

OPINION 8
WHY MODI STILL
STANDS TALL**WORLD 11**
26/11: EXTRADITION HEARING FOR
TAHAWWUR RANA TO BE HELD ON FEB 12**SPORT 14**
WARNER OUT OF
WHITE BALL SERIES

LUCKNOW, TUESDAY DECEMBER 1, 2020; PAGES 14 ₹3



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It's decisive battle, heed our 'mann ki baat': Farmers

Protesters refuse to budge, more farmers head to protest sites; Delhi Police places concrete barriers at all entry points to Delhi; heavy traffic jam in parts of Capital

SHEKHAR SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Refusing to listen to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's assertion that the farm laws are in farmers' favour, farmers on Monday said they have come to the national Capital for a "decisive battle" and urged Modi to listen to their "mann ki baat".

More protesters covered near the borders of the national Capital as the protest appeared to intensify, prompting the Delhi Police to enhance security and place concrete barriers at all entry points from Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. The protesting farmers refused to budge from their demands and stayed put at the border, leading to traffic snarls in parts of the national Capital as the Delhi Police kept the Singhu and Tikri borders closed and heightened checking at other places.

Addressing a Press conference at Singhu border, a representative of protesting farmers said they will continue their agitation until their demands are met.

"Our demands are non-negotiable. We have come here to fight a decisive battle," Jagmohan Singh, general secretary Bhartiya Kisan Union (Dakaunda), said and claimed the ruling party will have to pay a heavy price if it does not heed to their concerns.

"We will remain at Delhi borders and make our strategy from here. We have come to Delhi to ask the PM to listen to 'mann ki baat' of farmers, else the Government and the ruling party will have to pay a heavy price..." he said.

BKU Haryana president

SUPPLY OF VEGETABLES, FRUITS FROM OTHER STATES IMPACTED

New Delhi: The supply of vegetables and fruits to the city from other States has been impacted and it has been halved at Azadpur Mandi, one of Delhi's largest wholesale market, owing to the protest by farmers at the Singhu and Tikri border points of Delhi for the last five days.

Gurnam Singh Chaduni said around 31 cases have so far been registered against protestors to "suppress" their agitation, adding that farmers will continue their stir until their demands are met.

The Delhi Police has filed an FIR in connection with the violence that broke out during the protest by farmers at Singhu border on November 27. "The case has been registered under sections of rioting, unlawful assembly, destruction of public property, assaulting public servants," said the senior police official.

Police Commissioner SN Shrivastava visited Singhu border to take stock of the security arrangements. "They (farmers) have been given an offer and the

arrangements are better at the Burari instead on the road. On the road, there are issues for commuting. Here, there is no toilet or water, whereas the arrangements in Burari are better. The police have made good arrangements and we are ready for any situation," he said.

Cemented barriers and multi-layered barricades have also been put up at Ghazipur border near UP gate where many farmers have been protesting since Saturday.

Former AAP leader Yogendra Yadav, who is also a member of Akhil Bhartiya Sangharsh Samanvay Samiti's national working group, alleged that five lies are being spread about the farmers' agitation including that only farmers from Punjab were protesting.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah had appealed to the farmers to shift to the Burari ground and had said the Centre is ready to hold discussions with them as soon as they move to the designated place.

A meeting of over 30 farmer groups on Sunday rejected Shah's offer for talks before the scheduled date of December 3 and demanded an unconditional dialogue.

Thousands of protesters are to spend another night in the cold at the Singhu and Tikri border points.

Meanwhile, traffic woes continue in Delhi amid farmers' protest. The closure of borders has also resulted in heavy traffic on other alternate routes between Delhi and Haryana.

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Farmers gather at the Singhu border during their ongoing Delhi Chalo protest against Centre's farm laws in New Delhi on Monday

Ranjana Dimri | Pioneer

Modi: Opp misleading farmers, maligning our pious intention

Govt has fulfilled promises to raise farmers' income, asserts PM

RAMESH K SINGH ■ VARANASI

Defending farm reform laws, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday launched a scathing attack on the Opposition parties for misleading the farmers saying those who have a long history of doing wrongs with the people are now deliberately misleading the farmers though "our intention is pious like the sacred water of the Ganga".

Without naming any party or referring to the ongoing agitation of the farmers of Punjab, he said unlike our predecessors we believe in fulfilling our promises.

Addressing a public meeting at Khazuri on the outskirts of Varanasi, his Parliamentary constituency here, on Monday after inaugurating six-lane widening project of about 73-km-long route between Raja



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit to Kashi Vishwanath Mandir in Varanasi on Monday

PTI

Talab and Handia on Varanasi-Prayagraj route constructed with a cost of ₹2,447 crore, he said his Government has given alternatives and options to farmers through farm laws whereas earlier they were not allowed to make any deals outside the mandis (markets).

"It is a truth that through our reforms we have not only given strength to the farmers but also taken steps for making mandis more modern," he said.

The PM also criticised those who are misleading the farmers on the issues of MSP.

"On the MSP the Opposition was misguiding the farmers whereas his Government has tried to give strength to all the farmers including small and marginal ones so that they can not only increase their crop production but also income. We have implemented the recommendations of Swaminathan Commission which has suggested increasing earnings to the farmers by one hand half times their total cost of production," he said.

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Withdraw farm laws at once or will have to rethink support to Centre, says RLP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) ally Rashtriya Loktantrik Party (RLP) has asked the Centre to immediately withdraw the farm laws otherwise he will have to "reconsider party's support to the Centre".

RLP convener and Nagaur MP Hanuman Beniwal tweeted, "RLP is a partner of the NDA, but its strength lies in youth and farmers, and if prompt action is not taken in this matter in the interest of farmers, I will have to reconsider on being part of the NDA. At the same time, all recommendations of the Swaminathan Commission should be implemented."

NRIs raise voice, fund stir

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Funds and support are pouring in from the non-resident Indians (NRIs) for protesting farmers from Canada, Italy, the US, the UK, Philippines and France.

An NRI from Canada donated 50,000 Canadian dollars (₹25 lakh) while a United Kingdom-based NRI donated ₹10 lakh for providing langar to protesting farmers. Three NRIs residing in Manila have sent ₹1 lakh to Bhartiya Kisan Union (Ekta Dakaunda) in support of the protest.

Besides getting funds from NRIs, farmers have also got support from prominent celebrities belonging to Punjab. English cricketer Monty Panesar and Canada Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan supported the farmers' stir. Panesar questioned what protections are available for the farmer as a result of the new



to uphold this fundamental right."

Raja Dhaliwal of Canada's "World Financial Group" has donated 50,000 Canadian dollars (₹25 lakh) for providing langar to the farmers. Dhaliwal, while releasing the video message through video conferencing, said it had been decided to do this work dedicated to the doctrine of Guru Nanak Sahib. He said he stood by the farmers and would also raise his voice for economic, community and political support.

NDP leader in Canada Jagmeet Singh tweeted, "The violence perpetrated by the Indian govt against farmers peacefully protesting is appalling. I stand in solidarity with the farmers from Punjab and across India - and, I call on the Indian govt to engage in peaceful dialogue rather than violence."

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CAPSULE

COLDEST NOVEMBER IN DELHI IN 71 YEARS: IMD

New Delhi: The November of 2020 was the coldest in the national Capital in 71 years, with the mean minimum temperature dropping to 10.2 degrees Celsius, according to the IMD. Delhi recorded a mean minimum temperature of 10.2 degrees C in November 1949.

SoPS FOR MASKS: FINE FOR NOT WEARING MASKS

New Delhi: Imposing fines for not wearing masks or not following physical distancing, opening markets on alternate days and closing them if large number of coronavirus cases are reported, are among the measures recommended by the Centre to ensure compliance to Covid-appropriate behaviour in markets.

Covid-19 IN INDIA

TOTAL

CASES: 94,62,739

DEATHS: 1,37,649

RECOVERED:
88,87,740

ACTIVE: 4,35,176



PM calls all-party Covid virtual meet on Dec 4

Govt monitoring vaccine availability for mass treatment

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In the light of a new surge in the coronavirus cases and the Government keenly monitoring availability of domestic vaccines for its treatment at a mass scale, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has called a virtual meeting of floor leaders of all parties on December 4 to discuss Covid-19 situation in the country.

The leaders will deliberate the pandemic situation following unlocking stages in a video conference meet on

Friday that will be chaired by the Prime Minister.

Floor leaders of political parties from both Houses of Parliament have been called for the meeting, according to sources.

The Parliamentary Affairs Ministry is coordinating the meeting and has reached out to floor leaders of all parties, they said. This will be the second all-party meeting called by the Government to discuss the Covid-19 situation since the outbreak.

Senior Cabinet Ministers in the Modi Government, including Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Home Minister Amit Shah, Health Minister Harsh Vardhan, are expected to attend the meeting.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi and Minister of State Arjun Ram Meghwal too will attend the meeting.

The meeting is being held at a time when it is being contemplated to merge the Winter Session of Parliament with the Budget Session in wake of rising Covid-19 cases in the national Capital.

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Govt plans to vaccinate around 25-30 cr people by August: Vardhan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Around 25-30 crore people are likely to get coronavirus vaccines by July-August next year, the Government said on Monday even as it asked States/UTs to identify healthcare workers, including doctors, pharmacists as well as MBBS and BDS interns, who will carry out a Covid-19 inoculation drive once a vaccine is available.

"In the first 3-4 months of next year, there is a possibility that we will be able to provide vaccine to the people of the country. By July-August, we have a plan to provide vaccines to around 25-30 crore people and we are preparing accordingly," Dr Harsh Vardhan told reporters at an event here.

The Government has on its

agenda to give vaccination priority to doctors, healthcare workers and people above 60-year-old.

"I would like to request everyone to remember and follow Covid-19 appropriate behaviour like wearing masks and following social distancing. These are important for health," said the Minister as he highlighted that India has one of the highest recovery rates in the whole world.

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Health Minister Satyendar Jain had said that labs are finding it difficult to release results of all tests within a day.

Kejriwal Govt caps RT-PCR test cost by pvt labs at ₹800

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Arvind Kejriwal Government on Monday ordered all private laboratories to reduce the price of RT-PCR tests in the national Capital to ₹800 from ₹2,400.

According to an order issued by the health department, private laboratories have been asked to charge ₹800 for testing "samples collected by Government teams and collected from collection sites by private labs as requisitioned by districts and hospitals".

However, the testing of samples collected through home visit will cost ₹1,200.

All labs and hospitals have also been asked to display the revised rates at a prominent place within 24 hours.

The private laboratories have also been asked to process samples, share the reports with the client (Government or individual) and update all reports on the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) portal within 24 hours of collection of samples.

Health Minister Satyendar Jain had said that labs are finding it difficult to release results of all tests within a day.

Need to eliminate terror havens: VP says at SCO meet

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Expressing concern over a state policy, India on Monday called for eradication of safe havens, infrastructure and financial networks terrorism.

Making this assertion, Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu said India condemns terrorism in all its manifestations.

Addressing the 19th session of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) virtually, his observations were in obvious reference to Pakistan. It is also member of the SCO. India is hosting the summit for the first time since joining the SCO in 2017.

Naidu said the most important challenge facing the region is terrorism and that elimination of this threat will help it realise its true potential including in the economic sphere.

Referring to cross-border terrorism and urging the world to combat this menace collectively, he said in apparent pointer to Pakistan, "We are particularly concerned about states that leverage terrorism as an instrument of state policy. The most important challenge faced by us is terrorism, particularly cross-border terrorism."

In veiled attack on Pak, Naidu hits out at cross-border terrorism, its being a state policy



In another reference to Pakistan, Naidu said it is unfortunate that there were attempts to deliberately bring bilateral issues into the SCO and described it as a blatant violation of principles and norms of the charter of the grouping.

In mid-September, India's National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval walked out of a virtual meeting of top security officials of the SCO member states after the Pakistani representative projected a map that inaccurately depicted Kashmir. India had slammed Pakistan for the "blatant disregard" to the norms of the meeting.

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Targeted sampling at marriage venues to begin from today

296 test +ve, 355 recover

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Targeted sampling of marriage halls, DJs and caterers will begin in the district for containment of coronavirus from Tuesday (December 1). According to a health official, special sampling is being carried out because of the wedding season.

When we visit a marriage hall, we will first take the samples of all the staffers and DJ brass band players. This sampling will be carried out for three days but function will not be disrupted in any way," he said.

In addition, sampling of office-goers in Aliganj, Gomtinagar, Indiranagar and Chinhat will also be done by door-to-door surveillance and rapid response teams.

According to the official, the Covid positivity rate continues to be at 3.7 percent while the number of patients recovering matches the figures of those testing positive.

The official said other routine activities are being carried out in the same manner as they were earlier.

Meanwhile, 296 persons tested positive for coronavirus in Lucknow on Monday while 355 patients recovered. The fresh cases included 29 from Gomtinagar, 24 from Indiranagar, 22 from Rae Bareilly road, 20 from Chowk, 19 from Ashiyana, 17 from Alambagh, 14 from Hazratganj, 13 from Madaon, 12 from Thakurganj, and 10 each from Talkatora & Aliganj.

Across the state, 2,044 persons tested positive, including 106 in Kanpur, 168 in Ghaziabad, 123 in Varanasi and 174 in Meerut, taking the UP tally to 5,43,888. There were 19 deaths in the state, including four in Lucknow and one each in Kanpur, Prayagraj, Gautam Buddh Nagar, Varanasi, Barabanki, Ayodhya, Deoria, Muzaffarnagar, Jaunpur, Maharajganj, Hapur, Fatehpur, Amethi, Chitrakoot & Ambedkarnagar, taking the toll to 7761. Besides, 2,472 patients recovered, taking the strength of recoveries to 5,12,028.

Spokesperson of Ram

CM Yogi asks pvt labs to revise RT-PCR test rate

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

After Delhi revised the RT-PCR rate for Covid test, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has suggested that private labs should revise the testing charges. He also stressed on constant vigil to prevent and control COVID-19. "Covid testing charges by the private labs should be revised and made reasonable. It is extremely important to maintain effective treatment and protection mechanisms to prevent the spread of COVID-19," Yogi said.

The chief minister, who was presiding over an unlock review meeting at his official residence here, also directed officials to employ the latest technique in strengthening the Covid testing system. He said an App should be developed for common people to know about nearest Covid testing centres.

Directing officials to augment health services in the state capital, the chief minister said that the recovery rate in Lucknow should be improved. He also asked officials to keep public address systems active so that these may be used to spread awareness among the people about the necessity of wearing face masks and maintaining social distance as part of Covid protocol. Those present in the

meeting included Minister of State for Health Atul Garg, Chief Secretary RK Tiwari, Infrastructure and Industrial Development Commissioner Alok Tandon, Agriculture Production Commissioner Alok Sinha, Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Awanish Kumar Awasthi, Director General of Police HC Awasthi, Additional Chief Secretary (MSME and Information) Navneet Sehgal, Additional Chief Secretary (Revenue) Renuka Kumar, Additional Chief Secretary (Health) Amit Mohan Prasad, Additional Chief Secretary (Agriculture) Devesh Chaturvedi, Additional Chief Secretary (Panchayati Raj and Rural Development) Manoj Kumar Singh, Principal Secretary to CM and Information Sanjay Prasad, Principal Secretary (Health) Alok Kumar, Principal Secretary (Animal Husbandry) Bhuvnesh Kumar, Director Information Shishir and other senior officials.

Meanwhile, apprehending a fresh surge of coronavirus infection after the festival season, the Uttar Pradesh government has issued fresh directions to the district officers for effective implementation of the standard operating procedure for containing the spread of the deadly virus.

The government said for breaking the coronavirus

chain, the containment zone be effectively identified in vulnerable and high incidence areas. The government directed the district officials to take effective measures for compliance with the COVID-19 protocol like wearing masks, washing of hands and maintaining social distancing.

Chief Secretary RK Tiwari issued the fresh guidelines to all divisional commissioners, district magistrates, ADGs and IGs on surveillance and containment zones. He said besides making the use of masks mandatory at public places, the people violating this be penalised and other administrative action be taken against the offenders.

The chief secretary asked the district officials to ensure strict compliance of the COVID-19 protocol at crowded places, markets, weekly markets and public transport. He said the protocol should be strictly implemented at airlines, railway and metro rail and other modes of transport like boat and bus.

He said there was a need for delegating the responsibility to the district magistrates for imposing the local containment zone at micro level in their districts. He said along with unlocking of the economic activities, the COVID-19 protocol also needs to be followed simultaneously.

Manohar Lohia Institute of Medical Sciences Dr Shrikesh Singh pointed out that there has been an increase in Covid patients getting admitted by 10-15 percent. "Earlier, serious patients were being admitted but now moderately serious patients are also being given admission, which is adding to the numbers. However, death rate has come down. The recovery rate has been good at 90 percent but more patients are being admitted to the hospital than those being discharged over the last week. However, we expect the number of patients being admitted and that being discharged to be the same soon," he said.

He said they had expect-

ed a huge surge in the cases post Diwali and Chhath but it has not been the case. "However, it will still be premature to say anything regarding the course of disease, because the wedding season is going on and another 15 days will be crucial," he said, adding that the right time to assess the situation would be after December 15.

Asked about plasma therapy being administered to patients in the hospital, he said they have learnt during the course of treatment that it is basically a viral infection and much is not known about the disease. "There is no clear-cut medicine for this disease. All the drugs that we are giving to

patients and plasma therapy are additional forms of treatment, but it is actually the immunity of a person which matters the most. However, we are administering plasma therapy to patients and also encouraging those who are being discharged to donate plasma," he said, adding that their collection of plasma has also increased.

Singh said the attendants of patients are also understanding that these are just additional therapies. "Earlier, they used to insist on plasma therapy but now they also understand that what is important is timely intervention and proper management of symptoms," he added.



Rajnath reviews development projects

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Defence Minister and MP from Lucknow, Rajnath Singh, reviewed the on-going development projects of his parliamentary constituency on Monday and directed the officials to complete them in a time bound manner. Singh was on a one-day visit to Lucknow and reviewed over a dozen ongoing projects and interacted with the people and the officials.

Officials said that Singh reviewed the ongoing over bridge project from Lalkuan to Aishbagh. He was accompanied by UP Law Minister Brajesh Pathak and law-makers including Neeraj Bora, Suresh Tiwari and Suresh Srivastava.

"The defence minister also reviewed the outer ring road that connects with Kisan Path. He also interacted with farmers and common people to find out about the progress of the development projects and how



they would impact their lives," said Diwakar Tripathi, the representative of Rajnath Singh in Lucknow. Officials informed Singh that all the major projects had either been completed or were on the verge of completion. Singh was also informed that the construction of three-lane road connecting Sultanpur road with Ayodhya road had been completed at a cost of Rs 297 crore. The total length of this road is 10.11 kms. The Bridge Corporation has also completed construction of approach road of rail over bridge constructed over Lucknow-Barabanki rail line. "Construction of road along Indira canal has been completed. This is an added attraction of Kisan Path while the link connecting Sultanpur road with Kisan Path is underway. The total cost of the project is Rs 24 crore," the official said. The defence minister also enquired about the progress of renovation of Gomti Nagar railway station.

Majority of HIV patients defeated Covid-19 at KGMU: Dr Himanshu

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A majority of HIV patients who tested positive for coronavirus recovered at KGMU, nodal officer for Covid Dr D Himanshu pointed out on the eve of the World Aids Day on Monday. He cited the case of a 16-year-old boy who defeated coronavirus at KGMU.

"This boy also had tuberculosis, but he recovered from Covid-19 and now we are carrying out the anti-TB treatment and maintaining him on anti-

retroviral therapy for AIDS. The condition of many HIV patients has improved and we would like the general public to know it is not necessary that all those with low immunity would have complications," he said. He pointed out that the 16-year-old boy was put on oxygen therapy after he contracted coronavirus infection and his oxygen requirement improved slowly and now he has been discharged.

On how HIV patients despite low immunity levels, he said it was because of cell

immunity. "There is one type of immunity which occurs because of the antibodies that detect the virus and attack it, while the other is cell immunity which means that cells attack the viruses. The problem in HIV is that it impacts the cell immunity and hence if we give a good anti-retroviral therapy and the cell immunity is maintained at a certain level, the patient can defeat Covid-19," he said.

On whether the treatment of HIV patients at KGMU was impacted because of the coro-

navirus pandemic, he said they catered to 100 patients a day and provided them drugs at the ART Centre. "However, there was some impact in the sense that there were several patients from outside of the district who avoided coming to the hospital, and we provided drugs through the link ART Centre so that the therapy was not discontinued," he said. Talking about the migratory population during Covid-19, he said they provided them with transit anti-retroviral therapy.

Reverence marks Prakash Parv

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The 551th birth anniversary (Prakash Parv) of Guru Nanak Dev was celebrated with reverence at Gurdwara Naka Hindola on Monday. The hall of gurdwara was decked up with flowers, balloons, lights and the 'palki' of Guru Granth Sahib was placed there. The programme was telecast live across the state.

Chairman of Shri Guru Singh Sabha S Rajendra Singh Bagga congratulated the associates present on the occasion. Giani Sukhdev Singh expressed his thoughts on the life of Guru Nanak Dev.

Students of KKNS Gurmat Sangeet Academy and members of Mata Gujari Satsang Sabha also sang shabad-kirtan in this programme. Giani Harvinder Singh gave a narrative lecture of Gurmat thoughts.

The distribution of langar in the 'samagam' was done by Sikh Young Men's Association and Dashmesh Sewa Society.



Sikh devotees at Gurdwara Naka Hindola on the occasion of Prakash Parv on Monday

Pioneer

Prasad was distributed among the devotees. At the end of the programme, Bagga honoured all Sikh organisations, Jathedbandi Sikh Sewak Jatha and Punjabi Youth

Association by presenting 'sirapa'. Guru's prasad was also distributed.

SKD Academy also celebrated Gurupurab and Kartik Purnima on Monday. The

principal and staff paid obeisance to Guru Nanak Dev. A special prayer was organised at the Vrindavan branch for Dev Deepawali and Kartik Purnima.

BBAU prof elected IATLIS member

Lucknow (PNS): Head of department of Library and Information Science (BBAU) Shilpi Verma has been elected member of Indian Association of Teacher of Library and Information Science (IATLIS). She has been elected till 2023. All the elected members will take up their posts after 'IATLIS Conference-2020'.

"The 32nd IATLIS conference was also organised at BBAU in 2016 by the department of Library and Information Sciences. The proposal to form Association of Teacher of Library and Information Science was made at the UNESCO regional seminar in Delhi in October 1960, and the association was formed in 1969," BBAU spokesperson Rachna Gangwar said.

Verma has nearly 17 years of experience in teaching and research. Her 41 research papers have been published in various national and international journals. She has edited about 12 books and also been conferred five national awards. Verma, who is also a trained associate trainer of UGC's Capacity Building of Women Manager Programme, is currently the chairperson of BBAU's Committee for Basic Facilities for Women and Gender Champion Committee and also the convener of Unnat Bharat Abhiyan.

Constable granted leave for mother's 'terahvi' after CP's intervention

Lucknow (PNS): Social media came handy for a constable who wanted to take leave for her mother's 'terahvi' but was denied permission for the same. The commissioner of police (CP), Lucknow, took cognisance of the issue and the CP was granted leave for 30 days.

As per reports, constable Jai Prakash Saroj is posted at Krishnanagar police station. He wanted to take leave for her mother's 'terahvi' and he reached the office of CP where a day officer refused to grant him leave. Later a video featuring the teary-eyed cop narrating his story to mediapersons went viral and the CP came to know of the issue. He immediately granted the constable leave for 30 days.

Girl alleges abduction bid

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Car-borne unidentified youths attempted to abduct a girl who, along with a colleague, was returning home from somewhere in Madaon on Thursday. As per reports, when the girl, a resident of Eldeco City Colony at IIM road crossing, and her colleague, reached IIM crossing, a car intercepted their scooter and later came to a screeching halt. Some youths hurriedly got down from the car and caught hold of her before she could sense foul play.

The girl alleged that the youths tried to bundle her in the car, but she managed to wriggle herself free and ran

towards a security guard at the gate of the colony. Some commuters also stopped when they saw the youths trying to overpower her. The accused fled the scene but deprived the girl of her mobile phone and purse.

Meanwhile, a team of Chinhat police arrested three persons on the charges of theft and recovered stolen goods from their possession on Monday. The accused were identified as Anwar Ali, Peer Ali and Lav Kush (all of Chinhat). The police said the accused owned their involvement in a theft case in the past. The team recovered a huge quantity of hardware items for plumbing and two stolen motorcycles.

In another incident, a truck conductor was fatally knocked down by a speeding vehicle in Vibhuti Khand police station area early Monday morning.

As per reports, Ashok Kumar Yadav (33) of Gorakhpur, along with his brother-in-law Dharmendra Yadav (truck driver), reached the city to unload goods in Kamta locality. Around 4 am, Dharmendra parked the truck near a private bank and Ashok left for a deserted place to relieve himself. Dharmendra told the police that Ashok was crossing the road when an unidentified truck knocked him down. Ashok was rushed to RMLIMS where he was declared brought dead.

DM monitors movement of polling parties

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash monitored polling parties leaving from Ramabai Ambedkar Shal on Vidhan Parishad election duties on Monday. He gave directions to all officials to carry out fair elections and follow Covid-19 protocols while doing so.

Elections to the graduate constituency and teachers' constituency will be held on December 1. For the graduate constituency, there are 140 polling parties and for the teachers' constituency, there 37 polling parties. The polling parties left with both the statutory and non-statutory material and every vehicle was also



ferrying the SSB personnel who will be deputised at the booths. Polling will take place from 8 am to 5 pm.

चौधरी चरण सिंह विश्वविद्यालय, मेरठ Ch. Charan Singh University, Meerut				
REVISED-RECRUITMENT NOTICE				
Online Applications are invited from eligible candidates (As per UGC notification 18 July 2018 and subsequent UP Government order 28 June 2019 and first Statutes of University as amended from time to time) for the appointment to the following posts in the University:				
Advt. No.	Name of Post	Number of Posts with Category & Department Name	Level	
Acad. 1185R/01/2020	Professor	Economics (UR-1), Mathematics (SC-1), Sociology (OBC-1), Microbiology (SC-1), Physics (UR-1)	14	
Acad. 1186R/02/2020	Associate Professor	History (UR-1), English (SC-1), Psychology (SC-1 & UR-1), Botany (EWS-1), Statistics (OBC-1), Economics (OBC-1)	13A	
Acad. 1187R/03/2020	Assistant Professor	Genetics & Plant Breeding (OBC-1), English (SC-1), Physics (UR-1), Political Science (OBC-1), Education (SC-1), Sociology (UR-1)	10	
The last date for submitting online application is 21.12.2020. interested applicants may visit website http://www.ccsu.ac.in/ccsu/recruitment in for further details and eligibility conditions.				
				Registrar



Devotees taking holy dip at river Ganga on the occasion of Kartik Purnima in Varanasi on Monday morning

Pioneer

Thousands throng ghats on Kartik Purnima

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Despite the prevailing coronavirus pandemic, thousands of devotees thronged 84-odd ghats of river Ganga on the auspicious occasion of Kartik Purnima here on Monday. As the festival of Dev Deepawali of this holy city has become popular across the world in the recent decades, hundreds of tourists and outsiders arrived here to watch the grandeur of Dev Deepawali in the evening. Majority of such

tourists also preferred to take holy dip in the river Ganga. Besides, throughout the day, rush was also seen at Kashi Vishwanath Mandir and other temples.

Right from wee hours the devotees started thronging various ghats of Ganga to take bath there. Maximum rush of devotees was seen at Dashaswamedh and its adjoining ghats including Rajendra Prasad, Sheetla, Man Mandir and Ahlyabai. Rush was also seen at Assi, Scindia,

Nagva, Bhainsasur, Rajghat, Narad, Kedar, Hanuman, Ravidas and Tulsi Ghat. A good number of devotees also reached Panchganga Ghat whereas per mythological beliefs it is said that it is the confluence of five rivers including Ganga, Yamuna, Saraswati, Trishna and Dumrathapa. Rush was also seen at different ghats of Ramnagar including Shastri and Balua ghats.

After taking bath at various ghats, the devotees offered

daans to the Brahmins and poor people including beggars as daan is considered important for the festival. Elaborate security arrangements were made to avoid any untoward incidents and right from the wee hours. Water Police personnel were seen active along with expert divers. Senior police officers in view of the rush of devotees and proposed visit of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi had already imposed several traffic restrictions in the city.

Prakashotsav of Guru Nanak celebrated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

There was a festive mood among the local Sikh community on the auspicious occasion of 551st Prakashotsav of Shree Guru Nanak Devji Maharaj here on Monday. In view of the prevailing coronavirus pandemic, Chief Granthi of Gurubag Gurdwara Bhai Sukhdev Singh appealed to the devotees to maintain social distance and follow all the COVID-19 guidelines. On the auspicious occasion, the premises of Gurubag and Nichbag Gurdwaras were decorated with attractive lighting arrangements. However, unlike previous years programmes were limited in view of COVID-19 restrictions.

The city, which is important for the Hindus, Buddhists and Jains, is also important for the Sikhs as it is said that in 1563 Vikram Samvat, Guru Nanak Dev, the first Guru of Sikhs, had arrived in the city along with some of his followers and stayed here for almost one month and during the period he also delivered religious discourses. It was the same place where Guru Nanak Devji Maharaj had delivered his discourses, today Gurubagh Gurdwara is located. Varanasi is also the place



Sikhs offering prayer at Gurubag Gurdwara on Prakashotsav of Guru Nanak Devji in Varanasi on Monday

Pioneer

where the ninth and tenth Gurus of the Sikhs had passed some days. The tenth and last Guru of Sikhs, Guru Govind Singh stayed sometime during his childhood along with his father at Nichibagh where presently Nichibagh Gurdwara is located. Some of the articles used by Guru Govind Singh and his father

are still preserved at this Gurdwara.

In the evening Huzuri Raagi Bhai Narinder Singh recited Shri Guruvani Kirtan which was followed by langar. Earlier, the programme of the day began with Simran between 4.15-5 am followed by Kirtan and the end of Shri Akhandh Path Sahib. The

programmes were also continued between 7.30 pm to midnight at Gurdwara Nichibagh where Chief Granthi Bhai Ranjeet Singh and Bhai Narinder Singh presented Sabd Kirtan. Bhai Sukhdev Singh prayed to the Almighty to help the world become free from the coronavirus pandemic.

84 new Covid cases in Varanasi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

As many as 84 new COVID-19 patients have been detected in the district, increasing the total number of cases to 19,152 on Monday. The day saw two more deaths, increasing the toll to 308. During the day, the follow-up negative reports included 95 and all of them have been recovered from home isolation, increasing the number to 15,204. As no patient has been discharged from any hospital, the number remained at 2,864. The total number of patients who have been recovered so far is 18,068, leaving 776 active cases. The recovery rate is 94.34 per cent, while the mortality rate is 1.60 per cent.

Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr VB Singh has informed that in the first report of the day, 63 positive patients were found out of 3,287 reports received. Till then, the total test reports received were 4,24,893 and the results of 1,496 are

awaited. Out of them, 4,05,762 were negative while 19,131 positive. The total number of samples collected was 4,44,865. Earlier, a female aged 72 from Sunderpur succumbed to COVID-19 at Sir Sundarlal Hospital, Banaras Hindu University (SSH BHU). With the addition of 12 new red zones, the total number of hotspots has increased to 2,500 including 218 red zones. Three green zones have been converted into red zones again. There are 2,282 green zones with six new ones.

POLLING TO GRADUATES, TEACHERS SEAT TO BE HELD TODAY: All the preparations have been completed to conduct peaceful and fair election to the Graduates' and Teachers' constituency for which the polling is scheduled on Tuesday. The polling parties departed for their respective polling centres with polling kits on Monday. The counting will be held on December 3.

The polling parties reached

Pahadia Mandi on Monday morning as per schedule and departed for their respective polling centres by collecting polling kits. The polling is scheduled from 8 am to 5 pm on Tuesday. A total of 127 polling centres and 311 polling booths have been made in eight districts of Varanasi division for the election to the Graduates constituency, while 119 polling centres and 120 polling booths have been made for the Teachers' constituency. The districts fall in Varanasi division include Varanasi, Bhadohi, Chandauli, Ghazipur, Ballia, Jaunpur, Meerzapur and Sonbhadra. After the polling, the sealed ballot boxes will be taken to Pahadia Mandi and will be kept in the strong room in the observance of returning officers and observers. To ensure free and fair polling, an elaborate security arrangement will be made at polling centres. The counting will be held in Pahadia Mandi on December 3 from 8 am onwards amidst the

tight security arrangement.

The polling is at each and every booth will be monitored through digital cameras. A total of 311 and 120 polling booths have been made in the division to ensure smooth election of Graduate and Teacher constituency respectively including as many as 73 and 21 polling booths respectively in Varanasi district. Besides as many as 94 micro observers, 21 static magistrates and nine zonal magistrates have been appointed to keep a close watch on the voting process. To lodge a complaint and also give suggestions the control room has been opened which number is 0542-2502562.

It may be said here that as many as 22 and 12 candidates are in election fray on the seat of Graduate's and Teacher's constituency respectively. A total of 2,09,813 and 33,466 voters will use their franchises in the election for the Graduate and Teacher constituency respectively

88 more test positive in Prayagraj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The number of corona infections is fluctuating every day. On Sunday, about 1000 Covid tests were conducted than on normal days, but there was a slight increase in the number of infected. About 88 people reported positive for coronavirus in 24 hours. During the treatment, one infected person died.

According to Nodal Officer Corona Dr Rishi Sahai, a total of 4,046 people were tested for Covid in the district on Monday. A total of 88 infected were identified. At the same time, the percentage of those who have got infection-free has increased. A total of 144 people became infection-free. Out of which 28 were discharged from various Covid hospitals and 116 people completed



home isolation.

Nodal Officer Dr Sahai said that the total number of Covid infected has reached 26,534. At the same time, more than 19,000 people completed home isolation. About 6,339 patients have been discharged from the Covid hospitals after

being deprived of infection. The number of people who lost their lives to corona infection reached 343. After the fortnight, the number of active patients has come down again. There are now 837 active cases in the district.

The number of serious

patients infected with Covid had reached 115 after Diwali, all admitted to SRN Hospital. On Sunday, 87 patients are being treated at SRN Hospital, 21 at Beli Hospital and 24 at United Medicity.

According to Nodal Officer for Corona Dr Rishi Sahai, the director-chairman of AMA Blood Bank has been corona infected. His report has come positive.

At the same time, the Covid report of a ward boy of SRN Hospital and lab technician of CHC Phulpur, two teachers of a school and a journalist has come out positive. At the same time, the manager of Axis Bank Kareli and HDFC Bank Kareli branch and two clerks of Canara Bank Kareli are also among those who tested positive for COVID-19.

Kalpwasis need to bring negative RT-PCR test report

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Kalpwasis in the forthcoming Magh Mela will have to bring along a negative RT-PCR test report with them to get entry in the mela ground and will have to undergo a test every week during their month-long stay.

Nodal Officer and Additional Chief Medical Officer Dr Rishi Sahai said that medical teams equipped with a thermal scanner and sanitisers would be stationed at all the 15

entry points of the mela ground. Every devotee coming for kalpwas will be required to submit a COVID-19 negative test report on entry. The report should not be older than five days.

Besides, all kalpwasis will have to undergo a Covid test once every week. Over 20 medical teams would be deployed at the mela ground to conduct RT-PCR tests. The kalpwasis would also be submitting an undertaking that they agree to be sent to quarantine or isolation

at a centre in Kalindipuram, if they test positive, he added.

The Health department will set up six booths for collection of swab samples in six sectors of the Magh Mela ground. The Mela will start from January 14 next year.

The UP Government had recently assured seers that Magh Mela would be organised despite the pandemic, but under strict implementation of COVID-19 safety guidelines.

The Akhil Bharatiya

Akhara Parishad has advised seers not to invite followers in large numbers and appealed to them to strictly follow the safety guidelines during Magh Mela. Few religious organisations are likely to be allowed this time due to the pandemic. We will urge all devotees coming on Mauni Amavasya snan to take a dip at different ghats and not to crowd a particular ghat. Kalpwasis would also be advised not to invite many guests to their tents, an official said.

Sangeeta Srivastava new AU V-C

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Prof Sangeeta Srivastava took over as the Vice-Chancellor of Allahabad University on Monday. Her appointment is being welcomed by the teachers, employees as well as the students.

She is the fourth permanent Vice-Chancellor of Allahabad University after the Allahabad University became the Central University. She will be the first female Vice-Chancellor of AU. Her term will last for five years. After becoming Central University, Prof Rajen Harshey, Prof AK Singh and Prof Ratan Lal Hangoo have been appointed on the post of Vice-Chancellor. All the three vice-chancellors appointed earlier have been from other universities and institutes, while Prof Sangeeta Srivastava is the first professor to become Vice-Chancellor from Allahabad University itself.

Professor Sangeeta Srivastava has been appointed the new Vice-Chancellor of Allahabad University (AU). Prof Sangeeta started serving in 1989 as a lecturer in the Home Science department of AU. The Department of Home Science was part of the Biochemistry department at that time. Home Science department got a new building in 2002 with the effort of



Prof. Sangeeta Srivastava

Prof Sangeeta Srivastava. She was the head of the Home Science department from 2002 till June 2019, until she was appointed as the Vice-Chancellor of the State University.

After completing her schooling from St. Mary's Convent, Sangeeta Srivastava did her BSc from Allahabad Agricultural Institute (SHUATS) and MSc from

Jabalpur University. She did her PhD under the direction of Professor PC Gupta in the University of Allahabad.

Prof Sangeeta Srivastava who earlier headed the department Home Science (Biotech) at Allahabad University, had been serving till yesterday as the Vice-Chancellor Prof Rajendra Singh Rajju Bhaiya State University. The President

of India Ram Nath Kovind appointed Prof Srivastava as a regular Vice-Chancellor of Allahabad University on Sunday 11 months after the resignation of the then Vice-Chancellor Prof Rattan Lal Hangloo. Prof Rattan Lal Hangloo had tendered his resignation on December 31, 2019, and since then Prof RR Tiwari had been serving as officiating V-C.

Allahabad University had become a central university in 2005, and Prof Sangeeta Srivastava has become the first woman Vice-Chancellor of this central university.

The Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandi Ben Patel issued an order on Sunday to ensure that Prof Sangeeta Srivastava hands over the change of Rajju Bhaiya State University to the Vice-Chancellor of UP Rajarshi Tandon Open University Prof Kameshwar Nath Singh who has accepted this additional charge till the appointment of a regular vice-chancellor at Rajju Bhaiya State University, Prayagraj.

Wife of Justice Vikram Nath, Chief Justice of the Gujarat High Court, Prof Sangeeta Srivastava is the fourth Vice-Chancellor of Allahabad Central University after Prof Rajen Harshe, Prof AK Singh, and Prof Rattan Lal Hangloo.

ABAP supports Yogi on renaming Hyderabad as Bhagyanagar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The Akhil Bharatiya Akhara Parishad (ABAP) has supported Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's statement of renaming Hyderabad, the capital of Telangana, to its ancient name Bhagyanagar.

Akhara Parishad president Mahant Narendra Giri has said that the Mughals ruled the country for hundreds of years and that they changed the name of many ancient cities of the country to Islamisation.

Now the country has become independent, in the way the name of Allahabad has been changed to Prayagraj after about 500 years and Faizabad has been renamed Ayodhya, similarly Hyderabad should also be renamed as Bhagyanagar.

Mahant Narendra Giri has said that changing the name of Hyderabad to Bhagyanagar may change the fate of Hyderabad as well as AIMIM

MP Asaduddin Owaisi.

He termed Owaisi's opposition to the change of name as unfair. Mahant Narendra Giri has said that no one should have any objection in giving the ancient name of Hyderabad.

He said that after changing the name of Hyderabad to Bhagyanagar, the development of the city should also be voted by the people to strengthen the BJP in the civic elections. Giri has once again demanded that the name of Hyderabad be changed to Bhagyanagar.

3 MEDICINE SHOPS DEMOLISHED: Three medicine shops near the SRN Hospital campus gate and old building were demolished by the Prayagraj Development Authority (PDA) on Monday. In the presence of the police, the PDA team carried out the demolition operation. During this, a panic like situation prevailed on the entire campus.

Medical store operators also protested the action but all their efforts went in vain. Two

shopkeepers took away the goods before the action took place in the afternoon but some medicines and ACs were buried under the debris in a shop.

Sushila Medical, Siva Enterprises and Pitambara Enterprises were given space on a lease in the medical college's SRN Hospital campus. Many orders were issued in this regard earlier but due to some reasons every time the order was cancelled leading to postponement to the demolition.

The college administration cancelled the allocation of lease and shops stating the need for itself under the rules. The notice was issued asking to vacate the shops within 48 hours, but the operators did not take the initiative. The two shops had a three-year lease left, while Pitambara re-contracted in the past March.

Two JCB machines were included in the team led by PDA zonal officer Sat Shukla on Monday afternoon. All

three medical stores were demolished in the presence of police and PAC. During this, some people tried to protest which was thwarted by the police. The crowd involved in the commotion was dispersed with sticks.

Principal Dr SP Singh was out of town during the operation. On the information, Vice Principal Dr Vinod Pandey arrived with other colleagues, but did not hear one of the shopkeepers pleading during the demolition. The PCOs allocated on lease two and a half decades ago at SRN Hospital Gate along with three medical stores were severed from the action. Medical store operators who came under the influence of demolition have alleged that there is no PCO there. Photocopy is done here in the name of PCO. Tea with cold drinks is also sold there. The original work is missing, another trade is taking place but the college administration does not see it.



District Magistrate, City, Alok Tiwari and Member of State Commission for Women Poonam Kapoor hand over certificate of merit to members working for 'Mission Shakti' at Collectorate on Monday

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Mission Shakti focus on mental health, empowerment of women: Kapoor

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Member of Uttar Pradesh State Commission for Women, Poonam Kapoor, said the main thrust of Mission Shakti was on mental health and empowerment of women.

Addressing women who were given certificate of merit under Mission Shakti at the collectorate here on Monday, Kapoor said Chief Minister, Yogi Adityanath had launched Mission Shakti for women's safety, women's respect and their self-reliance and its main thrust was on mental health and empowerment of the fair sex

She said the campaign was continuing to benefit lakhs of women and girls in the entire state.

The SCW member said while the urban women were quite aware of the thrust of Mission Shakti, the rural women were ignorant about it and thus effort was being made to create awareness among

them.

Kapoor said the Bharatiya Janata Party believed that women should get their fundamental rights as enshrined in the Constitution and they should get respect in society as well.

She said Mission Shakti would empower women to openly express if they were being victimised and exploited. She said this programme would continue so that it created an awakening among the rural and urban women.

The SCW member said if the women were being victimised, they were free to approach the helpline set up by the government. She said they could call on Women Power Line 1090, Chief Minister's Helpline 1076, Childline 1098, Mahila Helpline 181, Police Emergency Helpline 112, Health Services 102 and 108 Ambulance services as these helplines were meant exclusively for women.

Addressing the gathering,

District Magistrate Alok Tiwari said the Mission Shakti campaign focused on ensuring the safety and dignity of women and girls, and it sent across a stern warning that perpetrators of crimes against females would be dealt with an iron hand.

He said in the first phase, Mission Shakti focused on spreading awareness towards ensuring the safety and dignity of women and the girl child. He said in the second phase, Operation Shakti would target eve-teasers and put them on the path of punishment or reform and if such elements did not mend their ways, they would have to face social-boycott and their pictures would be displayed publicly.

Tiwari said female foeticide was a curse and thus protection of the girl child and giving respect to women should start from home.

He said under the plan, cottage industries would be set up for women and arrange-

ments would be made for proper marketing of the products they produce through special agencies assigned by the government.

The district magistrate said security of women would be kept on priority. He said all the women who were furthering the Mission Shakti needed special commendation and this felicitation function was one such step.

He hoped that more women would spread awareness of the campaign and help the underprivileged women.

He said the government was serious towards running this programme for a long period so that women could be benefited and made aware of their rights.

Later, Kapoor handed over the commendation certificates to Neha Gupta, Sunidhi Kapoor, Usha Tiwari, Rabia Sultana, Poonam Pal, Mamta Bhatia, Priyanka Yadav and Ritu Shukla.

100 more test positive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Nagar reported 100 more coronavirus positive cases on Monday evening. Chief Medical Officer Dr Anil K Mishra said that 100 more people had tested positive for coronavirus infection between Sunday evening and Monday evening taking the tally of confirmed cases to 30,649 cases. He said that 15 cases were discharged from hospital. He said one COVID-19 death in the city was reported till Monday evening keeping the death toll to 779. The CMO said at present 1156 active cases were undergoing treatment. Dr Mishra said 4315 samples were sent for testing in the city.

Cash, mobiles stolen from 5 repair shops

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Cash and 64 mobile phones were stolen from five mobile repairing shops in a row in the famous Sugar Market under Pheelkhana police station on Sunday night.

In the recent past also, miscreants had stolen around 100 mobile phones from three shops in the market.

Ajit Gautam and his brother Amit of Kashiaram Colony, Panki, said they had closed their shop around 9 pm on Sunday. Around 11 am on Monday when they reached to open their shop, one of the racks was found missing. They said miscreants stole 15 mobile phones lying in the shop for repair, accessories, cash and the rack from there. From the adjacent, 14 mobile phones lying for repair were stolen. Besides, 25 mobile phones were stolen from the shop of Jai Gautam of Shuklaganj (Unnao) and 10 from the shop of Sonu.

The miscreants also took away cash amounting to thousands of rupees from these shops. The irate shopkeepers staged a massive demonstration. The local police reached the spot and carried out investigation. The shopkeepers said that during the past one month, eight shops had been burgled but the local police had failed to workout the case so far. Station House Officer Satish Chandra Sahu said efforts were on to identify and nab the culprits with the help of footages of CCTV cameras installed there.

CAIT demands e-commerce policy

KANPUR (PNS): The Confederation of All India Traders national secretary Pankaj Arora, while addressing the meeting of the federation, strongly raised the demand for an e-commerce policy.

He appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to ensure that the policy was introduced at various levels for making India self-reliant.

Arora said the e-commerce legislation should cover all e-commerce-related issues that could not be or were not being addressed by the existing regulators or government bodies.

He said as per the expected draft, the policy would be equally applicable to entities with foreign and domestic investments. He said the policy may ask e-commerce companies for any information that was appropriate or necessary for compliance.

Arora further said that treatment of non-personal data would also be addressed by the regulatory framework and would adhere to the norms that would be formulated for processing of non-personal data.

He said the policy called data a national resource that e-commerce entities used to build their data. He said it was, as per the document, as important as intellectual capital (intellectual property) or industrial capital (funds). Arora said information about e-commerce activities in India should be stored in such a way that it could be given to the government without delay. He said the company would have to comply with all requests for information made by the government and within the time period specified by the appropriate authority.

Head constable found dead

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

A head constable posted in Sherwaan hillock under Jamalpur police station on Sunday. Reports said Shahi Kant Singh, a resident of Kaudihar village under Chakia police station in Chandauli district, was posted as a head constable at Saraikhwaja police station in Jaunpur. At present he had come to his residence on leave. On Friday he left his house on his car No (UP-67/W-4346). Late at night when his family called him on his phone he did not answer it. Later a missing report was lodged at Chakia police station. His family reached Sherwan in search of him and found his vehicle in the market. They contacted the police station and the police through surveillance found the location of his mobile phone at Sherwaan hillock, about two

kms away from the market. The missing head constable was found dead there. Till the filing of the report, the police was busy in investigating the case.

COMBING OPERATION: SP Ajay Kumar Singh launched a combing operation in Naxal-infested area of Sherwaan hillocks under Jamalpur police station on



Sunday. To check Naxal activities and instil the spirit of fearlessness in people the SP launched combing operation along with heavy police force and PAC. During it the SP

interacted with people and gathered information related to the area. He directed the cops to collect feedback of the area regularly and do accordingly for eradicating the menace. During the intensive operation the SP was accompanied by the CO Chunar, SO Jamalpur and heavy police force.

MARCH: In the series of programmes under traffic month an awareness march was conducted by the police on Saturday. It was flagged off by ASP City Sanjay Kumar. The march started from Patel Chowk, Bharuhna. The participants made the commuters aware. At Ramchandra Shukla Park a human chain was formed and the participants interacted with drivers as well as pedestrians. NCC cadets, COs, reserve inspector, traffic incharge and SHO Dehat Kotwali, and recruits took part in the march which ended at Roadways.

CIL CMD inspects Jayant, Nigahi mines

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

Chairman-cum-Managing Director (CMD) of Coal India Limited (CIL) Pramod Agarwal visited Jayant and Nigahi mines of Northern Coalfields Limited (NCL) on the second day of his two-day visit to NCL on Sunday. During his inspection at Nigahi project, he laid the foundation stone for expansion of Jayant Athletic Academy and saw the operation of the Ganga dragline apart from inaugurating the first planing of 'Surface Minor' (the lowest coal layer of NCL) at Turra seam. During his inspection at residential athletic academy in Jayant area, Agarwal was informed that the NCL provides national level free residential training in athletics to young players by experts of Athletic Federation of India under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and in keeping in view the improvement in the performance of the trainees, residential training of 40 others is being arranged at the academy.

CIL CMD also visited Rose Garden in Jayant project Later, Agarwal visited Nigahi Project and after inspecting the mines he inaugurated the newly developed view point and honoured the best employees of the project. NCL CMD PK Sinha, Director (Personnel) Bimlendu Kumar, Director (Technical/ Operations) Dr Anindya Sinha, Director (Technical / Project & Planning) SS Sinha, heads of different departments, general managers of various projects, union representative and others were present. Earlier, Agarwal attended the 36th Foundation Day of NCL as the chief guest. In his address he praised the team NCL for producing coal more than the target in adverse conditions and expressed confidence that like the previous years, NCL will

maintain its performance even further. He also praised the consistency in performance of NCL even during Covid-19 and said that despite adverse circumstances, there is continuity in its performance. This underlines the safe operations and working efficiency of the team in NCL. CIL CMD emphasised on quality, digitisation, environment friendly mining and use of new technology, mechanised transport in the coal industry. He also said that to strengthen social partnership, CIL plans to spend about ₹600 crore in the CSR head in the current financial year. CMD NCL PK Sinha

congratulated Team NCL for a unique journey from 11 MT to 108.05 MT. At the same time, he again expressed confidence to produce more than the target in the year 2020-21. During the programme, coal fields were awarded for their outstanding performance in the year 2019-20 on parameters like production, productivity, safety, environment, CSR, capacity utilisation of machines

and highest profit. CIL CMD also provided appointment letters to 17 land-displaced people of different projects. Apart from it he also e-inaugurated the Atal Hospital of Bina while chairperson of Coal India Limited Officers' Wives Committee Dr Renu Agarwal Bina Workers' Club 'Sanskar Kendra'. The function was attended by various directors, senior officers of NCL along with Technical Secretary (CMD CIL) MK Singh JCC member Munnial Yadav (BMS), Ashok Dubey (general secretary from CMS), Sarvesh Singh (GS, CMOAI), chairperson of Kriti Mahila Mandal Sangeeta Sinha and vice-chairperson Dr Sunita Kumari, Suchandra Sinha and others. Bimlendu Kumar welcomed the guests while Dr Anindya Sinha proposed the vote of thanks.



Spl trains to run as per revised timetable

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The railway administration has decided to revise the timings of special trains being run for the convenience of passengers from December 1. As a result, the following special trains will be run as per the revised timetable from December 1. All coaches in these trains will be of reserved category and passengers traveling in them will have to follow the Covid-19 prevention guidelines, CPRO PK Singh said.

LKO JN- NEW DELHI SPL: The 02229 Lucknow Jn-New Delhi special will from December 1 leave Lucknow Jn at 22:00 hrs, Alamnagar at 22:55 hrs, Hardoi at 23:39 hrs, Hardoi at 23:39 hrs, the second day Shahjahanpur at 00:40 hrs, Bareilly at 01:45 hrs, Rampur at 02:40 hrs, Moradabad at 03:33 hrs, Hapur at 05:05 hrs, Ghaziabad at 06:01 hrs and reach New Delhi at 06:45 hrs. The 02230 New Delhi-Lucknow Jn special from December 1 will leave New Delhi at 22:00 hrs, Ghaziabad at 22:45 hrs, Hapur at 23:25 hrs, Moradabad at 01:33 hrs, Rampur at 01:42 hrs, Bareilly at 02:39 hrs, Shahjahanpur at 03:47 hrs, Hardoi at 04:45 hrs, Alamnagar at 06:17 hrs and reach Lucknow Jn at 06:50 hrs.

AGRA FORT-LKO JN SPL: The 02180 Agra Fort-Lucknow Jn special from December 1 will leave Agra Fort at 06:31 hrs, Yamuna Bridge Agra at 06:44 hrs, Tundla at 07:22 hrs, Firozabad at 07:39 hrs, Etawah at 08:26 hrs, Bharthana at 08:42 hrs, Phaphund at 09:15 hrs, Jhijnhak at 09:30 hrs, Rura at 09:45 hrs, Panki Dham at 10:06 hrs, Kanpur Central at 10:50 hrs, Unnao at 11:20 hrs and will arrive at Lucknow Jn at 12:25 hrs. The 02179 Lucknow Jn- Agra Fort special train from Dec 1 leave Lucknow Jn at 15:55 hrs, Unnao at 16:46 hrs, Kanpur Central at 17:25 hrs, Pankidham at 17:44 hrs, Rura at 18:05 hrs, Jhijnhak at 18:19 hrs, Phaphund at 18:34 hrs, Bharthana at 19:00 hrs, Etawah at 19:20 hrs, Shikohabad at 19:57 hrs, Firozabad at 20:17 hrs, Tundla

at 20:50 hrs and Yamuna Bridge Agra at 21:12 hrs and reach Agra Fort at 11:49 hrs.

BHIWANI-KANPUR CENTRAL SPL: The 04724 Bhiwani-Kanpur Central special from December 1 will leave Bhiwani at 19:40 hrs and after stopping at Kharak, Kalanaur Kalan, Lahli, Rohtak, Sampla, Bahadurgarh, Shakurbasti, Delhi Kishanganj, Delhi, Delhi Shahadra, Ghaziabad, Aligarh, Tundla, Ferozabad, Shikohabad, Mainpuri, Bhongona, Farrukhabad, Fatehgarh, Kamlaganj, Gursahaiganj, Kannauj, Bilhaur, Barrajpur, and Kanpur Anwaraganj reach Kanpur Central at 11:35 hrs. The 04723 Kanpur Central-Bhiwani special will from December 1 leave Kanpur Central at 17:15 hrs and after stopping at Kanpur Anwaraganj, Kalyanpur, Barrajpur, Bilhaur, Kannauj, Gursahaiganj, Kamalganj, Fatehgarh, Farrukhabad, Bhongona, Mainpuri, Shikohabad, Firozabad, on second day Tundla, Aligarh, Ghaziabad, Delhi Shahadra, Delhi, Delhi Kishanganj Shakurbasti, Bahadurgarh, Sampla, Rohtak, Lahli, Kalnau Kalan, Khark and reach Bhiwani at 09:25 hrs.

LTT- JAYNAGAR SPL: The 01061 Lokmanya Tilak Terminus (LTT)- Jaynagar special will leave LTT at 11:30 hrs and after stopping at Thane, Kalyan, Nashik Road at 15:00 pm, Manmad, Chalisgaon, Pachora, Jalgaon, Buharanpur, Khandwa, Itarsi, Pipariya, Narsinghpur, Jabalpur, Katni, Maihar, Satna, Manikpur, Naini, Prayagraj, Prayagraj Rambagh, Gyanpur Road, Bhulanpur, Varanasi, Varanasi City, Saranath, Aunrihar, Ghazipur City, Yusufpur, Ballia Suraimanpur, Chhapra, Dighwara, Sonpur, Hajipur, Bhagwanpur, Muzaffarpur, Dholi, Samastipur, the third day to Lahariya Sarai, Darbhanga, Sakri, and Madhubani and reach Jaynagar at 02:45 hrs. Likewise the 01061 Jaynagar-Lokmanya Tilak Terminus special will leave from Jaynagar at 13:00 hrs and after stopping at Madhubani, Sakri, Darbhanga, Lahariya Sarai Samastipur, Dholi, Muzaffarpur, Bhagwanpur, Hajipur, Sonapur, Dighwara,

Chhapra, Suraimanpur, Ballia, Yusufpur, Ghazipur City, Aunrihar, Saranath, Varanasi City, on second day Varanasi, Bhulanpur, Gyanpur Road, Prayagraj Rambagh, Prayagraj, Naini, Manikpur, Satna, Maihar, Katni, Jabalpur, Narsinghpur, Pipariya, Itarsi, Khandwa, Buharanpur, Bhusaval, Jalgaon Manmad, Nashik Road, Kalyan and Thane and will reach Lokmanya Tilak Terminus at 00:25 hrs on the third day.

ANAND VIHAR TERMINUS-GHAZIPUR CITY SUHAILDEV SPL: The 02220 Anand Vihar Terminus-Ghazipur City Suhaildev special will from December 1 every Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday leave Anand Vihar Terminus at 18:50 hrs, Ghaziabad at 19:25 hrs, Moradabad at 21:47 hrs, Bareilly at 23:08 hrs, on the second day Lucknow at 03:15 hrs, Musafirkhana at 04:45 hrs, Sultanpur at 05:13 hrs, Zafarabad at 06:55 hrs, Jaunpur at 07:45 hrs, Aunrihar at 08:38 hrs and reach Ghazipur City at 09:30 hrs. On the other hand, 02219 Ghazipur City-Anand Vihar Terminus Suhaildev special train will from December 2 every Wednesday, Friday, Sunday and Monday depart from Ghazipur City at 17:20 hrs, from Aunrihar at 17:57 hrs, from Jaunpur at 19:20 hrs, from Zafarabad at 20:05 hrs, from Sultanpur at 21:20 hrs from Musafirkhana at 21:50 hrs, from Lucknow at 23:58 hrs, the second day from Bareilly at 03:25 hrs, from Moradabad at 05:02 hrs, from Ghaziabad at 07:20 hrs and arrive at Anand Vihar Terminus at 07:55 hrs. The rake composition of this train will remain the same as notified earlier

CHANGE OF TERMINAL: The railway administration has decided to change the terminal of the 04056/04055 Delhi-Ballia-Delhi special train. As a result from December 9 the 04056 Delhi-Ballia special train to run from Delhi will be run from Anand Vihar Terminus to Ballia in place of Delhi. Similarly, from December 10 the 04055 Ballia-Delhi special train to depart from Ballia will in place of Delhi go to Anand Vihar Terminus station, CPRO PK Singh said.

Row over minister shifting to AIIMS for Covid treatment

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The row over Union Minister of State for Rural Development Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti being shifted to AIIMS, Delhi has created a furore. While the ruling party members were targeting the GSVM Medical College doctors, the medical college's Vice Principal Dr Richa Giri denied all charges and clarified that the minister on her own got herself admitted to AIIMS and before

leaving the hospital here she gave in writing that she was moving to Delhi for better treatment of COVID-19 at AIIMS.

Dr Giri said the LLR Hospital was a Level-3 Covid hospital and had all facilities for treatment of COVID-19 but still the Union minister preferred to get admitted at the AIIMS.

Chief Medical Officer Dr AK Mishra said the minister insisted on going to New Delhi

by her personal vehicle but every care was taken to ensure her safety and security and a well equipped ambulance along with an escort was sent from Kanpur so that the minister did not face any problem.

He said as per the junior residents and senior doctors, the minister was highly concerned about the disease and appeared apprehensive although the doctors said that LLR Hospital was well equipped with diagnostics,

pathology and specialists to manage her health problem.

He said the ambulance which accompanied the minister was well equipped with advance life support system.

It may be mentioned here that there were rumours in the political circles that lack of proper health services at LLR Hospital forced the minister to rush to AIIMS.

The district magistrate is inquiring into the whole incident.

Raiyat honoured with Kho Kho Pitamah award

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Former international player Surendra Singh Raiyat was felicitated with the Kho Kho Pitamah award for his astounding contribution to the game in Kanpur Nagar and many adjoining districts at a function organised by the District Kho-Kho Association at the KK Girls' Inter College in Kidwai Nagar on Monday.

Co-secretary of the association, Bhupendra Singh Sachan, said that after a long gap a workshop on kho kho and referee examinations were organised in the city.

Over 80 candidates took the examination.

He said the objective of this examination was to prepare a better referee panel for the promotion of the game to facilitate proper training and guidance to the budding players taking part in ensuing competitions.

He said most of the city players took part in written and viva-voce examinations to prove their mettle.

Results of the examination would be announced soon



Former International Player Dr Surendra Singh Raiyat being felicitated with the 'Kho-Kho Pitamah' award on Monday. Pioneer.

and the successful candidates, on the basis of their expertise in the game, would locate the best budding players for future

tournaments.

Kho Kho Association secretary KN Tewari, Shailendra Garg, Sarvendu Sachan,

Mahant Singh, Bakhtawar Singh, KD Singh, Pradip Mishra and IM Pandey were present.

321 candidates in fray J&K DDC polls

Srinagar/Jammu: As many as 321 candidates are in the fray for the second phase of the District Development Council (DDC) polls in Jammu and Kashmir for which the voting will take place on Tuesday at over 2,100 polling booths, State Election Commissioner (SEC) K K Sharma said here on Monday.

In the second phase of the polls also, 43 constituencies are going to polls in the union territory – 25 in Kashmir and 18 in Jammu, the SEC said.

Sharma said 321 candidates are in the fray for the 43 DDC seats. Out of those, 196 are in the Kashmir valley and 125 in the Jammu region, he said.

The SEC said simultaneously with the DDC polls, the sarpanch elections will be conducted in 83 constituencies and total 223 candi-

dates are contesting in the phase two.

Similarly, he said, panches bypolls going to be held in 331 constituencies and a total of 709 candidates are in the fray.

He also said 58 sarpanchs (29 men and 29 women) and 804 panchs (548 men and 256 women) have been elected unopposed.

There are about 7.90 lakh voters eligible for voting for the second phase at 2,142 polling booths – 1,305 in Kashmir and 837 in Jammu, the SEC said.

“Almost all booths in Kashmir are sensitive from the security point of view. Additional security has been provided in the polling stations in the valley,” he added.

He said all security arrangements have been put in place and the areas have been secured, while the polling parties and election material has

already reached the polling booths.

“We are looking forward to good polling numbers,” he said, and appealed voters to come to the booths wearing face masks.

Asked about the complaints that candidates were not being provided security or confined to secure accommodations, Sharma said while personal life of candidates was important, for an election to be successful, the candidates have to go out to the constituency and campaign.

“I reviewed this again today. Have we received any complaints? Not many. I have received one or two complaints and I have referred those to IGP Kashmir. However, the big leaders of political parties have not made any complaints about a specific candidate or a group of candidates that they have not been permitted to campaign,” he said.

However, he said, candidates are told to inform police before going somewhere so that the visit is secured.

“Otherwise, wherever law and order is not suitable, candidates could come under risk. But, human safety, personal life of candidates are important and at the same time, there is of custom in democracy where the candidate goes to the constituency, campaigns there, then only can the election be called successful. For that, the police is providing escort, but they have to stick to a time-table,” he said.

“If any candidate wants extension in the hours, let them come to us with it and we will enable the candidates,” he added.

On a question about those candidates who have won the polls unopposed being confined to clus-

ter accommodations, Sharma said the goal of the government was not to keep anyone away from their homes.

“If there is a security problem in their areas for some days, it will be taken care off immediately and they will be able to go to their areas sooner,” he said.

When asked about the alleged detention of PDP president Mehbooba Mufti on Friday, the SEC said the visit was not campaign-related.

When it was reported, I sought a report from IGP Kashmir. I discussed it and verified it. Mufti is an ex-chief minister of J-K. Whenever she moves out, she needs protection. For all the ex-chief ministers, there is a SSG secures them and which has been a standard protocol which they have to follow. **PTI**

J&K people should get rid of Abdullah-Mufti gang: Tarun Chugh

Jammu: Hitting campaign trail in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district, BJP general secretary Tarun Chugh on Monday urged the people to get rid of 'Abdullah-Mufti duo' who have been "looting J&K for the last 70 years" and deprived the region of development and progress.

Addressing a meeting in Bhalla village ahead of the second phase of District Development Council (DDC) polls, he alleged that former CMs Farooq Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti have been aware of the corruption of each other.

“But no leader from these parties ever went to jail because there has been an understanding between the two to take turns for fillings their

coffers,” Chugh said.

He said these leaders deliberately brought laws to favour some people, while other sections of the society like women and Gujjars were deprived of any benefits.

Calling the people to vote for the BJP in the coming elections, he said it is time power should be taken away from the Abdullah-Mufti gang and given to the common man.

“The people should get rid of Abdullah-Mufti duo who have been looting Jammu and Kashmir for the last 70 years and deprived the people of 'development and progress,' Chugh asserted.

The second phase of the DDC polls will be held on Tuesday. **PTI**

Baba Amte’s granddaughter Sheetal kills herself by injecting poison

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a shocking development, noted social worker and public health expert Dr Sheetal Amte-Karajgi, granddaughter of Magsasay Award winner Murlidhar D Amte alias Baba Amte, committed suicide on Monday morning, by allegedly injecting herself with some poisonous liquid, in Warora taluka town in Chandrapur district of eastern Maharashtra.

Dr. Sheetal was the CEO of Maharogi Sewa Samiti and also a member of the board of the directors of the organisation

that focuses on helping people disadvantaged by leprosy. She used to run “Anandwan”, a place housing Maharogi Sewa Samiti (Leprosy Service Society) that her grandfather had founded at Warora in Chandrapur district which had converted into a smart village.

Dre Sheetal was declared dead at Warora sub-district hospital, where she had been rushed to earlier in the morning after it was prima facie learnt that she had administered herself with a poisonous injection. She was 40 and is survived by her husband Gautam, six

years old son Sharvil Karajgi and her parents Dr Vikas Amte and Bharati Amte. Her famous uncle Prakash Amte and Mandakini Amte, both Magsaysay laureates, are doctors at Anandwan.

Given that the motive behind Dr Sheetal's suicide is not known, the Chandrapur district police have launched investigations into her death. The investigators are trying to ascertain if she had left a suicide note. Significantly enough, Dr Sheetal had posted a photograph of an acrylic painting named “War and Peace” done

by her on a 30 inches x 30 inches canvas on her twitter handle on Sunday. The painting carried her name and date “Dr. Sheetal Amte-Karajgi 29.11.2020”. The investigators are examining the abstract painting to see if it gives any clue for the cause of her decision to end her life. They are looking into the reported dispute within her family.

There were reports in the local media in recent months about the internal feud within the Amte family. Dr Sheetal was the epi-centre of the family feud. Unconfirmed reports said that Dr Sheetal had been under

considerable mental strain during the recent months.

In a joint statement issued on November 22, 2020, Dr Sheetal's parents Dr Vikas Amte, Dr Bharati Amte, her uncle Dr Prakash Baba Ambe and aunt Dr Mandakini Prakash Amte had clarified that there had been no dispute within their family. “For three generations, we have been living together harmoniously. Dr Sheetal Gautam Karajgi has made great contribution to our organisation. But, now she has admitted in social media that she is under mental tension

and disappointment. Whatever allegations that made against ther trustees of Maharogi Sewa Samiti and their style of fuinctioning are baseless..We are issuing clarification jointly to remove misunderstanding, if any, in the minds of the people,” the four Amte family members stated in their joint statement. After completing her medicine from the Government Medical College in Nagpur in 2003, Dr Sheetal started working at Anandwan to contribute to her famous grandfather's vision. Her brother Kaustubh is an accountant for Anandwan.

Pak fighter jet spotted close to LoC in Poonch sector

Jammu: Amid escalating tensions, a Pakistani fighter jet flew very close to the Line of Control (LOC) in Poonch district early Monday morning prompting Indian troops to maintain extra degree of alertness to foil any nefarious designs of the Pakistan Army.

“The jet flew close to the LoC in Poonch sector in violation of international conventions which does not allow fighter jets to fly within a 10 km radius of the border,” a defence spokesperson said.

The spokesperson said that a jet stream was clearly visible in the sky close to the LoC in Poonch.

After a gap of a few hours, Pakistan army initiated an 'unprovoked' ceasefire violation in the Shahpur sector of Poonch. Defence spokesman in Jammu said, “Pak army initiated unprovoked ceasefire ceasefire violation by resorting to use of small arms and intense mortar shelling in the forward areas”. He said the Indian army retaliated strongly. **PNS**

TMC reacts sharply after BJP says Guv may call Didi for floor test

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress has strongly reacted to a comment from BJP MP Soumitra Khan who claimed that Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar was closely watching the steady alienation of MLAs from the ruling outfit and could soon call Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for a floor test in the Assembly.

Senior Trinamool leader and MP Saugato Roy said the BJP leaders were behaving like naive politicians who have no idea of the Constitution.

“Some BJP leaders have no idea of how the Constitution works ... The TMC has a support of 218 MLAs in a House of 294... so how can the Governor be expected to make

such an unconstitutional move by calling for a floor test...” Roy said wondering “in the first place even if the Governor would like to do so how Soumitra Khan got the information of his likelihood of doing so? The people are watching all this and they will take the decision when time comes... Let them do it and face the consequence.”

Senior Minister Partho Chatterjee said that the TMC had an overwhelming majority and even if the Governor wanted a floor test there was no constitutional way that he could do it... “his hands are tied by the diktats of constitution.”

Another TMC leader and Minister JP Mullick said that by making comments on behalf of

the Governor and on such a big constitutional issue “naive MPs like Soumitra Khan” were only exposing the Governor's office. “It is for the Governor to take an action on him and not the Trinamool Congress Government,” he said wondering why the Governor who was known for making comments on every issue had not come out with a statement on Khan's comment.

Taking a jibe at the TMC whose “organizational adhesive is giving way,” Khan said soon half of the TMC MLAs would leave that party and join the BJP. “At least 8 ministers are ready to quit the TMC immediately,” Khan, who is also the state president of Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM), said.

“The way the MLAs have been dissenting and leaving Trinamool, the governor may all of a sudden ask the CM to prove majority... There is a possibility,” Khan said.

Adhikari a formidable leader for his mass connect unlike most of his party colleagues has still not left the TMC but is almost on his way out sources close to him say. In fact Adhikari on Monday took out a huge apolitical procession with flags bearing Sanskrit language “OM” symbols.

Adhikari apart there are other MLAs like Mihir Goswami who on Saturday joined the BJP. MLAs from Coochbehar, Diamond Harbour and North 24

Parganaas too have unfurled their rebel flags and are reportedly in touch with the BJP leadership.

Supporting Khan, Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh said “December will see many things happening in the TMC... the party will become half-extinct and it will vanish in thin air after the elections.”

Saying that Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee lacked the courage to expel Adhikari he said “if she does so the party will vanish here and now... so she is buying time.

Meanwhile in a separate development Ghosh on Monday slapped a libel notice on Chief Minister's nephew Abhishek Banerjee for calling him a goonda.

Mamata Govt to kickstart door-to-door drive today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

In a bid to reach out to the people of the State ahead of the 2021 Assembly elections the Trinamool Congress Government will launch a “Duarey Duarey” (door-to-door) campaign from December 1 to January 30, during when the Government schemes like the “Swasthya Saathi” or health insurance-for-all scheme would be taken to all the families.

Chief Secretary Alapan Bandopadhyay on Monday said that consequent to a decision taken by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee digital cards

for health insurance would be reached to all the citizens of the State through 20,000 camps which would run from December 1 to January 30.

Consequent to this scheme the entire population of the State will get Rs 5 lakh worth health insurance facility in private hospitals.

The Chief Minister had announced the scheme a few days ago saying Centre's “Ayushman Bharat” scheme was being run in a 60:40 ratio with the states implementing it, while “Swasthya Sathi” was totally funded by the Bengal government.

“Earlier, we had decided to enroll at least 7.5 crore people

under ‘Swasthya Sathi’. I am announcing today that every family in West Bengal, every person, be it a child or an old man or woman, irrespective of their religious affinity will be covered under this scheme,” Banerjee said.

“The Centre gives only 60% for Ayushman Bharat. Who will pay the rest 40 per cent? If the common people need to pay Rs 2.5 lakh for a Rs 5 lakh scheme, then why will people opt for that. Our Swasthya Sathi scheme is 100 per cent funded by the state government,” she said adding she would welcome the central scheme if they provided the entire 100 percent cost.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

NEED TO ELIMINATE...

Naidu said, “We remain concerned about threats emerging from ungoverned spaces and are particularly concerned about states that leverage terrorism as an instrument of state policy. Such an approach is entirely against the spirit and ideals and the Charter of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.”

Stressing that peace was an essential prerequisite for progress, Naidu said, “Terrorism is truly the enemy of humanity. It is a scourge we need to collectively combat.”

Observing that the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic has slowed down the economic trajectory of all Member states, Naidu said India has fought it bravely and has shown remarkable resilience in fighting the virus as well as in ensuring economic stability. He said a people-empowered and people-driven approach has enabled India to keep its Covid-19 death rate at one of the lowest levels in the world.

Stating that more than 60 per cent of the vaccines for global immunisation programmes are being manufactured in India, he said “Thanks to its world-class pharmaceutical industry, India has demonstrated itself as a ‘pharmacy to the world’ during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.” The Vice President informed the dignitaries that when the whole country was under lockdown, India supplied medicines and equipment to more than 150 countries, including to the Member states of the SCO.

Prime Ministers of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan participated in the meet. However, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan did not participate in the meet. Pakistan was represented by its parliamentary secretary for foreign affairs.

PM: OPP MISLEADING...

Defending his Government on MSP issue, Modi said prior to 2014, the previous Government had purchased pulses only worth Rs 650 crore during the five years while his Government had purchased pulses worth Rs 49,000 crore which is 75 times more.

“Similarly, they (previous

Governments) had purchased paddy worth Rs 2 lakh crore while our Government has purchased paddy worth Rs 5 lakh crore which is 2.5 times more. While they purchased wheat worth Rs 1.5 lakh crore, it doubled in our tenure to Rs 3 lakh crore,” he said questioning the farmers that if they wanted to abolish the MSP system why they had supported the farmers in such a big way.

In his marathon address, Modi was seen defending the policies of his Government. Highlighting the various schemes launched by the Government in the recent time, he said when his Government had launched the scheme of providing Rs 2,000 per month to about 10 crore farmers of the country, many had tried to mislead the farmers terming the same as just an election gimmick but the scheme continued till date and three installment of the benefits had already paid directly to the bank accounts of the farmers.

“Many State Governments had refused to implement the same for their petty political gains,” he said hinting at the Punjab Government and added that whenever his party would come to power there, the Government would provide the benefits of the schemes to the farmers of that State also. The PM praised the remarkable achievements being made by the State Government under the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, terming the UP as ‘Express State’ as work on five mega projects covering all the regions are going on in full swing.

“In 2014, there were only two effective operating airports in the State but today the number has increased to almost a dozen including international airports at Kushinagar and Jewar (Noida),” he said, highlighting how through various infrastructure schemes, huge number of employment jobs are being created in the state even during coronavirus pandemic period.

Highlighting various schemes of his Government launched in the field of rural development, he said today the farmers of the regions are getting facilities of better storage in perishable cargos and due to this now, they have not only exported their mangoes to London and Middle

East but also the paddy growers of Chandauli are getting handsome income of their black rice variety.

“Just two years ago in an experiment 400 farmers of Chandauli had asked to produce kala namak variety of rice and now the general rice which is being sold at Rs 35-40 per kg, this rice was exported recently at the rate of Rs 850 per kg,” he said, adding that encouraged by this many more farmers are going to start harvesting of this variety of rice now.

Earlier, Yogi welcomed the PM while Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya, Bhadohi MP Ramesh Chand Bind and Sewapuri MLA Neel Ratan Patel, among others were also present.

PM CALLS...

The meeting also assumes significance as it is being held after Modi's visit to pharmaceutical companies in Ahmedabad, Hyderabad and Pune to review coronavirus vaccine development work there.

On Monday, Modi again interacted with three teams involved in the development of the corona vaccine through video conferencing.

The political meet, according to sources, would pave way for a comprehensive containment plan with a time-frame and also detail vaccine distribution down to the last man in a systematic way. It is calculated that after the first dose a second dose would also need to be introduced.

The Centre has asked States to submit their detailed plan for the vaccine distribution, including the cold-storage facilities.

GOVT PLANS...

“From 1 lab in January 2020, we now have 2,165 labs. More than a million people are being tested on a daily basis. We have completed 14 crore cumulative tests today. This all shows the determination of the Government and relentless efforts of our corona warriors whose contribution is significant in fighting the pandemic,” he said.

Later, Harsh Vardhan and chairman of the Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) distributed masks and soaps at the Old Delhi Railway Station on Monday, stating it was the biggest weapon to fight Covid-19.

Meanwhile, sources said that Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan in a letter to States and UTs has said the MBBS and BDS doctors as well as interns, staff nurses, auxiliary nurse midwives and pharmacists would be considered as potential vaccinators, for carrying out the drive, provided that they are actively involved in day-to-day provision of clinical care and have experience in administering injections.

IT'S DECISIVE...

The Delhi Traffic Police tweeted, “Singhu Border is still closed from both sides. Please take alternate route. Traffic has been diverted from Mukarba Chowk & GTK road. Traffic is very very heavy. Please avoid outer ring road from signature bridge to Rohini & vice versa, GTK road, NH 44 & Singhu borders.”

In another tweet, it said Tikri border is also closed for traffic movement whiel Jharoda, Dhansa, Daurala Jhatikara, Badusari, Kapashera, Rajokri NH 8, Bijwasan-Bajghera, Palam vihar and Dundaheira borders were open and available to Haryana. Also, the Delhi Police has upped security at border as farmers threaten to block entry points. “Delhi Police has strengthened its presence at various border points in the wake of the farmers protest. All internal and outside forces have been mobilised to the maximum,” a senior police officer said.

NRIs RAISE...

UK MP Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi tweeted, “It takes a special kind of people to feed those ordered to beat and suppress them. I stand with farmers of Punjab and other parts of India, including our family and friends, who are peacefully protesting against the encroaching privatisation of #FarmersBill 2020.”

According to farmers' unions, they have formed committees at the village, block, district and State levels to manage separate account books and arrange funds. Apart from it, they have also formed committees to regularly conduct audit of financial transactions at all levels. Since the protest began, BKU Ugrahan has spent around Rs 8-10 crore so far.

Chhattisgarh Govt announces steps to eradicate unemployment from State

Raipur: The State Government under the leadership of Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel took a historical decision today, to employ the unemployed youth of the State.

Concerning this, the E-category registration system in the Public Works Department of the State Government is to be initiated in all the construction departments, bodies and boards of the State Government.

Baghel affirmed that the integrated “E” category registration system has been implemented in the state by the Public Works Department. A provision has been made to employ the local unemployed youth via the “E” category registration system in a single work through a limited tender at block



level costing up to Rs 20 lakhs.

The appointment of Diploma Engineers in the projects undertaken worth Rs 20 lakh and graduate engineers to be appointed in projects costing up to one crore in

construction contracts have been made mandatory by the Public Works Department. A provision has been made to pay 15 thousand rupees per month to the diploma engineers and 25 thousand per month to the graduate engineer.

A large number of unemployed engineers will be able to avail employment with the mandatory appointment of engineers via the tender contracts.

The Chief Minister has further directed the Chief Secretary of the state that instructions should be issued to follow the above two decisions of the Public Works Department in all construction departments, bodies, boards, boards etc. so that more and more youth of the state could avail its benefits.

I am facing life threats from my own daughter: Abdul Rashid Shora

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Even after quitting 'active' politics a year ago former student leader and JNU activist Shehla Rashid on Monday found herself in a spot after her father, Abdul Rashid Shora surfaced in Jammu claiming he was facing death threats from his daughter and a security guard attached with her. Abdul Rashid Shora also accused her of indulging in anti-national activities in the company of few notorious people. Referring to a series of meetings which took place between him and a Kashmiri businessman Zahoor Wattali, former MLA Engineer Abdul Rasheed in 2017, Abdul Rashid alleged his daughter was offered a sum of Rs Three crores by the same people to join hands with them in the active politics. Zahoor Wattali was arrested by the National Investigation Agency in the terror funding case in August 2017.

Feeling insecure due to recent

life threats, Abdul Rashid Shora claimed he has sought security protection from the Director General of Jammu and Kashmir police to ensure his safety. In a written complaint addressed to the Director General of Jammu and Kashmir, Abdul Rashid Shora also claimed that Shehla is being supported by his elder daughter Asma Rashid, his wife Zubeida Shora and one of the security guards, Sakib Ahmad. Abdul Rashid Shora also went on to claim in his complaint, “As a concerned father when I strongly objected to my daughters decision for joining these notorious people as i felt the money coming will be used for unlawful activities they threatened to kill me”.

“I have a strong belief that there are anti-national activities going on in my house, the characters involved in this plan are my daughters, my wife and Shehla's security guard namely Sakib Ahmad”, he added.

8-year-old girl raped, strangled in Rajasthan

PTI ■ JAIPUR

An eight-year-old girl was thrown into a dry well after being allegedly raped and strangled to death by unidentified men in Pratapgarh district of Rajasthan, police said on Monday.

Her body was recovered on Saturday night, SHO of Choti Sadri police station Ravindra Pratap Singh said.

The accused abducted the minor from her house on Friday night while she was sleeping with her mother. She was allegedly raped and strangled to death, the SHO said.

They later threw the girl's body into a dry well, which is 300 meters away from her home, he added.

Singh said a probe into the matter is underway and nearly half a dozen people have been rounded up for interrogation.

Anti-Covid SOPs for markets issued



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With markets buzzing with activity and people throwing caution to wind, the Centre on Monday issued fresh SOPs on preventive measures in market places aiming to check the spread of coronavirus in the country.

The Union Health Ministry issued fresh do's and don'ts stating that the markets in containment zones will remain shut until further orders. Civic enforcement agencies will have the discretion to open the market on alternate days in case of surge in infections or if people do not follow anti-Covid norms.

"Market places in containment zones shall remain closed. Only those outside containment zones will be allowed to operate," the notification from the Centre stated.

According to the new

guidelines from the Centre, markets outside containment zones will be allowed to function. However, the Centre has urged that persons in vulnerable categories (persons above 65 years of age, persons with comorbidities, pregnant women, and children below the age of 10 years) stay at home and only step out for essential purposes.

The new guidelines comes in the wake of the increasing coronavirus cases touching to 94,31,691 with 38,772 new infections

The Ministry also advised shop employees under high-risk categories to take extra precautions and stay away from any work involving direct contact with the public.

The Health Ministry said it will be contacting Market Owners Associations for the implementation of the advisory. The ministry also called for

Drop in daily cases: 38,772 fresh +ves in last 24 hours

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India recorded a drop in its daily coronavirus (Covid-19) tally on Monday after 38,772 fresh cases registered in the last 24 hours taking the total caseload to 9,431,691 which include 446,952 active cases and nearly 89 lakh recoveries.

A total of 45,333 new Covid-19 recoveries were registered across the country, leading to a net reduction of 6,561 cases from the active caseload, the Union Health Ministry said on Monday. The total recoveries have surged to 88,47,600.

"The gap between Covid-19 recoveries and active cases, that is steadily increasing, presently stands at 84,00,648 i.e 19.8 times the active cases," the Ministry said.

The contraction of India's active Covid-19 caseload to 4,46,952 comprises just 4.74 per cent of the total coronavirus infections reported so far in the country.

"The difference in new recoveries outnumbering new cases of Covid-19 has also improved the national recovery rate to 93.81 per cent as on date," the Ministry said, adding that India's coronavirus case fatality rate has further dipped to 1.45 per cent.

India is one of the countries with the lowest deaths per million population globally (99.4 at present), the ministry said. Karnataka, Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh have reported the highest decline in active cases in the past one month, while Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana and

Rajasthan are reporting a rise in the active caseload, it added.

India has achieved a landmark milestone in its fight against COVID-19, with total tests having crossed the 14-crore mark with 8,76,173 tests being conducted in a day, the Ministry said.

India has ramped up its per day testing capacity to 15 lakh, it said. The ministry said that 76.94 per cent of the new recoveries were from Delhi, Kerala, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Karnataka.

With 6,325 persons recovering from coronavirus infection, Delhi saw the highest number of recoveries. Kerala registered 5,861 daily recoveries while Maharashtra reported 4,362 new recoveries, it said.

Ensure proper fire safety in hospitals and nursing homes, States told

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In the wake of recent fire incidents in hospitals, Union Home Ministry on Monday asked all States to ensure proper fire safety in hospitals and nursing homes, saying utmost precautions must be taken at a time when the country is fighting the coronavirus pandemic.

Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla wrote a letter to Chief Secretaries of all states and Union territories to strictly implement the fire safety norms. Last week, fire incidents in two hospitals in Gujarat killed 14 people.

The Home Secretary said the occurrence of various fire incidents in hospitals and nursing homes in recent past and non-adherence of fire safety measures by authorities in their respective jurisdiction is a matter of concern. Bhalla said recently six precious lives of COVID-19 patients were lost in a fire incident at an ICU ward of a hospital in Rajkot and eight people died in a hospital in Ahmedabad.

"At such a crucial time, when the country is fighting against COVID-19 pandemic, utmost precaution needs to be taken to avoid such incidents in future," he said in the letter,



seeking implementation of fire safety norms in the States.

"I would urge you to ensure compliance of above advisory and direct all concerned to immediately re-inspect, re-check all hospitals and nursing homes from the point of view of fire protection and means of escape to prevent recurrence of such fire incidences in future," he added.

The Home Secretary said the Directorate General (fire services, civil defence and home guards) in the Ministry of Home Affairs has been issuing necessary advisories at regular intervals to the states and UTs so that suitable directions may be issued to ensure compliance of fire safety guidelines and various codes and standards, and to ensure that proper fire safety measures are in place in all

Bhalla said in addition, guidelines have been issued by the National Disaster Management Authority for hospital safety

the buildings, including hospitals and nursing homes.

Bhalla said in addition, guidelines have also been issued by the National Disaster Management Authority for hospital safety, laying down the provisions to establish the minimum requirements for a reasonable degree of safety from fire emergencies in hospitals.

BJP attacks Kejriwal for supporting farmers' stir

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Monday targeted Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for supporting the protest of farmers on the outskirts of Delhi and linked it with 'Khalistani and Maoist' elements.

BJP leader Amit Malviya, who has recently been appointed co-in-charge of West Bengal, said that the Delhi government has implemented the new agricultural laws in the capital, "but now that there is a protest against this law, the Arvind Kejriwal government is looking for an opportunity to burn down Delhi".

Malviya, the head of the information technology department of the BJP, said that the Kejriwal government approved the new agricultural laws on 23 November itself and is also implementing this law but is now back-



ing the protest on Delhi's borders.

Malviya has used words like 'Khalistani' and 'Maoist' in his tweets while referring to the protestors.

"Arvind Kejriwal led Delhi government has already notified the new Farm Laws on 23Nov20 and had started implementing them. But now that the Khalistanis and

Maoists have stepped in to oppose, he sees an opportunity to burn down Delhi. It was never about farmers. Just politics," tweeted the BJP leader.

Cong launches campaign to muster support for farmers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress on Monday launched a social media campaign to muster support for the farmers protesting against the Centre's new farm laws with party leader Rahul Gandhi saying, when farmers raise their voice, it resonates across the country. "The Modi Government has persecuted the farmer - first it brought black laws and then used lathis against them, but it forgot that when the farmer raises his voice, it resonates throughout the country. You also raise your voice against the exploitation of farmers and join the #SpeakUpForFarmers campaign," Rahul Gandhi said in a tweet in Hindi.

The former Congress chief said wherever these farmers are protesting, the people and Congress workers should stand in their support and provide them food

"The farmer of the country has come to Delhi in the cold, leaving his home and fields, to voice his protest against the black agriculture laws. In this battle of truth and untruth, with whom do you stand - the 'Annadata' (food-giving) farmer or the PM's capitalist friends," Rahul Gandhi said in another tweet.

The former Congress chief said wherever these farmers are protesting, the people and Congress workers should stand in their support and provide them food. "The question is why is the farmer out on the roads, travelling thousands of kilometers and is stalling traffic. PM Modi says the three farm laws are in favour of the farmer, but if these laws are in the farmer's favour, why is he not happy and why is he protesting," asked the Congress leader.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also joined the #SpeakUpForFarmers campaign and shared the same video highlighting the plight of the farmers.

Utpal K Singh new Secretary General of Lok Sabha



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has appointed Utpal Kumar Singh as the new Secretary General of Lok Sabha. Singh is currently working as Secretary in the Lok Sabha Secretariat and belongs to the 1986 IAS batch of Uttarakhand cadre.

Singh was Chief Secretary in Uttarakhand and also worked in many Central Government departments including Ministry of Agriculture, HRD and World Bank. He has been appointed as Secretary General on contract basis for a year from December 1. Singh, who hails from Jharkhand, retired from IAS in July this year. Secretary Generals of both Houses have the same rank of Cabinet Secretary.

Audio feed of RS TV disrupted due to damage caused to microphones

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Public Works Department (CPWD) has told the Rajya Sabha Secretariat that the audio feed of Rajya Sabha TV was disrupted briefly during the passage of the farm bills on September 20 due to damages caused to microphones at the chairman's seat by some MPs.

The CPWD, which also posted the letter on its Twitter, said that loss of audio in RSTV feed is purely due to technical reasons. The CPWD response came amid allegations by opposition parties that the audio feed of Rajya Sabha TV (RSTV), which exclusively broadcasts proceedings from the Upper House of

Parliament, was deliberately muted to black out their point of view.

The farm bills were passed by the Rajya Sabha on September 20 amid a bedlam when Deputy Chairman Harivansh was in the Chair. As many as eight opposition members were suspended from the House for allegedly throwing the rule book at the presiding officer, heckling him over their demand for a division of vote and destroying the microphones located at the Chair.

In its letter, the CPWD said, "It is informed that abrupt interruption in the audio feed of the Rajya Sabha proceedings between 13.05 hours and 13.35 hours on September 20 during

consideration of two farmer's bills by Rajya Sabha was due to damage to the chairman's microphones by the Hon'ble MPs." It said that as directed by the Chair, no other microphone was on at that very time except that of the chairman.

"So when these mics were broken, there was no audio output from the system to RSTV. It took nearly half an hour to restore this after following necessary protocols," the CPWD said in the letter written to the Rajya Sabha Secretariat in response to a RTI application. Underlining that there was no technical issue causing the interruption in the audio feed, the CPWD said assigning any other motive to this is "mischievous".

Covid-19 hampers fight against HIV

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Covid-19 pandemic has cast a shadow on the access and delivery of healthcare services in HIV across the region, whether in low or high-income countries, owing to travel restrictions and a change in high-risk behaviour as some of the main reasons for the disruption in treatment.

A first cross-country survey in Asia Pacific region has revealed that over 80 per cent of surveyed prescribers reported that there was a decrease in the frequency or delay of visits of people living with HIV (PLHIV) while about 46 per cent of at-risk population reported a decrease in frequency of taking HIV tests during the virus outbreak.

However, providing a ray of hope was the digital platforms like telehealth, becoming a mode of delivery for HIV care during the pandemic.

The survey, "Impact of Covid-19 on access and delivery of HIV care in Asia Pacific", was conducted online, from



October to mid-November 2020, in 10 countries/territories in Asia Pacific (Hong Kong, India, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam) by Gilead Sciences, a biotechnology company and the AIDS Society of India.

At least 1,265 respondents, comprising people living with HIV, at-risk population and HIV care prescribers, participated in the survey, including 96 from India. This region has more than 5.8 million PLHIV and in 2019, 300,000 were newly infected and about 160,000 deaths were AIDS-related, as per a report by UNAIDS 2020.

In India, over 82 per cent

of prescribers reported a decrease in the frequency or delay of visits of PLHIV mainly due to fear of getting infected with Covid-19 (62 per cent) and travel restrictions imposed during the pandemic (46 per cent), as HIV tests were mostly not accessible at point-of-care.

About 80 per cent of HIV care prescribers reported a decline in preventive prescriptions for at-risk population while more than 1 in 3 amongst the at-risk population reported that they had either decreased or stopped taking HIV preventive medicine, said the survey.

The study found out that almost 47 per cent of PLHIV

and 37 per cent of those at-risk reported that they are concerned about getting antiretroviral medicines and preventive medication during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

Digital platforms like telehealth became a mode of delivery for HIV care during the Covid-19 pandemic. Amongst HIV care prescribers, almost 97 per cent use telehealth to consult with patients via telephone (85 per cent) or video (50 per cent), or to provide refill prescriptions (67 per cent).

As the world observes AIDS Day on December 1, Dr I S Gilada, President, AIDS Society of India, said, "Despite proactive efforts by the Government to minimise the impact of disruption in medical services and delivery of ART, PLHIV and at-risk populations suffered a severe blow. Interruptions to access and delivery of care can negatively impact PLHIV and those at-risk of HIV, putting them at a higher risk of health complications."

Online Int'l exhibition held on wealth of Buddhist art and antiquities

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

First of its kind online International exhibition deploying state of the art technologies like 3D scanning and virtual space utilisation to showcase a wealth of Buddhist art and antiquities displayed in various museums across Asia was opened by Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu during the 19th Meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of Government (SCO CHG) held here on Monday.

The exhibition is developed and curated by New Delhi-based National Museum in collaboration with SCO member countries and can be accessed at <https://nmvirtual.in/> for worldwide viewing from the comfort of the home.

"The international exhibi-

tion gives a glimpse of the artistic wealth displayed in various museums across Asia, and represents the artistic excellence embedded within an eclectic historical timeline spanning across the development of different Schools of Buddhism, innovative curation and narration methodology etc," an official from the Union Culture Ministry said.

The participating institutions are National Museum (New Delhi), Indian Museum (Kolkata), National Museum of Kazakhstan, Dun Huang Academy (China), National Historical Museum of the Kyrgyz Republic, Museums of Pakistan, State Museum of Oriental Art, Moscow (Russia), National Museum and National Museum of Antiquities, Tajikistan and renowned archaeological sites

of Uzbekistan.

The visitors can explore the Indian Buddhist treasures from the Gandhara and Mathura Schools, Nalanda, Amaravati, Sarnath etc. in a 3D virtual format while the Pakistan hall depicts the life of Gautama Buddha and Buddhist art through a collection of impressive Gandhara art objects from Karachi, Lahore, Taxila, Islamabad, SWAT and Peshawar museums. These include fasting Siddhartha and footprint of Buddha from Sikri, meditating Buddha from Sahri Bahloil, miracle of Sravasti from Gandhara etc.

Over 100 objects from State Oriental Art Museum, Moscow, depict the Buddhist Buriyat Art of Russia through icons, ritual objects, monastery traditions etc.

Tamil Nadu, Puducherry may experience heavy rainfall: IMD

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Barely four days after the very severe cyclonic storm Nivar made a landfall over the coast of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, a new low pressure area has formed in southeast Bay of Bengal, almost the same region where the powerful cyclone 'Nivar' had taken birth last week.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the new low pressure will cross the Sri Lanka coast on December 2 and will bring moderate to heavy and extremely heavy rainfall over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala and coastal Andhra Pradesh over the next four days. The IMD has issued a red-colour coded warning for the

southern areas of Tamil Nadu, Kerala in view of the brewing storm and said that these areas are expected to receive heavy to very heavy rainfall.

This system is predicted to move west-north-westwards and reach extreme North Sri Lankan and South Tamil Nadu coasts, involving back-to-back landfalls (Sri Lanka and South Tamil Nadu) by Wednesday, which would decide the strength with which it may hit the South Tamil Nadu coast.

"Tamil Nadu is expected to receive heavy rainfall between December 1 and 4. South Kerala is expected to receive extremely heavy rainfall on December 3 and heavy to very heavy rainfall on December 1 and 4. Lakshadweep is expected to receive heavy rainfall on Dec 3

Winds with a speed of 45-55 kmph gusting to 65 kmph are likely over the Comorin area, Gulf of Mannar and Tamil Nadu-Kerala coasts

and 4," it said.

"It is very likely to intensify further into a deep depression during the next 24 hours. It is also likely to intensify further into a cyclonic storm. It is very likely to move west-northwestwards and cross the Sri Lanka coast around the evening of December 2," the IMD said.

The IMD said squally

weather with wind speed would gradually increase becoming 55-65 kilometres per hour gusting to 75 kmph over southeast and adjoining southwest Bay of Bengal from the night of December 1 and 70-80 kmph gusting to 90 kmph over southwest Bay of Bengal, along and off Sri Lanka coast. Winds with a speed of 45-55 kmph gusting to 65 kmph are likely over the Comorin area, Gulf of Mannar and Tamil Nadu-Kerala coasts from December 2 forenoon for subsequent 24 hours, it said.

Last week, "very severe cyclonic storm" Nivar had hit Tamil Nadu. While there were no reports of loss of life, about 2.5 lakh people were housed in cyclone shelters in the state as part of safety measures.

Navy intensifies rescue effort to trace naval pilot

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Navy has intensified its search and rescue effort to trace naval pilot Commander Nishant Singh. His MiG-29K fighter jet had crashed into the Arabian Sea on Thursday last week. However, the same day the rescue teams managed to rescue the other pilot who along with Singh managed to eject from the jet before it went down.

Giving the update on Monday, navy officials said here intensive aerial, coastal and surface search by the Indian Navy ships and aircraft was in progress to locate the pilot. Underwater search by divers and seabed mapping using specialised equipment in the vicinity of primary wreckage of MiG-29K was on.

The search teams had managed to locate the debris of the ill-fated jet over the weekend. It included landing gear, turbo charger, fuel tank engine and wing engine cowling.

In addition to nine warships and 14 aircraft engaged in the search efforts, the Navy's Fast Interceptor Craft is also deployed to search waters along the coast. Further, the Marine and Coastal police are on the lookout and nearby fishing villages have been sensitised.

The twin-seater MiG-29K fighter jet crashed during routine sortie.

These aircraft operate from the INS Vikramaditya aircraft carrier.

Cong's State pillars

The party's CMs have kept the farmers' issue boiling, enough for the Govt to take note. Can the leadership build on this?



If Prime Minister Narendra Modi has had to clarify in every public speech within days that the new farm laws are progressive and he is just as protectionist about farmers' interests, then the latter's agitation has worked. If Home Minister Amit Shah is trying to douse the fire and attempting reconciliatory talks after his own partymen are labelling the stir as a Khalistani and Maoist plot, then the *kisan* unions have had their way. And though the protesters have largely stayed away from politicians on principle, the fact that Punjab's Congress Chief Minister, Capt Amarinder Singh, has been consistently pushing their cause, no matter how self-serving that might be, has given the farmers' campaign a political heft that has blunted the edge of the Centre's unilateralism. In fact, it is the first time that Congress Chief Ministers like Singh and Chhattisgarh's Bhupesh Baghel have turned the tide of national discourse by crusading against the farm Acts and forcing a discussion on consensus politics, something that the central Congress leadership has fallen far short of. Singh's Government has not only brought its own amendment Bills against the farm Acts, Congress MLAs are on a relay dharna in Delhi demanding an audience with the President, who may not entertain a challenge to the Central laws. But at least Singh has given the Congress a talking point at a time when it's languishing by the wayside. Of course, the Punjab Government could have simply brought in its own law to pick up all State produce at Minimum Support Price (MSP), regardless of the Central laws that allow farmers access to wider markets but throw them at the risk of being cheated out of a fair price given the competition. There are fears that the older regulated system, while co-existing, would be weakened by a parallel market and Singh played on these by pushing an amendment to the Central law itself, knowing full well that it was a negative rather than assertive action but would be more politically loaded. The first amendment says that the sale of wheat and paddy (which are the State's cash crops) will be valid only if the seller pays a price equal to or greater than the MSP announced by the Central government and that any violation would be punishable. The second Bill reintroduces the market fees or licences for private players outside the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) *mandis*, which the Central law has abolished. This it says will be used to create a distress fund for small and marginal farmers; hence is populist. The third Bill attacks the central Act that gives unlimited power of stocking essential commodities to traders and reassigns that right to itself, arguing that production, supply and distribution of goods make for a State subject. Punjab is also planning to tweak the definition of a "trade area", where farmers, traders and electronic trading/transaction platforms are given freedom to deal in farmers' produce without any restrictions, to cover its limits. It is impossible for the Centre or food majors to agree to such clauses but Singh has scored over the might of the ruling BJP or any sane argument by crusading with zeal and symbolism. Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and Baghel, too, have pushed amendment Bills but with not as many punishing clauses. But the three have certainly built momentum on an issue that matters across heartland India and have sustained and mobilised a movement around it, strong enough to give the Congress its first cogent tool as an Opposition.

In fact, strategy or not, the three Congress Chief Ministers are not just holding on to their turfs but are articulating positions on national issues. Baghel and Gehlot have been warning against the brutal communalisation of personal freedoms implicit in the proposed "love jihad" laws by BJP-ruled States. Singh has refused the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) entry without his permission. Unless there is a strategy to deflect attention from the central leadership, the Congress chieftains are doing pretty well as the voice of the Opposition on their own. The problem is people still want to hear the central leadership and expect it to steer the discourse. But ever since the Hathras rape-murder case, when the Gandhi scions visited the victim's family amid high drama, they have been silent. In fact, that was a bit of a hit and run given their belligerence as we are yet to hear from them on a follow-up to the case. Contrast that to the Chief Ministers, who have stayed with their respective causes. Also Singh, Gehlot and Baghel have defended the leadership tooth and nail, speaking out against the Congress' dissenters, saying it was more important to coalesce against the BJP on graver issues than fight among themselves or lampoon the leadership. And that "electoral defeats were not the yardstick for leadership change." Question is will the Congress leadership reward this loyalty and bring its chieftains forward or use them for fire-fighting? The fact that Singh and Baghel are more popular than Rahul Gandhi in their home States shows that the Congress does have leaders of merit, who collectively have it in them to revive the party and keep it relevant. The Central leadership has no choice but to devolve power and build a semblance of representational democracy in its organisational structure. In fact, the Congress has historically had strong regional leaders. If only it were to nurture their strengths than making their continuity conditional on doing the bidding of its first family, the party's organisational matrix wouldn't have been lying in shreds across States. Nor would the grassroots workers go fortune-hunting to other parties, fearing their voice wouldn't ever matter. Will the Congress learn to identify its assets first?

Vaccine troubles

What does the case of the volunteer in Chennai tell us about medical trials?



While a 40-year old man, apparently a business consultant from Chennai, has claimed that he has suffered from adverse reactions to the trial vaccine administered by the Serum Institute of India (SII) during the Phase-III clinical trials, we do not know the full details of the case. This is the vaccine developed by Anglo-Swedish pharmaceutical firm AstraZeneca and University of Oxford where SII is a partner. For one, we still do not know whether the individual was given the new vaccine or a placebo, which is why his allegations raised by his lawyers are slightly suspect. The instant countersuit by SII makes one suspect whether this was just an extortion attempt but one thing is clear, the individual involved has little chance of success in court as volunteers to clinical trials for any medication should be fully aware that they can suffer extremely adverse reactions to trial medication and those reactions could also mean death.

The extremely rushed research and development for vaccines to counter the COVID-19 virus, which has devastated the global economy and driven millions across the world back into poverty, might yet be successful but rushing clinical trials will mean that certain adverse effects and even a death or two might occur. Those who volunteer for such trials should be made fully aware of the risks and they usually are. In case this is genuine, and it well might be, the individual and his family should be compensated for his tribulations. The system of clinical trials in India should ensure that those who take upon the civic responsibility to better mankind by subjecting their bodies to such insane risks should be given adequate coverage for the danger involved. Ever so often in India, many trials are highly risky and those who volunteer, often from poorer families, are dumped and left without compensation or recourse if things go wrong. There may be more than what meets the eye in this particular case. But that should not take away from the tremendous risks and troubles that many clinical trial volunteers put themselves through. This also highlights that companies involved in clinical trials, whether they are large, global pharmaceutical firms or small research firms in India, should be more open and transparent about what the volunteers suffer. SII would do well to tell us the entire story lest this becomes a case where the anti-vaccine movement can get a foot in the door in India.

opinion08

Why Modi still stands tall

The answer lies in his minutiae precision on last-mile micro-management of 269 key projects, down to the district level percolation



BINDU DALMIA

As we enter the last month of a calamitous year, my year-end musings have been pivoted around the key question—What led to a surge in Modi's popularity while the opposite happened to the elected leaders of US and UK? Why did his persona prevail despite the pandemic challenging resources and policies? I would say that he kept the response specific to our reality rather than promising the moon and went in for long-term transformative measures that would equip the nation against any such unforeseen crisis in the future.

Trusteeship paradigm of governing the largest democracy: At the recently concluded G20 summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for a new global index based on "respecting nature in the spirit of trusteeship of Mother Earth." His collaborative response in sync with multi-lateral institutions to prioritise ESG-centric concerns (based on the tri-pillar of environment, sustainability and governance) commits to a much-needed collective responsibility of all nations in managing the planet's resources.

By the same yardstick, the Prime Minister's post-pandemic management of his own country has paved the way for a new and distinct style of governing democracies on a similar "trusteeship paradigm." When benchmarked against global counterparts, Modi's crises-management places him in the league of the tallest global leaders for coming across as a trustee-head of the nation, who from the beginning, remained visible, accountable, admonishing, nudging and persuasive. At the same time, he was empathetically "shepherding his people, instead of resorting to punitive measures that would have regressed economic recovery."

Democracies, noticeably for the last five years, have mutated their strains, deviating from the original concept of fair, inclusive and participative governance to morphing into illiberal and totalitarian regimes. Viewed in this context, a "trusteeship model of democracy" is in sharp contrast to the ascent of authoritarian leaders, even in the most advanced democracies.

Was the Modi-led Government's response to the crisis financially adequate? This will



remain a subjective question as developed countries had greater flexibility for welfarist measures to cushion vulnerable sections of society. In contrast, injecting four stimulus packages worth 10 per cent of the GDP to fire up the economy was the extent to which the Government could stretch its limits, with the fiscal deficit doubling to 7.7 per cent of the GDP.

Were India's containment measures and public messaging of the COVID crisis the best? Certainly not, when compared to Vietnam, Taiwan, Canada, Germany or New Zealand.

Was Modi's early lockdown proactive or premature? Initially, the response to relief and rehabilitation was ad-hoc and knee-jerk. But then the Government swung into streamlining Centre-State coordination for DBTs and food grains reaching 800 million people.

During disaster management, it is impossible to forecast the duration or depths of *force majeure* damages as no leader can possibly see the end of the tunnel clearly when adversities strike. While the US and the UK's health infrastructure is ranked among the best by the Global Health Security Index, India's "mortality rate per million" remained among the lowest.

Modi's popularity: Modi 2.0 in 2020 is a distinctly changed persona, in image, in demeanour, in electoral rhetoric, in elevating the national agenda above narrow political, ideological or populist gains, and in taking the moral high ground

at international fora by demanding the reform of archaic multilateral institutions.

As we enter the last month of a calamitous year, one is compelled to assess just what was it about Modi that he not only retained but exponentially widened his electoral base as seen in the recently-concluded Bihar elections, despite a severely pandemic-ravaged economy? Because 2020 was a year that savagely punished elected leaders for acts of omissions in administering inadequate relief and rehabilitation, while outrightly rejecting Trump for remaining in denial of a humanitarian crisis of unprecedented scale.

The answer lies in Modi's minutiae precision on last-mile micro-management of 269 key projects, down to the district level percolation. As India approaches the delivery stage of the vaccine, Modi's forward-planning is becoming more job-stepped by visiting vaccine hubs to fine-tune distribution mechanisms, down to assessing the availability of cold storage chains and ancillary equipment like syringes.

India ready for economic take-off: In January 2021, the levers of global growth are expected to rebalance more favourably towards a partial return to globalisation, which is a distinct reversal from the economic insularity of the Trump era. With President-elect Joe Biden taking charge next month, economic recovery is expected to accelerate with the liberalisation of international

trade as America regains its leadership as the primary engine of growth, instead of China, which augurs well for global recovery.

India is now uniquely positioned for a faster climb-back after a contraction of -7.5 per cent, with the grounds being laid to expand economic activity. Optimism for an economic rebound is based on the structural reforms undertaken in 2020, the lowered rate of corporate taxation, a stable currency backed by strong foreign reserves, vibrant FDI flows of £35.73 billion and the Finance Minister's nudge to increase CAPEX spending by public sector enterprises to drive economic growth. Sustained buoyancy will, of course, depend on the budgetary proposals and the efficacy of the vaccine in controlling future surges.

Going beyond crisis management, the Government needs to scale up human resource capital and find newer avenues for raising capital resources.

Second, if we aspire to make India a "Plus One" investment destination, gaps must be plugged for delays in contract enforcement. India takes 1,440 days to implement contracts against 150 days in Singapore. We need to hasten dispute resolution and follow Vietnam's example of allocating large land parcels on lease/rent/ mortgage.

Third, the pandemic forces a relook at our woefully inadequate investment in healthcare, education and labour-skilling,

all of which are State subjects and constitute three vitals of the Human Resource Development index. The Centre and States need to work more closely to incentivise private participation in education and healthcare by not restricting brick and mortar hospitals and universities to compulsory compliance with "not-for-profit agenda," as any prospective investor will look for a lucrative return on capital.

Removing the regulatory restrictions on "not-for-profit" institutions in education will create a facilitative environment for private participation by big domestic and overseas brands, build optimal capacities and bring in technology while lowering costs per-child per-annum.

UNDP estimates that the total financial requirement for India to reach SDG 4 by 2030 is \$173 billion per year, as against the current budgeted outlay of \$76 billion annually for education.

The education sector will see explosive growth if Modi's plan to turn 1.2 million schools into "smart classrooms" is implemented by connecting 60,000 villages within three years with high-speed optic fibre. The Ministry of Electronics and IT is contemplating a public-private business model for this visionary project, which will lower the cost of education per child through e-learning.

In order to evolve as a knowledge-based economy and transit towards optimal digitisation, the Modi Government has made great strides to push brand India into the top 50 countries club in the Global Innovation Index for the first time. Our higher education institutions have improved their global rankings and in the Employability Rankings 2020 Index, India has scaled up to the 15th position globally. However, we need to scale up to skill/re-skill 40 crore people by 2022 in order to match up to the pace of virtualisation which is a key enabler for economic recovery as these measures remain a work-in-progress.

I conclude this analysis by paraphrasing an opinion from *The New York Times*, which lauded Modi's initiatives by stating that he fared "better than many peers because he acted decisively, pre-emptively and relatively early...Modi's success, analysts say, may be more durable. He's widely seen as a mobiliser, not a despot..."

(The author is a columnist and Chairperson for the National Committee on Financial Inclusion at the Niti Aayog)

SOUNDBITE

We need to recognise as a society that all of our economies around the world are built on the backs of women's unpaid labour.

American philanthropist
—Melinda Gates



Happy Gurburab to everyone celebrating. May the blessing of Guru Nanak ji always be with us.

Former cricketer
—Sachin Tendulkar



Today, our farmers are forced to ask for their own rights! Shame on BJP govt for putting barriers to farmers in their own country.

Congress leader
—Vivek Bansal



India considers SCO as an important regional organisation to promote cooperation in the areas of peace, security, trade, economy & culture.

Secretary (West), MEA
—Vikas Swarup



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Don't blame FBI

Sir — The never-ending, well until January 20 to be precise, denial of the presidential election outcome is getting more extreme each day. However, US President Donald Trump's lawsuits have been failing with his pleas getting rejected in US courts.

The latest bit from a Trump interview — "This is total fraud and how, the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) and Department of Justice, I don't know, maybe they're involved" — shows that doubts will always remain around the verdict.

Surely, the FBI and DOJ are beyond reproach as their basic purpose is to protect the US and its way of life. They serve the country and its President, regardless of who is in power.

The 1960s TV series, *F.B.I.*, starring Efrim Zimbalist, Jr, may have been over the top but the good guys are still serving their country by working for the FBI and not against it. Shame on you, President Trump!

A court in Pennsylvania has dismissed a lawsuit filed by Trump's team, observing that "voters, not lawyers choose the President." The judgement came four days after Pennsylvania

Beyond the kitchen counter

Onion, which is a staple kitchen item among others for an average Indian, is an essential ingredient for many cuisines and recipes. From spicy curries to tangy relishes, it is impossible to imagine cooking anything without it. But it also has high medicinal value.

If folk remedies are to be believed, onions could treat cold, cough, asthma and bronchitis. Among other nutritional benefits, onions stimulate growth of healthy bifidobacteria in the colon and help in lowering blood lipids and are thus effective in managing cholesterol levels. The sulfide in onion reduces tumor growth and is being explored as a possible ingredient in the cure for cancer.

The flavonoids in onion help in reducing bad cholesterol while thiosulfinate thins out the blood further. These, traditional practitioners say, reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke. Onion also stimulates hair growth because of the huge content of sulphur in it. It stimulates blood flow and produces collagen, which helps in the growth of hair. One can extract its juice, mix it with almond oil or coconut oil and massage it on the scalp; leave it for around 45 minutes; then wash



it with warm water. One can also mix onion juice with lemon juice and massage the scalp with it. This prevents hair loss and dandruff.

In these times of immunity-boosters, we must tap into our plant wealth and heritage and develop a holistic well-being routine in our daily lives. Much of our herbal heritage needs to be recognised and patented for pharmaceutical uses.

Jubel D'Cruz
Mumbai

certified Trump's Democratic rival Joe Biden as the winner in the State which has 20 electoral college votes.

Trump told reporters on Thursday that it would be "hard" to concede to Biden, a Democrat. He said he would leave the White House if the Electoral College declares Biden

as the winner but made it clear he was not prepared to "concede" the election.

Dennis Fitzgerald
Melbourne, Australia

Farmers' woes

Sir — In a democracy, it beats reason that its police force wants to

use stadiums to imprison protesters (farmers). It is a small mercy that the Delhi Government refused to grant the police the permission to do so. These farmers have simply been protesting against a law that they don't find favourable. They have as much right to make themselves heard and be invited to negotiations in

the consultative nature of democracy. Cracking down on them with force is no solution.

Given the recent decisions on Shaheen Bagh and other cases, pertaining to protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, this brutal silencing of protest was all but expected.

The discontent of farmers in this country has been growing over the years due to the Central government's careless economic policies. These have debilitated the rural economy. Farmers have experienced a growing mismatch between their production efforts and income under the current regime.

Climate change and its outcomes have already worsened the farmers' condition. The new farm Acts expose them to market fluctuations, hence the insecurity. The community of farmers is thus right in feeling agitated. The Government can try and keep farmers under control but it cannot deny the discontent that is growing among 60 per cent of the country's voting population. They could turn the tide.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

A polarising municipal poll

The GHMC campaign was centred around comments on Pakistan, Jinnah and a Hindu-Muslim narrative, not civic issues



KALYANI SHANKAR

Whoever thought that a civic poll would create so much excitement, passion and polarisation? The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) election scheduled for today (December 1) has become an unprecedented high-profile political event. It is being fought with the same vigour as the Lok Sabha polls by not only the BJP, which is aiming high, but also by the other players like the ruling Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS), the All-India Majlis-e-Itehaadul Muslimin (AIMIM) and the Congress Party. The BJP is ambitious and wants to replace the TRS. This is an indication of what will come in the 2023 Assembly polls. The party has an advantage because the Congress, which ruled the State, for many decades and the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), which was in power till a few years ago, left a space for the BJP to occupy. The TDP is almost wiped out and the Congress receded to fourth place in the recent Lok Sabha polls.

Eyebrows are being raised at the way the BJP has fielded national heavyweights for campaigning for a municipal poll, like the party chief JP Nadda, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. Though he did not campaign, even Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Hyderabad to review the progress of the COVID-19 vaccine clinical research on November 28. First of all, the BJP, which surprised everyone by winning four Lok Sabha seats out of 17 in Telangana in 2019, got the momentum and continued with another surprise victory in the Dubbaka bypolls early in November. After the recent stunning performance in the Bihar Assembly elections, the party's morale is high. Second, if the BJP wins the GHMC polls, it means that the saffron party is continuing its winning spree.

Moreover, the BJP is positioning itself to spread its footprint further South. As of now, the party is weak there as it has only one State Government (Karnataka) in its kitty. Third, the BJP wants to cut the AIMIM to size. The Asaduddin Owaisi-led AIMIM has always been strong in the Hyderabad region. Owaisi has expanded his party to Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The AIMIM is quite upbeat after winning five seats in the recent Bihar polls and wants to expand in West Bengal in next year's Assembly elections, too. However, this will cut into the Muslim vote bank and it will be helpful for the BJP to split the Muslim votes. Even though the TRS has always contested against the AIMIM in every election, the former has enjoyed issue-based support from the latter. The two parties tactically announced that there would be no tie-up in the municipal polls in order to protect their turfs.

The BJP, the TRS and the AIMIM have all been generous in spending money and have more than adequate muscle power and manpower to fight this election for different reasons. The BJP wants to spread its wings further in the South. The AIMIM has always won in the Hyderabad region and is protecting its turf. As for the ruling TRS, it is a fight for its prestige. The party, which has been on a winning spree since the State was bifurcated in 2014, made a clever and surprise move by advancing the civic poll by two months. The TRS had won 99 seats in the previous civic elections while the AIMIM won 44 seats, the BJP three and the Congress two.

The BJP is attacking the TRS for its politics of appeasement. Plus, the recent flood relief measures have been inadequate. The Musi River that runs through the city was in spate last month and tanks and nullahs developed breaches and low-lying areas were waterlogged. About 50 municipal wards were affected due to it. The BJP cleverly wants to cash in on this. Interestingly, while the GHMC poll is normally fought on civic problems like water, sewerage, sanitation, roads and other amenities, the campaign showed a polarising trend. It was centred around polarising comments on Pakistan, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, allegations involving Rohingya refugees and a Hindu-Muslim narrative, not civic issues.

This led to the Director-General of Police Mahender Reddy to warn the parties after a security meeting. "They are trying to incite communal trouble. We are examining the speeches carefully. Action will be taken as per law against those trying to create disturbances," he cautioned. Hyderabad has one of the largest Muslim populations for a city in India: about 44 per cent of the people in the city are Muslim while 52 per cent are Hindu. All the parties have been generous in promising sops to the electorate if they win. The BJP, the TRS and the Congress have promised free drinking water supply to the city, while the BJP has promised a free vaccine to tackle the Novel Coronavirus and renaming of Hyderabad as Bhagya Nagar.

The Chief Minister of Telangana, Kalvakuntla Chandrababhan Rao, is threatening to mobilise a non-BJP Opposition front including the Trinamool Congress, the Samajwadi Party, the Nationalist Congress Party and so on, in an attempt to revive the anti-BJP front.

Opinion polls have come up with varied findings, giving the maximum seats to the TRS at 85, while almost all of them see the BJP winning nearly 30 per cent of the votes. The 35 votes of the MLAs and MPs in the region would go in favour of the TRS. However, it all depends on whom Dame Luck favours in the end.

(The writer is a senior journalist)

THEY (AUSTRALIA) HAVE OUTPLAYED US. WE WERE INEFFECTIVE WITH THE BALL AND DIDN'T HIT THE AREAS. —INDIAN CRICKET CAPTAIN VIRAT KOHLI

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



KOHLI IS AN IMPULSIVE CAPTAIN. HE IS MAKING TOO MANY CHANGES IN HIS BOWLING. AND THIS IS AN AREA THAT HE NEEDS TO TAKE CARE OF. —FORMER INDIA PACER ASHISH NEHRA

Plug the leaks

The Government should stop selling food at a subsidised price through the PDS. Instead, it should limit its role to crediting subsidy directly to the accounts of beneficiaries



UTTAM GUPTA

Since 2014, the Narendra Modi Government has weeded out close to 44 million bogus ration cards by using the Information Technology (IT) infrastructure viz. digitisation, seeding of Aadhaar on ration cards, electronic point of sale machines at retail shops and so on. However, this addresses only a small aspect of the problem and that, too, is unlikely to be rooted out completely with the use of technology alone. Besides, large-scale diversion and black marketing of grain, inclusion of the privileged among beneficiaries, a ballooning subsidy bill and so on will persist so long as the extant system of routing food subsidy through State agencies continues. What then is the way forward? The Government should stop selling food at a subsidised price. Instead, it should limit its role to crediting subsidy directly to the accounts of beneficiaries. When foodgrains at ₹1/2/3 per kg are not available, these maladyies will be automatically nipped in the bud.

Under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), the Union Government arranges for supply of wheat, rice and coarse cereals to the beneficiaries at ₹2/3/1 per kg, which is a fraction of the cost of procurement, handling and distribution (eg. 1/15th in case of wheat). Every person whose name is mentioned on the ration card is eligible to receive five kg of rice or wheat per month. In addition, during April-June, to mitigate the impact of COVID-19, the PM Garib Kalyan Yojna added a "free" five kg of rice or wheat per person per month to all 815 million individual beneficiaries under the NFSA. Besides one kg of free pulses per month was provided to every family. These additional provisions were extended for a further five months till November.

The supplies are made by the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and other State agencies on behalf of the Central Government, which reimburses to the former the excess of the cost of purchase, handling and distribution over the price charged from the beneficiaries i.e. ₹2/3/1 per kg on additional supplies (during the eight months of the current year, this is zero). This reimbursement or food subsidy is paid from the Central Budget. In recent years, food subsidy has increased to frightening levels. During 2019-20, it was ₹2,19,000 crore. For 2020-21, prior to COVID-19, the likely spend was estimated to be ₹2,53,000 crore. Including the impact of free food during April-November or about ₹1,50,000 crore, this will scale up to ₹4,03,000 crore. In case the free food scheme is extended further, the spend will be much higher.

The ballooning food subsidy is putting a huge stress on the Union Budget. Faced with a shortfall in tax collection in recent years and the over-arching need to contain fiscal deficit, the Centre has been making short payments to the FCI, forcing the latter to borrow heavily to sustain its operations. The situation is so pathetic that since 2016-17, the FCI has been drawing funds from the National Small Savings Fund (NSSF). As on March 31, the cumulative borrowings from the NSSF were to the tune of ₹3,30,000 crore.

The allocation for the current year being ₹1,26,000 crore (₹1,16,000 crore provided in the Budget, plus ₹10,000 crore in the first supplementary demands for grants) against the requirement of ₹4,03,000 crore, the shortfall is ₹2,77,000 crore. If no further supplementary authorisation comes, the FCI will have to borrow all of this from the NSSF, taking its borrowings to a gargantuan ₹6,07,000 crore as of March 2021. Though staying on the FCI's balance sheet, this mammoth debt

“THE GOVERNMENT CAN TRANSFER ₹280 PER MONTH (SUBSIDY AT THE RATE OF ₹28 PER KG FOR 10 KG) TO THE BENEFICIARY'S ACCOUNT TO ENABLE HIM/HER TO BUY 10 KG FROM THE MARKET BY PAYING ₹300 (INCLUDING ₹20 FROM HIS/HER POCKET). THIS WILL STRIKE AT THE VERY ROOT OF DIVERSION, PILFERAGE AND BLACK MARKETING. WHEN FOODGRAINS AT ₹1/2/3 PER KG ARE JUST NOT AVAILABLE, THE VERY THOUGHT OF MAKING A QUICK BUCK WILL BE NIPPED IN THE BUD”



is entirely the liability of the Union Government and will need to be serviced from the latter's tax collections in the future. The core feature of this scheme, or supply of wheat or rice at a price almost close to zero, may be a boon for the beneficiaries but ends up being a bane for the economy. The availability of wheat at ₹2 per kg through the Public Distribution System (PDS) under the NFSA, when the market price is a minimum ₹30 per kg, is a huge allure-ment to all those involved in its implementation. No wonder, there is large-scale diversion of foodgrain from rake unloading points and godowns of the FCI. Trucks disappear on way to the retail sale points. Then there are millions of non-existent or fake beneficia-ries.

There is a clamour for becoming beneficiaries under the scheme even as there are numerous instances of people selling their subsidised quota of food-grain, say wheat bought at ₹2 per kg, to dubious traders at ₹12 per kg or more. Clearly, there are millions availing subsidised food despite being above the poverty line. The official word on the number of poor in India is no more than 25-30 per cent; yet the beneficiaries under NFSA are nearly over 66 per cent.

Further, since the handling and distribution cost, besides the Minimum Support Price (MSP) paid to farmers, is reimbursed to the FCI and other State agencies on "actual" as food subsidy, inefficiency and inflated cost claims (including bogus) are inevitable. The "loaders" getting away with monthly salary in lakhs easily pass muster under a cost-based mechanism. Reports of disappearance of food stocks in Punjab causing a loss of over ₹20,000 crore to the exchequer in 2016 are still fresh in people's memory. Such inefficiencies and irregularities have also been pointed out by the Comptroller and Auditor

General (CAG) of India. Meanwhile, the most deserving (poorest of the poor) continue to be deprived of their full requirement. This is because supplies under the NFSA at five kg per person per month barely cover 50 per cent of the requirement of a person, which is 10 kg per month, as estimated by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO). Having to buy the balance five kg at a very high price, say ₹30 per kg in case of wheat, they are worse off.

Weeding out of 44 million bogus beneficiaries in itself may appear to be a big accomplishment. But seen in the broader perspective, this addresses only a small aspect of the problem and that, too, is unlikely to be rooted out completely with use of technology alone. Besides, other problems will persist so long as the system of routing food subsidy through State agencies continues.

In early 2015, a committee under Dr Shanta Kumar, a senior BJP leader, had recognised the need to deal with non-deserving beneficiaries and restricting subsidised food only to the very poor. It recommended a cut in the number of those eligible for subsidised food from 67 per cent to 40 per cent and restricting the benefit of ₹1/2/3 per kg only to the poorest of poor people under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana, while increasing the supply to seven kg per person. Others should pay 50 per cent of the MSP paid to farmers.

Even as that report is lying in cold storage, its prescription is nowhere near addressing the flaws in the existing system. The way forward is to stop routing subsidy through the State agencies. In other words, the Government should not sell food at subsidised price; instead, it should limit its role to crediting subsidy directly to the beneficiary's account. The Government can transfer ₹280 per month (subsidy at the rate of ₹28 per kg for 10 kg) to the ben-

eficiary's account to enable him/her to buy 10 kg from the market by paying ₹300 (including ₹20 from his/her pocket). This will strike at the very root of diversion, pilferage, black marketing. When, foodgrains at ₹1/2/3 per kg are just not available, the very thought of making a quick buck will be nipped in the bud. As for the FCI *et al*, while they will still be involved in purchase, handling and distribution, they will operate like any other business entity and be compelled to operate efficiently and keep costs low.

With private entities, too, allowed to directly buy from farmers, stock farm produce sans any limit (courtesy, the three farm laws recently enacted by the Centre), there will be plenty of products available in the market ensuring fair amount of competition and enabling low price to consumers.

We will have a scenario whereby the market price of wheat could come down to say ₹25 per kg or even less (from the existing minimum of ₹30 per kg) giving relief to everyone. Ditto for other products. It will have a deflationary impact down the line as all of the processed food will cost less. There will be huge saving in subsidy, which will be restricted only to the poor or about 300 million (down from existing 800 million) even as the Government need not have to pay for any flab such as inflated cost, inefficiencies, subsidy to bogus beneficiaries and so on. This will rein in fiscal deficit and trim borrowings, thereby preventing an unsustainable burden on the future generation of tax-payers.

The outcome of this approach is very promising; however, its adoption will require political courage and a fundamental change in the mindset of our policymakers.

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

A leader who believed in leaving no one behind

Indira Gandhi nationalised private banks, turned them into the biggest public sector banking system in the world which gave people loans for self-employment



EDUARDO FALEIRO

Recently, we commemorated the birth anniversary of the late Indira Gandhi, who has so far remained the only woman Prime Minister of India. She was considered the most popular leader of the masses of Independent India especially among the weaker sections of society. The Congress Party during Indira Gandhi's tenure coined the slogan "Garibi hatao (eradicate poverty)" and she led the efforts for the amendment to the Preamble of the Constitution to include the words, "Socialist, Secular and Democratic Republic of India."

In furtherance of these concepts, her Government implemented the 20-point programme. Its basic objective was to eradicate poverty and to improve the quality of life of the poor and the weaker sections of society. It included removal of rural poverty, health, education and housing for all, justice for Scheduled Caste (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) and equality for women.

Indira Gandhi nationalised private sector banks and turned them into the most gigantic public sector banking system in the world, which gave people loans for self-employment. It happened to be involved in the implementation of the 20-Point Programme when I was Union Minister of State for Finance. The banks were instructed to provide loans to the poor and weaker sections of society who wanted to open some small business. As a result, millions across the country got those small loans for setting up their own ventures. The rate of repayment of those loans was as good, if not better, than

the repayment of large loans taken by big firms. For the benefit of the people, the number of bank branches was increased substantially, too.

In Goa, we had branches of the State Bank of India (SBI) and of a couple of other banks in the main towns but not in the villages. During my tenure, in the process of implementation of the 20-Point Programme, branches of different banks were opened in practically every village of our State. Similar steps were taken in all States across India.

Indira Gandhi was much criticised for imposing the Emergency in 1975 which lasted for 21 months. To my mind, Emergency was thought to be necessary at that time in view of the moves of the Opposition to destabilise the Government and the country. The Emergency was imposed on the advice of Sanjay Gandhi and Siddhartha Shankar Ray. Much of the criticism of the Emergency was on account of the Family Planning programme, which was implemented in North India

sometimes in a drastic and brutal manner. Sometime later, Indira Gandhi herself felt that imposition of the Emergency had been a mistake.

In Goa itself, Emergency proved to be beneficial. "Trains are running on time" was then a national slogan and in Goa the Administration became more efficient, black marketing and hoarding stopped and food and other articles of general consumption were easily available, which was not the case earlier. The support of the Goan people to the Government of India during Emergency benefitted the Congress Party, which went on to win the Lok Sabha seat of South Goa. This was the first-ever election victory of the Congress Party in Goa. Until then, the Congress had not won a single seat either in Parliament, in the Assembly or even at the municipality level.

In the general elections held in 1977, Indira Gandhi lost her Lok Sabha seat from Rae Bareilly but immediately thereafter in 1978 she won a byelection from the

Chikmagalur constituency. In November 1978, the Janata Party brought in a motion to expel Indira Gandhi from Parliament. My party, the Congress (U), supported this motion of the ruling party. However, I personally could not support it. I felt that I had won the Lok Sabha election in the name of Indira. I met Yashwantrao Chavan, who was the leader of the Congress (U) in Parliament. Chavan permitted me to oppose the motion. During the debate, while my party supported the motion, I strongly opposed it. Indira Gandhi was in the Lok Sabha during the debate and apparently she never forgot my support to her on that day. In 1980, I was the only candidate in the whole country belonging to the Congress (U) who was also supported by the Congress (I).

After Liberation, there were two opposite points of view on the status of Goa, Daman and Diu. In the first four Assembly elections, the Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP) obtained a significant victo-

ry and formed the Government. The MGP wanted the merger of Goa into Maharashtra on the grounds that Goa identified culturally and in many other ways with Maharashtra. The United Goans Party (UGP) as well as the Congress held that Goa should not merge with Maharashtra. The MGP wanted the matter to be decided by voting on the floor of the Assembly.

This was strongly opposed by the UGP and the Congress. Thereafter, during the premiership of Indira Gandhi an opinion poll (referendum) was held for Goa. This was the first and so far the only one ever held in the country. It went against the demand for the merger. Thereafter, the Congress and the UGP demanded statehood for Goa.

My first speech in the Lok Sabha echoed that demand for statehood. However, Morarji Desai, then Prime Minister, was not in favour of small States. In 1980, Indira Gandhi returned as Prime Minister and I moved a Bill seeking statehood for

Goa. Rajiv Gandhi, then General Secretary of the Congress Party, met me and promised that statehood would be granted to Goa. True to his word, statehood was granted to us in the next term of the Lok Sabha during the premiership of Rajiv Gandhi himself.

It was obtained due to the efforts of then Chief Minister Pratapsingh Rane, my colleague in the Lok Sabha Shantaram Naik and other leaders of the Congress and the MGP's Pankar. The MGP brought a resolution demanding Statehood for Goa. While replying to the debate, Shashikala Kakodkar, then Chief Minister said, "In the early years after Liberation, the MGP stood for merger with Maharashtra and fought for it through the opinion poll in a democratic way. The verdict of the poll went against the merger. The MGP accepted the people's verdict because it believes in the wisdom of the electorate."

(The writer is a former Union Minister)

S&P retains India’s growth forecast at (-)9% this fiscal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

S&P Global Ratings on Monday retained its forecast of 9 per cent contraction in the Indian economy for the current fiscal, saying even though there are now upside risks to growth but it will wait for more signs that Covid infections have stabilised or fallen.

S&P, in its report on Asia Pacific, projected the Indian economy to grow at 10 per cent in the next fiscal.

“We retain our growth forecast of negative 9 per cent in fiscal 2020-2021 and 10 per cent in fiscal 2021-2022. While there are now upside risks to growth due to a faster recovery in population mobility and household spending, the pandemic is not fully under control. “We will wait for more signs that infections have stabilised or fallen, together with high-frequency activity data for the fiscal year third quarter, before changing our forecasts,”

S&P said.

According to the official data released last week, Indian economy recovered faster than expected in the September quarter as a pick-up in manufacturing helped GDP clock a lower contraction of 7.5 per cent. Indian economy had contracted 23.9 per cent in April-June.

The RBI in October projected India’s economy to contract by 9.5 per cent this fiscal. It said the industrial sector is leading and the output is now above levels from a year ago, helped by rising demand for consumer goods.

Investment recovered faster than consumption in the second quarter, partly due to resumption of stalled projects. The private sector drove the recovery as spending resumed and households and firms moved more toward normalised activity.

S&P said inflation should ease from recent highs, albeit

gradually.

“We project that headline consumer price inflation just above the mid-point of the Reserve Bank of India’s (RBI) forecast a range of 2 to 6 per cent through 2021.

One-off factors should ease, including food-supply disruptions and supply constraints related to earlier lockdowns.

But the pass-through to core inflation, currently near 6 per cent, suggests that inflation persistence remains a challenge,” it said.

S&P said it does not expect much fiscal easing in its projections. “Past action has targeted low-income households, with substantial welfare effects, but a broader fiscal effort has been lacking. We do not see this changing. At the same time, the RBI will be constrained from cutting rates and we anticipate rates will start normalising upward from 2021 onwards,” it added.

HEALING ECONOMY

Green shoots to support equity markets

FIANS ■ MUMBAI

Faster-than-anticipated economic recovery along with likely continuation of accommodative monetary stance will support the domestic indices’ expected northward trajectory during the week ahead.

However, spurts of likely profit bookings coupled with expensive propositions as well as any delay in anti-Covid vaccine rollout might arrest the potential up move.

“Equity markets could open higher on Tuesday, reflecting the positivity of the Q2 GDP numbers. Nifty continues to consolidate after reaching a high on Novmeber 25,” said Deepak Jasani- Head of Retail Research at HDFC Securities.

“An upward breach of 13,146 is necessary to expect more upsides while a downward breach of 12,833 could

bring in more downsides and mean that a temporary top has been made on November 25.”

Last Friday, official data showed that India’s gross domestic product (GDP) contracted 7.5 per cent in the July-September period, as the economy rebounded from a record slump of 23.9 per cent in the previous quarter due to slowdown caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

This figure was higher than anticipated by the market.

Among sectors, automobile industry will be in focus during the holiday-shortened week, as the industry will divulge its sales performance during November.

The main festive season of 2020 ended last month and investors expect healthy sales performance from the sector.

“Going ahead, the overall structure of the market remains positive, but intermittent prof-

it booking cannot be ruled out, given the sharp rally in the past few weeks,” said Siddhartha Khemka, Head of Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

“Auto companies will be in focus as November sales data will start coming from Tuesday, while banks or financials will be in focus as the RBI’s Monetary Policy is scheduled for Friday.”

The Reserve Bank’s MPC is scheduled to announce the last review for the calendar year 2020. “The present liquidity glut, and the low-interest rates, will lead to improvements in the cost of funds for corporates and thereby their performance to a significant extent,” said Joseph Thomas, Head of Research - Emkay Wealth Management. Market watchers opined that the RBI will maintain both repo rate and accommodative stance.

GST ENABLEMENT ON UPI

4 months let-off from penalty on invoices without QR code

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

In a significant move to promote digital payments in Business to Customer (B2C) transactions through QR Code and GST enablement on UPI, the government has conditionally waived the penalty provisions for a period of four months from December 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021 for issuing invoices without mandatory dynamic QR code by the registered persons with a turnover exceeding Rs 500 crore, sources said.

Sources in the Department of Revenue (DoR) said that the government has been pursuing the banks, vendors and the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) for almost a year now to introduce GST enablement on UPI. Multiple meetings were conducted by the department with the NPCI, top banks and other stakeholders to push the project.

The NPCI developed the necessary solution required and shared technical documents, FAQs, etc, with the banks. Also, the NPCI was ready for the bank certification from February 6, 2020 and targeted for GST enablement on UPI to go live from first week of March 2020.

Sources said that the government, also, in pursuance of its objective to create a less cash society, mandated issuance of invoices with dynamic QR code by registered persons (business entities) with turnover exceeding 500 crores,

The NPCI developed the necessary solution required and shared technical documents, FAQs, etc, with the banks

vide its order dated March 21, 2020 to enable GST on the UPI which was to be effective from December 1, 2020 in respect of invoices issued to unregistered persons (customers).

A penalty provision was also invoked for issuance of invoices without dynamic QR code from December 1. However, the majority of the banks lagged behind in their preparedness for enablement of GST on UPI despite multiple meetings, persuasions and necessary support from the NPCI.

According to the sources, recently in a high level review meeting at North Block on GST enablement on UPI, it was decided to give one time waiver on penalty provisions for four months period till March 31, 2021 on the condition that the stakeholders would set up necessary process during this period to go-live with QR code on invoices by April 1, 2021, thereby enabling GST on UPI.

Thus, the government, said the sources, decided to extend certain concession and issued fresh notification dated November 29, waiving the penalty for issuing invoices without dynamic QR code from December 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021, provided that the taxpayers start complying with requirement of QR code from April 1, 2021.

Nitin Gadkari confident India will get Covid-19 vaccine as early as possible

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Monday expressed confidence that India will get a Covid-19 vaccine “as early as possible” and overcome the pandemic to win the economic war. Gadkari said the whole world, including India, is facing the crisis of Covid-19 and the situation is challenging. “We need to create positivity and self confidence in the mind of the people. Negativity and suspicion will create more complication,” Gadkari said this at the Virtual Horasis Asia Meeting 2020.

He also said that on the basis of the latest statistics, “we can say that we are coming to the normal situation”. At the same time in the manufacturing sector also, particularly trade and business, a lot of opportunities are up, he said.

The Minister for Micro,

Small and Medium Enterprises and Road Transport & Highways said that currently, “majority of countries are not interested to deal with China”; they are rather interested in India.

Gadkari also said that as compared to China, India has got the huge potential, as the young talented manpower is available in India. He added that there is availability of raw material in India and policy is favourable. “I feel that it is appropriate opportunity for the investor to invest in India,” said.

He said such a situation is advantageous for the country’s manufacturing sector to ramp up its capabilities to boost exports from India. “I am confident that we will get a vaccine as early as possible and 100 per cent we will win this war against COVID-19 and also win economic war,” Gadkari said at a virtual event.

Petrol, diesel price hike pauses after continuous rise

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

Oil marketing companies held back the increase in the prices of petrol and diesel on Monday much to the relief of consumers who have faced consistent increase in auto fuel prices in the past week.

With this, diesel prices continue to remain at 72.42 a litre in Delhi while petrol prices remain unchanged at Rs 82.34 per litre in the national capital. In other cities too, the price stayed at Sunday’s level.

Oil marketing companies had raised the price of petrol by 21 paise and diesel prices by 29 paise per litre on Sunday. Before this, fuel prices increased in nine out of the last 10 days starting from November 20.

In the past 10 days petrol prices have now risen by Rs 1.28 per litre and diesel by Rs 1.96 a litre. The increase has been primarily on account of firming up of global oil and



product prices following news of a successful coronavirus vaccine. Petrol prices had been static since September 22, and diesel rates hadn’t changed since October 2.

Though retail pricing of petrol and diesel has been deregulated and oil marketing companies were following a daily price revision formula, the same was suspended for almost two months to prevent volatility in international oil markets from impacting fuel prices regularly during the pandemic.

KVIC’s Honey Mission helps migrants earn

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The distressed migrant workers who were engaged with the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)’s Honey Mission in Uttar Pradesh in August this year, have reaped their first honey harvest and are awaiting a bumper yield in the months from December to March.

According to the KVIC, to begin with, five migrant workers in Western UP’s Muzaffarnagar district extracted 253 kg of honey from their 50 honey bee boxes that were distributed to them on August 25 this year.

Raw honey sells at an average of ₹200 per kg and at this rate it is estimated to fetch nearly ₹50,000 to the migrant workers. This means an average income of ₹10,000 to each of these beneficiaries. A total of 700 bee boxes were distributed to 70 migrant workers after training by KVIC in this region.

Gold down ₹142, silver declines by ₹701

In the previous trade, the precious metal had closed at ₹47,625 per 10 gram

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices fell ₹142 to ₹47,483 per 10 gram in the national capital on Monday on a weak global trend, according to HDFC Securities. In the previous trade, the precious metal had closed at ₹47,625 per 10 gram. Silver prices also declined ₹701 to ₹57,808 per kilogram from ₹58,509 per kilogram in the previous trade. In the international market, gold was trading lower at USD 1,781.50 per ounce, while silver was quoting flat at USD 22.29 per ounce. “Gold prices continued downside on Monday as optimism on vaccine has boosted investment sentiment towards riskier assets,” HDFC Securities Senior Analyst (Commodities) Tapan Patel said.

Auto wholesale billings to moderate as peak festive season ends: Ind-Ra

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

With the festive season now over in India, India Ratings and Researchers expects wholesale billings to moderate in the next couple of months, given that the inventory has already reached to a high level.

The ratings agency, in a report, pointed out that the inventory at dealer level for PVs (passenger vehicles) and 2Ws (two-wheelers) is already at higher than the 21 days recommended by Federation of Automobile Dealers Association (FADA).

However, it expects the overall automotive industry to continue to revive in the next two to three months, in line with the improving economic indicators.

According to the agency, domestic automobile industry (excluding CVs) reported year-

on-year (yoy) growth for the third consecutive month in October 2020, up 14 per cent YoY.

In fact, PVs and 2Ws sales volumes continued the growth trend, up 14 and 18 per cent on YoY basis, respectively, driven by increased consumer proclivity for personal mobility.

Besides, higher sales volumes in October were also to cater the increased demand during Navratri, the report cited. Furthermore, original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) chose to continue to stock up the dealership inventory ahead of Diwali in November, banking on a likely strong demand.

“In contrast, while retail sales volumes continue to see growth on a month-on-month (mom) basis, it remains a far cry from the FY20’s levels, barring PVs,” the agency said in the report.

Banks acting as villains for traders, alleges CAIT

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) on Monday urged Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to prevent banks from entering into an “unholy nexus” with e-commerce companies which is damaging “small businesses”.

In a communication sent to Sitharaman, it expressed serious concern over granting of 10 per cent cash back or discount by some of banks on purchase made via their cards from e-commerce portals.

It alleged that several banks are entering into an “unholy nexus with Amazon, Flipkart and other e-commerce companies, forming a cartel with them for indulging into anti-competitive practices and offending ‘Fair Practices Code’ of RBI for banks”.

Air India pilot unions seek civil Aviation Ministry’s intervention on wage cut issue

Mumbai: Air India pilot unions IPG and ICPA on Monday sought the civil aviation ministry’s intervention on the wage cut issue and also requested for an “urgent” meeting with him on several other issues. “In our meetings in September, you had given us an assurance to look into our grievances positively. While other airlines are rolling back the austerity pay cuts for their pilots, the wage cut for Air India pilots further increased from October. “This is completely divorced from market reality and equally unfair to pilots of Air India and its subsidiaries,” the pilot unions stated in the joint letter addressed to Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri.

Lamenting that pilots of Air India and its two subsidiary airlines, Air India Express and Alliance Air, continue to get reduced wages, up to 70 per cent lower of their normal wages, it said.

“Through our representations and meetings, we have shown you how Air India management’s cost cutting (move) is malafide and disproportionate and does not have any semblance to the aviation industry standards,” according to the letter. The Indian Commercial Pilots Association (ICPA) represents the pilots flying Air India’s narrow-body aircraft, while the Indian Pilots Guild (IPG) represents those who operate wide-body aircraft of the national carrier.

Stating that even the parliamentarians’ salaries have been “reduced by 30 per cent for a period of one year” to meet the exigencies arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic, it said that “even at the highest strata, there is a clear recognition of reasonable time-bound austerity measures across the board to compensate for the disruption due to the lockdown”.

80% of India Inc fear more fraud cases in next 2 yrs: Deloitte survey

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

The uncertainty and business disruption brought about by the pandemic has contributed to fears amongst corporate India about the rise in fraud cases in the future.

According to biennial survey - The India Corporate Fraud Perception Survey, Edition IV by Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu India LLP, over 80 per cent of respondents felt fraud cases would rise in the next two years, a 22 percentage point increase over the previous edition of the survey in 2018. About 70 per cent respondents felt that fraud losses

would rise and one-third of the respondents felt losses would be between 1 per cent and 5 per cent of revenues. These adverse sentiments are due to large-scale remote working arrangements and changes in business models, which have made it challenging to understand fraud-related vulnerabilities. The survey findings indicated that such adverse sentiments were further exacerbated by reliance on static data for Fraud Risk Management efforts. About 43 per cent respondents felt their existing fraud risk management frameworks were inadequate to address future frauds.

Accordingly, they indicated diverting budgets towards adopting enhanced technologies that could provide an enterprise view of fraud (22 per cent); implementing enhanced fraud risk management processes for third parties (17 per cent); and creating awareness amongst employees (17 per cent) for fraud prevention. For the first time in four editions of the survey, nearly 35 per cent respondents believed that future frauds would be detected using data analytics and other technology tools (and not rely entirely on conventional approaches, such as internal audits).

IHCL joins hands with Ambuja Neotia group to expand presence in eastern India

New Delhi: Tata group firm Indian Hotels Company Ltd (IHCL) on Monday announced expansion in eastern India with the signing of three hotels — two in Kolkata and one in Patna — with the Kolkata-headquartered Ambuja Neotia group.

The company has already partnered with Ambuja Neotia group for two other hotels in the east — one in Darjeeling, and the other in Gangtok. The Darjeeling resort will be opened in the middle of December. The resort in Sikkim will be opened around the end of next year, IHCL said. These five hotels will culminate to a total of 500 rooms, it added.

“We are very committed to the eastern part of India as we believe that it has tremendous potential. With the announcement today, we are further strengthening our footprint in the region and building on IHCL’s legacy in some of the most commercially and culturally important cities of the East,” IHCL MD and CEO Puneet Chhatwal said.

“The hotels will be on the management contract model, in which we bring the management and expertise to the Ambuja Group and help them in managing these properties...,” Chhatwal said in a virtual press conference. **PTI**

Banks to post larger capital declines without support: Moody’s

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

Banks in India are expected to post larger capital declines without public or private injections, Moody’s Investors Service said in a report. In its 2021 outlook for financial institutions amid Covid-19 recovery, Moody’s Investors Service said that capital will moderately fall in emerging Asia over the next two years.

“Capital will moderately fall in emerging Asia over the next two years, and banks in India and Sri Lanka will post larger capital declines without public or private injections,” it

said in a statement.

It cited moderate and uneven economic recoveries amid the coronavirus pandemic as well as political and trade uncertainties pose risks for financial institutions in emerging markets throughout Asia, Latin America, Europe, the Middle East and Africa in 2021. Overall, the outlook for banks is negative, while insurers are more stable, as the lockdown from the pandemic has resulted in one-off gains in profitability, although pressures on capital are increasing.

“The uncertain trajectory of asset quality is among the biggest risks for banks as oper-

Overall, the outlook for banks is negative, while insurers are more stable

ating environments remain fragile amid ongoing health concerns,” said Moody’s Managing Director Celina Vansetti-Hutchins. “Profit growth will be modest because of low interest rates and subdued lending, but lower loan volumes should aid capital. Additionally, banks’ lending and funding shifts in response to flatter yield curve dynamics and low rates will also pressure net interest margins.

Russia under pressure to explain Navalny poisoning

The Hague (Netherlands): Russia came under renewed pressure on Monday to explain the nerve agent attack on opposition figure Alexei Navalny as the annual meeting of the global chemical weapons watchdog got underway amid measures aimed at reining in the spread of coronavirus.

Navalny fell ill on August 20 during a domestic flight in Russia, and was flown to Germany for treatment two days later. His allies accused the Kremlin of poisoning its fiercest opponent.

Tests carried out by labs in Germany, France and Sweden and by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons established that Navalny was exposed to a Soviet-era Novichok nerve agent.

The organization's director-general, Fernando Arias, told Monday's meeting that according to the Chemical

Weapons Convention, "the poisoning of an individual through the use of a nerve agent is a use of a chemical weapon."

A group of 56 nations issued a statement as the start of the annual meeting of the OPCW's member states urging Moscow to disclose "in a swift and transparent manner the circumstances of this chemical weapons attack."

Russia, which denies involvement in Navalny's poisoning, reacted bullishly in its written statement to the conference.

"Instead of trying to look into what had happened, Germany and its allies resorted to megaphone diplomacy, unleashed a mass disinformation campaign against Russia and started to demand some 'independent international investigation' under the auspices of the OPCW," Moscow's statement said.

In October, Moscow asked

for OPCW experts to visit Russia to provide "technical assistance" in its investigations. Arias said talks are underway to define "all the legal, technical, operational and logistical parameters in order for this visit to take place."

The European Union has imposed sanctions on six Russian officials and a state research institute over the poisoning.

Moscow responded earlier this month by announcing that it had adopted sanctions against a number of German and French officials.

The OPCW's annual meeting has been broken into two parts amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Two days of talks this week will focus on approving the proposed 71.74 million euro (USD 86 million) annual budget for 2021. The second half of the meeting will take place next year. **AP**

26/11: Extradition hearing for Tahawwur Rana to be held on Feb 12

Washington: A US court has set February 12 as the date of hearing for extradition of Pakistani-origin Canadian businessman Tahawwur Rana, who has been declared a fugitive by India for his involvement in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack case.

Rana, 59, a childhood friend of David Coleman Headley, was re-arrested on June 10 in Los Angeles on an extradition request by India for his involvement in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack in which 166 people, including six Americans, were killed.

Rana was earlier arrested in October 2009 by US police soon after Headley's arrest at Chicago O'Hare airport. US District Court Judge in Los Angeles Jacqueline Chelonian said in her order on November 13 that the Extradition Hearing in this case is scheduled for February 12, 2021, at 10:00 am.

Rana has time till December 21 to file his opposition to the request for extradition. The United States Government will have another months' time to file its reply.

In its motion on September 28, the US government support-

ed Rana's extradition to India where he has been charged with the offenses of conspiracy to wage war, commit a terrorist act, the waging of war, the commission of murder, and a terrorist act.

Rana, in his defense, has argued that the US' decision not to extradite his co-conspirator, David Headley, to India is inconsistent and bars his extradition.

However, the US government argued differently "because Headley fulfilled the required terms, the plea agreement established that Headley would not be extradited to India," said US attorney Nicola T Hanna.

"Rana's situation is different because he neither pleaded guilty nor cooperated with the United States. As a result, cannot avail himself of the benefits afforded to Headley through his negotiated plea. Such a position is neither inconsistent nor a bar to extradition," he said.

Unlike Rana, Headley immediately accepted responsibility for his conduct and pleaded guilty to all of the charges in the Superseding Indictment, Hanna said. **PTI**

Beware of coronavirus scams as vaccine approaches FDA approval

Washington: The coronavirus vaccine inching toward approval in the U.S. is desperately anticipated by weary Americans longing for a path back to normal life.

But criminals are waiting, too, ready to use that desperation to their advantage, federal investigators say.

Homeland Security investigators are working with Pfizer, Moderna and dozens of other drug companies racing to complete and distribute the vaccine and treatments for the virus.

The goal: to prepare for the scams that are coming, especially after the mess of criminal activity this year with phony personal protective equipment, false cures and extortion schemes. "We're all very excited about the potential vaccine and treatments," said Steve Francis, assistant director for global trade investigations with Homeland Security Investigations.

"But I also caution against these criminal organisations and individuals that will try to exploit the American public."

No vaccine has yet been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The FDA has approved the first treatment for COVID-19, the antiviral drug remdesivir.

With vaccines and treatments both, it has warned about the potential for fraud.

"The FDA is particularly concerned that these deceptive and misleading products might cause Americans to delay or stop

appropriate medical treatment, leading to serious and life-threatening harm," the agency said in a recent statement.

The drug companies are to have safeguards and brand-protection features in place to help avoid fraud, but that may not be available until the second generation of vaccine because everything is operated on such an emergency basis, said Karen Gardner, chief marketing officer at SIPCA North America, a company that works as a bridge between the government, businesses and consumers.

She said that makes it more important to educate health care providers on what the real thing looks like.

"When you have anything in high demand and limited supply, there is going to be fraud," she said. Desperation will drive people around normal channels.

Meanwhile, investigators are learning about how the vaccine will be packaged and getting the message out to field agents, creating a mass database of information from more than 200 companies, so they can be prepared to spot fakes and crack down on dangerous fraud.

They are monitoring tens of thousands of false websites and looking for evidence of fake cures sold online. Earlier this year as cases exploded, hospitals and governments grew short on masks, gloves and other protective gear. **AP**

Huge potential for furthering India-Dutch economic ties: India's envoy Venu Rajamony

The Hague: There is huge potential for furthering growth in the Indo-Dutch economic ties, especially in the key areas of water, agriculture, food processing and healthcare, India's envoy to the Netherlands Venu Rajamony said on Monday.

Modern flood management principles adopted by the Dutch nation are of great value to India besides the culture of fitness and passion for cycling are worth emulating, he said on the last day of his tenure in this country.

"The pandemic has opened everyone's eyes to the need to stay healthy and build immunity. Bicycles are cheap, efficient and environment friendly. Electric bikes of the kind popular in the Netherlands can transport people over long distances with little effort. If manufactured in India in large numbers, prices will also be reasonable," Rajamony told PTI in an interview over tele-

phone.

He said that India has strong economic interests in the Netherlands in terms of trade and investment. In the financial year 2020-2021 (April-June), the Netherlands is the second largest investor into India at USD 1.085 billion, the senior diplomat said.

In the ongoing fiscal (April-September 2020), the Netherlands was the third largest destination for Overseas Direct Investment (ODI) from India with investments estimated at USD 679.12 million, Rajamony said. The top two destinations were Singapore and the US.

Rajamony, who superannuates on Monday after putting in over three decades as an Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officer, said that the relations between India and the Netherlands are at an all-time high and significant progress has been made during his tenure. **PTI**

Australia demands apology from China for tweeting 'falsified', 'repugnant' image on war crimes

Melbourne: Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Monday demanded an apology from the Chinese government for tweeting a "falsified" and "repugnant" image of an Australian soldier killing a child in Afghanistan, amid escalating political tensions between Canberra and Beijing.

Morrison also demanded that the Chinese foreign ministry delete the fake tweet attacking the Australian Defence Force in the wake of a war crimes inquiry.

Amidst spiralling tensions between the two nations over trade issues, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian on Monday tweeted a graphic image showing a grinning soldier holding a bloodied knife to the throat of a child holding a lamb.

"Shocked by murder of Afghan civilians & prisoners by Australian soldiers. We strongly condemn such acts, & call for holding them accountable," Zhao tweeted along with the picture.

"Don't be afraid we are coming to bring you peace," reads the message on the image,

referring to a report by Australia's military earlier this month which found "credible information" that some Australian soldiers were involved in the murders of 39 Afghan civilians and prisoners between 2009 and 2013.

The report recommends a total of 36 incidents be referred to the Australian Federal Police (AFP) for criminal investigation.

Morrison said the image tweeted by Zhao was "falsified", "truly offensive" and "repugnant".

"The Chinese government should be totally ashamed of this post. It diminishes them in the world's eyes," he said.

The image, the prime minister said, is "deeply offensive to every Australian, every Australian who has served in that uniform, every Australian who serves in that uniform today, everyone who has pulled on that uniform and served with Australians overseas from whatever nation, that they have done that. It is utterly outrageous and it cannot be justified on any basis whatsoever." **PTI**

Thai protest leaders hear police charges of defaming king

Bangkok: Five leaders of Thailand's pro-democracy movement reported to police on Monday to acknowledge charges that they defamed the king, the most serious of many offenses of which they stand accused.

The five are part of the student-led movement that for several months has been campaigning for Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha and his government to step down, the constitution to be amended to make it more democratic and the monarchy be reformed to make it more accountable.

The demand about the monarchy is the most radical and controversial, because by tradition the institution has been considered untouchable, the bedrock element of Thai nationalism. **AP**

Iran says Israel remotely killed military nuclear scientist

Tehran: A top Iranian security official on Monday accused Israel of using "electronic devices" to remotely kill a scientist who founded the Islamic Republic's military nuclear program in the 2000s.

Ali Shamkhani, the secretary of the country's Supreme National Security Council, made the comment at the funeral for Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, where Iran's defense minister separately vowed to continue the man's work "with more speed and more power." Israel, long suspected of killing Iranian nuclear scientists over the last decade, has declined to comment on the attack.

Fakhrizadeh headed Iran's so-called AMAD program, which Israel and the West have alleged was a military operation looking at the feasibility of building a nuclear weapon.

The International Atomic Energy Agency says that "structured program" ended in 2003.

U.S. Intelligence agencies concurred with that assessment in a 2007 report.

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

Shamkhani's remarks drastically change the story of Fakhrizadeh's killing Friday. Authorities initially said a truck exploded and then gunmen opened fire on the scientist, killing him.

State TV's English-language Press TV earlier reported a weapon recovered from the scene of the attack bore "the logo and specifications of the Israeli military industry."

State TV's Arabic-language channel, Al-Alam, claimed the weapons used were "controlled by satellite," a claim also made Sunday by the semi-official Fars news agency. **AP**

UN hosts latest round of talks on Syria's constitution

Geneva: Delegations from Syria's government, opposition and civil society are meeting in Geneva for the latest round of talks toward revising the war-battered country's constitution.

The U.N. Envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen, was hosting the various sides Monday a day after saying Swiss health officials signed off on hygiene measures in place to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

Several cases cropped up among the Syrian envoys during a previous round of talks.

Nearly a decade into Syria's war, Pedersen acknowledged Sunday "challenges" in moving

forward talks on the constitution, which notably do not include extremist factions that control some parts of Syria -- notably much of northwestern Idlib province.

He said overcoming "deep mistrust" would take a long time, but hoped that work toward possible exchanges of detainees and the establishment of common "principles" in the discussions could help to overcome it.

"I hope that what we have achieved is actually the beginning of starting to build trust between the parties and that this building of trust could then be a door opener to a broader political process," he told reporters on Sunday. **AP**

'China firmly supports Nepal to safeguard its sovereignty, territorial integrity'

Beijing: China's Defence Minister Gen. Wei Fenghe has lauded Nepal's leadership for resolutely pursuing the 'one-China' policy and offered firm support to the Himalayan country in safeguarding its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, the defence ministry said here on Monday.

Wei, who is also a State Councillor, met Nepal Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli and exchanged views on matters of mutual interest and held talks with Army chief Gen. Purna Chandra Thapa on ways to resume military cooperation and training impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic during his one-day visit to Nepal on Sunday.

According to a Chinese defence ministry statement, Wei told the Nepalese leaders that China highly appreciates Nepal for resolutely pursuing the 'one-China' policy, and also firmly supports Nepal to safeguard its national independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Under the 'one-China' policy, Beijing emphasises other countries to recognise Taiwan and Tibet as part of China, it said. **PTI**

Charity says shelling kills 11 civilians in Yemen's Hodeida

AP ■ CAIRO

Artillery fire killed at least 11 civilians, including four children, near Yemen's strategic port city of Hodeida amid that country's grinding war, an international charity said on Monday.

Yemen's internationally recognized government blamed the Iranian-backed Houthis rebels for the attack. A spokesman for the Houthis did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Save the Children said the attack took place Sunday when shells hit home in the town of Durayhimi, just south of Hodeida, which handles about 70% of Yemen's commercial and humanitarian imports.

New Zealand files 13 safety charges after volcano killed 22

Wellington (New Zealand): New Zealand authorities filed safety violation charges on Monday against 10 organizations and three individuals after a volcanic eruption at White Island last year killed 22 people.

The island had been a popular tourist destination before the December 9 eruption. But many people now question why tourists were allowed to visit, especially after experts monitoring seismic activity raised the volcano's alert level two weeks before the eruption.

The names of those charged are being kept secret for now by authorities under New Zealand legal rules.

But two agencies which rely on public funding have disclosed they are among those charged: GNS Science and the National Emergency Management Agency.

Some of the others charged likely include private companies which took tourists to the island. The individuals charged were either company directors or managers. **AP**

13 charred to death as bus collides with van in Pakistan's Punjab

Lahore: At least 13 people were burnt alive and 17 others suffered injuries in a head-on collision between a bus and a van in Pakistan's Punjab province on Monday.

The accident took place on Kalakhatai Road Narang Mandi, some 75 kms from here.

According to rescue officials, the van collided with the bus head-on apparently due to poor visibility owing to fog.

"The van completely burnt after the collision. Rescue officials reached the spot and shifted the injured to hospitals," a rescue spokesperson said, adding that 13 passengers died of burns while the condition of some of the 17 injured is stated to be critical. **PTI**

NATO mulls Af dilemma as US draws down, attacks mount

Brussels: NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said on Monday that the military alliance was grappling with a dilemma over its future in Afghanistan, as the United States starts pulling troops out while attacks by the Taliban and extremist groups mount.

More than 17 years after taking the lead on international security efforts in Afghanistan, NATO now has around 11,000 troops from dozens of nations there helping to train and advise the national security forces. Most of the personnel are from Europe and other NATO partner countries.

But the alliance relies heavily on the United States armed forces for air support, transport and logistics. European allies would struggle even to leave the country without US help, and President Donald Trump's decision to pull almost half the US troops out by mid-January leaves NATO in a bind.

"We face a difficult dilemma. Whether to leave, and risk that Afghanistan becomes once again a safe haven for international terrorists. Or stay, and

risk a longer mission, with renewed violence," Stoltenberg told reporters on the eve of a videoconference between NATO foreign ministers.

Under a peace deal between the United States and the Taliban -- without the involvement of other NATO allies or the Afghan government -- all foreign troops should leave Afghanistan by May 1 if security conditions on the ground permit.

"Whatever path we choose, it is important that we do so together, in a coordinated and deliberate way," Stoltenberg said, on the eve of a videoconference between NATO foreign ministers where the organisation's most ambitious operation ever will be high on the agenda.

Trump's unilateral decision to leave only 2,500 US troops with the mission had allied military planners scrambling, as they tried to work out whether NATO could continue to operate in Kabul, and other major cities. NATO diplomats say that for now they have enough "enablers" to get the job done. **AP**

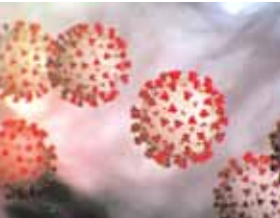
Novel coronavirus may enter brain via nose: Study

Berlin: The novel coronavirus may enter the brain of people through the nose, according to a study published on Monday that may help explain some of the neurological symptoms observed in COVID-19 patients, and inform diagnosis and measures to prevent infection.

The research, published in the journal Nature Neuroscience, noted that SARS-CoV-2 not only affects the respiratory tract but also impacts the central nervous system (CNS), resulting in neurological symptoms such as loss of smell, taste, headache, fatigue and nausea.

Although recent research has described the presence of viral RNA in the brain and cerebrospinal fluid, it remains unclear where the virus enters and how it is distributed within the brain.

The researchers from Charité-Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Germany examined the nasopharynx -- the upper part of the throat that connects to the nasal cavity -- a likely first site of viral infection and replication, and the brains of



33 patients -- 22 males and 11 females -- who died with COVID-19.

The median age at the time of death was 71.6 years, and the time from onset of COVID-19 symptoms to death was a median of 31 days, they said.

The researchers said that they found the presence of SARS-CoV-2 RNA, the genetic material of the virus, and protein in the brain and nasopharynx, adding intact virus particles were also detected in the nasopharynx.

The highest levels of viral RNA were found in the olfactory mucous membrane, they said.

According to the researchers, the disease duration was inversely correlated with the amount of detectable virus, indicating that higher

SARS-CoV-2 RNA levels were found in cases with shorter disease duration.

The team also found SARS-CoV-2 spike protein in certain types of cells within the olfactory mucous layer, where it may exploit the proximity of endothelial and nervous tissue to gain entry to the brain.

In some patients, SARS-CoV-2 spike protein was found in cells expressing markers of neurons, suggesting that olfactory sensory neurons may be infected, as well as in the brain areas that receive smell and taste signals, the researchers said.

SARS-CoV-2 was also found in other areas of the nervous system, including the medulla oblongata -- the primary respiratory and cardiovascular control centre of the brain, they said.

The researchers noted that further COVID-19 autopsy studies that include a broad range of sampling are needed to identify the precise mechanisms that mediate the virus's entry into the brain, and examine other potential ports of entry. **PTI**

8 inmates killed, 37 others hurt in Sri Lankan prison riot; Govt orders probe

Colombo: The Sri Lankan government on Monday ordered a thorough probe into a riot by inmates over rising coronavirus infections at a prison outside the capital Colombo that left at least eight prisoners dead and 37 injured.

Defence Secretary Major General (Retd) G D H Kamal Gunaratne has instructed Inspector General of Police (IGP) C. D. Wickramaratne to conduct a special investigation into the tense situation reported at the Mahara Prison on Sunday.

Issuing a statement, the Defence Ministry said the directive was issued on Monday after it was noted that several inmates had reportedly attempted to escape the prison premises demonstrating unruly behaviour, the Colombo Gazette reported.

The latest clash at Mahara Prison started when some inmates protested against prisoners infected by the COVID-19 virus being transferred from other facilities to Mahara jail. Police spokesman Ajith

Rohana said inmates created "unrest" at the Mahara prison, located about 15 kilometers north of Colombo, and prison officials took steps to control the situation.

The incident comes as pandemic-related unrest has been growing in Sri Lanka's overcrowded prisons. Inmates have staged protests in recent weeks in several prisons as the number of confirmed COVID-19 positive cases spiked in the country's overcrowded jails.

"The incident was started by a set of remand prisoners when they tried to force open a door and escape following which the authorities had to use force," Rohana said.

He said during the entire incident at least 37 more, including two jailors, were injured and all of them were transferred to the nearby Ragama hospital.

The residents near the prison said smoke was coming out of the premises due to fire.

Prisons authorities said the rioters had set fire to the kitchen and a record room of the prison. **PTI**

Explosions in 3 Malian cities amid jihadist attacks

Bamako (Mali): The cities of Kidal, Gao and Menaka in northern Mali were hit by simultaneous attacks on Monday against military camps housing international forces, according to residents and a United Nations official.

Kidal resident Souleymane Ag Mohamed Ali said he heard more than 10 explosions coming from the direction of the camp for UN peacekeepers and soldiers for the French Operation Barkhane.

A UN official confirmed the attacks on three cities, saying rockets fell Monday morning on the camp in Kidal, and at the same time there were similar attacks in Gao and Menaka. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not permitted to speak to press on the matter.

There were not further details. No group has claimed responsibility for the simultaneous attacks, but they bear the mark of jihadist groups linked to al-Qaida that carry out attacks in both northern and central Mali. **AP**

DOCYARD

DR RINKU JAIN

BioM Dentist

SPARSH CLINIC



Bite off your bad posture



When most people talk about their oral health, brushing, flossing and mouthwash come to mind. While these tasks are crucial to maintaining oral hygiene, there may be one habit that could be affecting your jaws and it will surely surprise you. Each tissue of our body is interconnected. There is said to be a direct link between our head posture and bite, teeth contact, and, ultimately, jaw pain. Our bite (Bite is technically referred to as dental occlusion) influences our posture. It is the contact between the upper and lower teeth when the mouth is closed. To understand the relation between the bite and posture here's a simple exercise:

Bend your neck backwards and close your jaw, notice that first, your back teeth come in contact with each other. Now bend your neck forwards and down towards the chest and close your jaw, notice that your front teeth will come in contact.

This exercise demonstrates how the bite and head position are interrelated. Our bite determines the position of our jaw, hence it also affects the position of our head on our spine. Your teeth and skeleton are interconnected, that is your head, spine, pelvis and the legs. Our teeth are the ones that help us to maintain our head position. As and when there is a change in the biting pattern, the body adjusts itself which involves the muscles of head & neck, back, pelvis, leg and feet.

Our teeth are the ones that help us to maintain our head position. As and when there is a change in the biting pattern, the body adjusts itself which involves the muscles of head & neck, back, pelvis, leg and feet

- Faulty dental restorations
- If a tooth is removed and not replaced.
- Thumb sucking and tongue thrust in kids
- Mouth breathing, Tongue tie, high frenum attachments
- Symptoms associated with a change in bite patterns are:
 - Headaches, neck aches, back pain
 - Pain in the jaw joint(TMJ)
 - Body ache
 - Muscle fatigue
 - Cracking sound in the TMJ while opening or closing the mouth
 - Bruxism
 - Sensitivity in teeth
 - Tingling and numbness in the fingers
 - Cracks in teeth
 - Change in posture.

When the bite is involved you must visit a dentist to correct the problems so that the muscles of the face and neck, the TMJ, nerves and ligaments all work harmoniously without any strain and tension.

Correction of the bite depends on the cause and the extent of damages already done. Using the most advanced digital occlusal analysis(T-scan) needs to be used, so that the bite can be balanced, so the muscles, jaw joint, and nerves are all relaxed. So if you face any of the problems mentioned, consult with your dentist, to see the involvement of your bite and get it corrected.

WARMFOODS

PEANUTS: Peanuts or groundnuts are high in nutrients like magnesium; Vitamin E, copper, phosphorus, potassium, zinc, calcium, arginine and many others.

Studies suggest that peanuts can help lessen the risk of cardiovascular diseases. Antioxidants, on the hand, help to protect the body from oxidative stress, which occurs in cases of various cancers and diseases.

Peanuts are also an extremely high source of plant protein and medical practitioners have advised that it should

be incorporated in the diet for children, vegetarians, and protein deficient people.

Peanuts provide our body with essential Vitamins, which helps in regulating metabolism, converting fat and carbohydrates into energy, and facilitating bone and tissue formation. Eating nuts has been associated with plenty of health benefits — from increased cognitive function to protection from Alzheimers and lower risk of mortality and developing chronic diseases like respiratory disease, neurodegenerative disease, diabetes and cancer.



ADAR POONAWALLA, CEO, Serum Institute of India, talks about the efficacy and safety of the COVID-19 vaccine Covishield and how the institute will apply for an emergency use licence. MUSBA HASHMI brings you a report

Only after two months into the pandemic, the world started to find a vaccine that could help. However, now even after nine months, the hunt for an effective vaccine is still on. A ray of hope for Indians is the Serum Institute of India's (SII) Covishield vaccine trial. The institute has partnered with AstraZeneca and University of Oxford to manufacture the vaccine.

With everybody's eyes glued on each and every minor development in the Covishield vaccine, what comes as a positive is the announcement that the institute will apply for emergency use of the vaccine in two weeks. With that being said, a cause of worry for most people is the safety of the vaccine.

To solve their worries, Adar Poonawalla, CEO, SII, explains that the vaccine provides 60 per cent sterilisation.

"This vaccine is a very good one, there were zero hospitalizations for those who took it. It also offers the sterilising immunity of about 60 per cent reduction of the virus, which is very good for a vaccine for this disease," Poonawalla said while addressing a virtual press conference on Saturday.

Not only this, but the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi also carried a three-city visit to the institute to know the status of the vaccine on Saturday and he was impressed.

"The PM is well-versed with vaccines now and we had very lit-



Dr Cyrus Poonawalla, Adar Poonawalla and Natasha Poonawalla welcome PM Narendra Modi to the Serum Institute of India, Pune plant & office

tle to explain to him. He was extremely impressed with the facility," Poonawalla said.

He added that the institute has discussed the implementation plan and is in process of submitting the data of the review plan. "After we have submitted the review plan and with the decision of Health Ministry, we will roll out 100 million doses, but it depends on the submission and approval status," Poonawalla said.

Though it is still unclear how many doses does the Government

plan to buy, Poonawalla says the figures can be around 400 million.

"As of now we don't have any information on how many doses the Government will buy, but we are anticipating 300-400 million doses by July 2021. We are talking about how and when to distribute it. We are also in talks to keep it at an affordable price. Having said that, we are waiting for the licence as of now," he said.

The good news is that they are not anticipating any delay in the vaccine production.

"I don't suspect any delay, even if the approval comes two weeks later, at the end point it shouldn't make any difference in the production," he said.

The distribution of the vaccine, he said, will be focused towards India initially and then to the African countries.

"We are producing 50-60 million doses a month and after January-February next year we plan to produce 100 million doses a month," Poonawalla said.

In his concluding statement, Poonawalla said that he wouldn't want to give out any message that would raise the doubts in people's mind.

"In a world where some people are questioning the vaccine, we don't want to build any doubt in the mind of people. Some are unsure or sceptical about it, hence we should only give out a message after proper fact check with the Health Ministry and not make any negative statement without proper research," he said.

This vaccine is a very good one, there were zero hospitalizations for those who took it. It offers a sterilising immunity of about 60 per cent, which is good for a vaccine for this disease

DadiKaKehna

Sensitive teeth can be extremely painful, especially if one is fond of having hot and cold beverages. ROSHANI DEVI shares easy home remedies that can help ease the pain without costing you an arm and a leg



If you love having tea, hot or cold coffee and soft drinks, teeth sensitivity can definitely make you feel annoyed, not to mention the pain that it causes.

Here are a few home remedies that can help reduce the pain so that you can enjoy your cup full of happiness.

First, take half teaspoon of salt, mix it in a glass of lukewarm water and rinse your mouth with it. Do this about 30 seconds twice a day.

Second, take help of honey and warm water. Mix honey in a glass of lukewarm water. Rinse your mouth with it. Honey is an antibacterial and can help in oral healing.

Third, don't forget turmeric. Turmeric is an anti-inflammatory agent. Use turmeric to massage your teeth. Alternatively, you can make a past using one teaspoon of turmeric, half teaspoon of salt and half teaspoon of mustard oil. Apply this paste to teeth and gums twice daily and see the magic.

Last but not the least, green tea works just as fine. Most of us love having green tea daily just to give a treat to our taste buds or to treat our body. However, green tea is good for oral health too. One can use unsweetened green tea as a mouthwash twice a day to strengthen teeth.



Let's test it out

Whether it is done in the physician's office or the patient's home testing is an invaluable tool. SAURABH GOYAL tells you how regular ketone testing can help manage Diabetes

As blood tests are tools. Some are to diagnose Diabetes, some are to help you manage it on a daily or long term basis and some are to keep you safe.

People with Diabetes are often told about blood testing and how important testing is to manage their blood glucose. It is a critical part of Diabetes management. Whether it is done in the physician's office or the patient's home it is an invaluable tool. This very important test called ketone testing is often not taught too well.

This test can be life-saving and should be explained to every person whilst sharing knowledge on Diabetes and the skills required to deal with it. It is simple and if you have diabetes you should know about it.

When the body is unable to burn glucose it burns fat and this produces a chemical called ketones. This occurs when there is too little insulin for the

amount of glucose in the body. Possible causes for this could be:

- Experiencing stress or illness such as fever
- Having an infection
- Omitting or taking too little insulin
- Eating more food than planned
- Improper storage of insulin

The human body primarily runs on glucose. When your body is low on glucose, or if you have diabetes and don't have enough insulin to help your cells absorb the glucose, your body starts breaking down fats for energy. Ketones (chemically known as ketone bodies) are by-products of the breakdown of fatty acids.

When the needle is inserted to draw blood, some people feel slight pain. Others feel a prick or stinging. This soon goes away.

If left untreated, ketones continue to rise and can result in a condition called Diabetic Ketoacidosis, or DKA. This

condition is quite serious and requires immediate medical attention. DKA is the most common cause of hospitalisation and death among children and young adults with diabetes, and the leading cause of adverse events for insulin pump users.

Testing your blood or urine to measure your ketone levels can all be done at home. At-home testing kits are available for both types of tests, although urine testing continues to be more common. Urine tests are available without a prescription at most drugstores, or you can buy them online.

At-home meters (Blood Glucose Monitoring systems) are available to test for blood ketones. This is performed in a similar way to a finger-stick glucose test. You prick your finger with a needle and place a small drop of blood onto the testing area.

The writer is Managing Director, Dr Trust (Nureca Ltd)

BREAKING BACK

The prolonged remote working phase has taken a toll on our backs and necks. MOHD WASIF tells you how by following simple steps you can keep the pain at bay



More than eight months into the COVID-19 crisis, has made us get used to the new normal of adapting to the culture of work from home. Leading companies are heavily involved in standard occupations that aim and promote the work culture of presently sitting at our homes, slumping in front of our portable workstations while also being constrained to oversee family chores. This puts a parcel of strain on our solid, inflexible and rigid spine.

Working from home isn't transitory; it's an ambush on our frame. This prolonged remote working phase has surely taken a toll on our backs and necks. And if you fall under those lucky ones who have not faced any kind of back pain as of now the probability of it happening to you too is pretty high. The single leading cause of disability across the world is related to back pain.

Four out of every five adults experience back pain sooner or later in life, making it the most common medical condition around the globe. It's high time we rethink about and work upon our sitting and sleeping postures. It's not that this issue didn't exist before the pandemic, but the adaptation to work from home has led to a rapid increase in the number of back and neck strain cases. We know for a fact that as we grow old, our spine ages along with it, and we may start feeling some aches and pains. But the interesting fact is that backache is more than a minor annoyance for people of all age groups.

Now the question arises; what causes the intolerable back and neck pain.

- It all comes down to a single word, posture. Poor posture while doing our day-to-day activities such as sleeping or working, is one of the major reasons behind it. While working in the office, an individual sits on his/her chair for eight hours continuously.
- Strain on a particular ligament or muscle is one of the most common issues leading to issues related to the spinal cord.
- Undoubtedly exercising is good for health but it should be done under proper guidance and training, else this could lead to major health issues like slip disc.

Yes, back and neck pain could prove to be a severe physical condition, but every problem has its own solutions. Few things that could help in avoiding backache, neck ache, or other related issues are discussed as follows.

- Engage in mindful meditation once/twice a day, to keep the body in tune.
- Make exercise a habit, be it yoga or gym the choice is yours. The main purpose is to gently stretch your joints and tissues.
- Make sure your blood circulation isn't hindered. Take a break after every 45-50 minutes, walk a little.
- Sort out your work setup or workstation as you call it nowadays. Get yourself a comfortable chair which helps in maintaining an upright posture and decreases the strain on the ligaments in the spine while you're working for long stretches.
- The kind of mattress we choose matters the most. Select a mattress that helps you in keeping your spine neutral and aligned and to minimise any curve in your spine, you can go for orthopedic mattresses. If a mattress is too firm or too squishy it won't support your spine at your neck or lower back the way it needs to. So choose accordingly.

The writer is Founder-CEO, Fresh Up Mattress

INBRIEF

Lung cancer treatment has changed dramatically in the last decade with the emergence of an era of personalised medicine. New treatment options are available that are more precise and customised according to sub-type and molecular profile of lung cancer. Targeted therapy which involves administration of oral tablets has revolutionised lung cancer therapeutics, said Dr Ullas Batra, Senior Consultant & Chief of Thoracic Medical Oncology, Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Institute and Research Centre, Delhi.

Almost 90% of patients with lung cancers present late and are usually already at an advanced stage disease, warranting the institution of chemotherapy upfront. However over the last few years, molecular targeted therapy has caused a paradigm shift, with a better safety profile, fewer side effects and better survival outcomes for the patients.

According to Dr Batra, lung cancer is no longer only a smokers' disease and almost 30% of the lung cancer patients are non-smokers. It can happen at any age and hence warrants early detection to render a better quality of life. However if detected early, lung cancer can be better controlled, with minimum disruption to quality of life.

TrendSlazer

Deols announce their new film

The Deol family announced their new film, *Apne 2*, on the occasion of Guru Nanak Jayanti on Monday. The film brings together the three generations of the family, **Dharmendra**, his sons **SUNNY DEOL** and **BOBBY DEOL**, and grandson **Karan Deol**.

Announcing the same, Sunny Deol tweeted from his verified account: “*Babaji ke aashirwaad aur aapke pyaar ki wajah se aaj hum vapas ek sath nazar aayenge*. Feeling blessed to get a chance to work with my father, brother and yet again with my son. *#Apne2*, in cinemas Diwali 2021.” The film goes on floors in March.

‘There is nothing wrong with becoming a popular celebrity on social media, just that there is a huge change that has happened. I entered the industry during the transition period. Earlier, it was important to have talent and as an artiste, we used to sharpen our skills. Now there is something called talent management.’
—**Amrita Rao**



Bollywood icon **RAVEENA TANDON**’s friendly appearance for her friend Neelam Kothari Soni in the Netflix series

Fabulous Lives of Bollywood Wives has got everyone talking.

She earned love from the audience for her cameo in which she even mimics her *Parampara* co-star **Saif Ali Khan**. If the insiders are to be believed, Saif loved the scene and they had a good laugh on it.

Reacting to this, Raveena said, “I’m happy that the show is a success, and I enjoyed my day out with Neelam and the fun cooking class that we took.”

Halsey slams Grammys

After being snubbed at the Grammy nominations this year, American singer-song-writer **HALSEY** has called out the nomination process, criticising it for being about more than just releasing quality music or cultural impact.

“I’ve been thinking and wanted to choose my words carefully because a lot of people have extended sympathy and apology to me since the Grammy nominations. The Grammys are an elusive process,” she wrote on Instagram Stories.



Oscar and Grammy-winning Indian composer AR Rahman has been roped in as ambassador of the BAFTA Breakthrough initiative in India. “I am happy to be working with BAFTA to discover some of the amazing talent that India has to offer in film, games and television,” Rahman said. “This is a unique opportunity for promising artistes to be supported by a world-renowned organisation, to not only make connections with other talented creatives across the world but to be mentored by BAFTA-winners and nominees. I am looking forward to seeing the brilliant talent chosen from India

Beyond the clouds

Music composer-singer **AR RAHMAN** has been chosen as the BAFTA Breakthrough India ambassador

to be showcased on a global stage,” he added.

The initiative marks BAFTA’s first steps into India. The talent hunt initiative will enable the Academy to identify and nurture up to five talents working in film, games, or television in India. The exercise, known as BAFTA Breakthrough initiative, is part of

the Academy’s year-round effort to support new talent, operating alongside their Awards ceremonies.

“I am also incredibly grateful for the invaluable support of our brilliant ambassador AR Rahman, an industry leader in his creative work and someone who shares our passion for identifying and nurtur-

ing new talent. He is well positioned to support the initiative, with his broad spectrum of work drawing recognition across Hindi, Tamil, and Telugu films, which will help BAFTA to appeal to a wide section of the industry,” said Amanda Berry, Chief Executive of BAFTA.



On Monday, the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) shared that the applications are now open for BAFTA Breakthrough India, supported by Netflix.

As part of the initiative in India, a jury of British and Indian industry experts will select five talents from across India to take part in the year-long mentoring and guidance program. The chosen talent will also connect with and learn from the British and Indian creative industries, and will be promoted as BAFTA Breakthrough artistes globally. —**JANS**

Everest in the times of COVID

Delta 105, an army experiential zone, is going to organise a two-day boot camp for aspiring mountaineers



Have you dreamt of climbing Mount Everest or go mountaineering amid this pandemic but don’t know where and how to start? Well, now look no further as a boot camp is being organised to take you beyond the virtual feel of mountaineering and travelling in these times. Delta 105, a one of its kind army experiential zone located in Manesar is going to organise a two days boot camp — “Commando Boot Camp” for aspiring mountaineers. It will certainly be your “gateway to Mount Everest” and will give you an essence of the hard work and time that goes into it. You can now believe that your dream of climbing the mountains is not too far.

The camp is led by professionals and enthusiasts who are experienced and will give you proper guidance and training for an adventurous and fun-filled experience. It is a three days camp from December 4 to 6 and involves activities like adventure courses, friendship peak and much more. The facilities include food, training, camping, army obstacle course, tent pitching, obstacle run, jumaring, rappelling, bonfire, survival training, leadership, star gazing and more adventure. It is going to be a deep dive into the mountaineering world.

If we think of any experience outdoors in the COVID hit world, the first thing that pops up is protection against the virus. The camp organisers shared that the place is regularly sanitised and necessary safety measures have been considered beforehand for the trainees safety. Female instructors will also be available.

The attendees will be provided training about:

- Basic skills that are required.
- Required equipment and their use.
- Required fitness level.
- Motivation through films and stories.
- Guidance and counselling.
- Confidence and personality development.

The eligibility criteria includes:

- The person should be able to walk for 30 minutes without a break.
- The person should not be overweight.
- The person should not be suffering from any kind of illness.
- No surgical patients are allowed.
- The person should be aged between 10 to 17 years.
- The person should be energetic, strong enough to sweat out the hurdles.

BEAT THE WINTER GLOOM

Here are a few simple yet effective home decor ideas to live the season joyfully. By **TEAM VIVA**

Winters are truly magical as it brings along the joy of sipping a hot cup of tea, the ease of snuggling in your blanket and the charm of basking in the afternoon sunlight. While it is the season of lounging around in the house wearing your comfy pajamas and working from your bed, this season also brings along the lazy mood swings. So how about we prep-up our space personalised basis our mood? Some like it to be warm, some vibrant and some look for the best of both worlds. So this year beat the winter gloominess by tweaking your home décor and relish the cold season thoughtfully with these simple yet effective ideas!

EMBRACE VIBRANT NOOKS

When the winters hit, your mood can take a backseat due to the sombre skies outside. This is where a bright shade can instantly make your space feel upbeat and energetic. So for your warm and comforting nooks in your house, go for a dark green colour on the walls which come out as pleasing to the senses yet radiating vibrancy. While nooks are great spaces to enjoy various activities, it can also be just a pretty customised corner area in your house.

Unlock your aesthetic sense by incorporating wood pattern laminates to balance the natural impact and sophistication of your look. For instance, one can opt a cabinet made with the Leon Ash laminate, whose subtle light brown shade and exquisite woodgrain texture seamlessly stands out against the walls. A few laminates also offers a safeguard plus technology with health and hygiene features — antivirus, antibacterial, antifungal that retard and kill up to 99.99 per cent of viruses and bacteria which come in contact with the surface. You can be easily assured of indoor hygiene and the health of your loved ones. Lastly, to make your nook cozier and



warmer, layer your cabinet with a thick cloth and mini pinecone plants.

READING SHENANIGANS

The only thing better than curling up with a good book is having a perfect spot to cosy-up with it. This space has to feel like you and to make that happen, think about the things that make you feel happy and soothed. Bring those elements into your reading area. Start with placing a soft chair and plush throw pillow which is all you would require for seating arrangements. Ditch the bookshelves, instead go for ancient trunks or an ottoman for stacking your novels. You can also re-create a coffee bar on a stool with a coffee machine and your favourite mug.

Now, speaking of the walls, go for distressed veneers that are easy to maintain and highly durable. You can opt for this Distressed The Plus Oak Parquet, which has a rich dark brown shade that will infuse cosy vibes in your space. Try to keep your white lighting dim to blend the colours well. A fur rug in beige or cream colour will further accentuate the entire set-up. Place some scented candles and you are ready to unwind with books amid a peaceful abode.

SLEEP, WORK, BINGE-WATCH, REPEAT

With everyone working from home and now with the onset of the winter season, our bedroom has become quite a multi-purpose area. Your bedroom provides a private sanctuary where you unwind, relax and get ready for the day ahead — basically live your daily moments. Go for a timeless monochrome palette of black and white, which brings alive emotions of peace as well as warmth. You can use black as your luxe statement shade by incorporating it in your furniture like bed, armless chair and a floor lamp.

Keep your room spick and span by contrasting the colours with wooden floors like the Oak Cappuccino, whose natural light brown colour will give your interiors a flamboyant panache. Also, it is your chance to bring out your crisp white blankets and grey pillows which are perfect for the cold season while complementing your décor. The beauty of indoor planters lies in its ability to instantly brighten your house, add freshness and bring life to the place. Here, you can place tall sea green ceramic planters to add that inviting essence to your bedroom.

Needless to say, we all need our winterland to be a space that resonates with us and makes us feel comfortable as we go about the day. Don’t you already feel like trying these inspiring and distinct home décor themes? We too!

A voice that matters

If empowered well, the youth can become agents of change and peace, says **NEIL BINOY**

It’s important to note how the young ones have started to recognise issues, which need immediate attention. From climate change, corruption, racism and gender to education and technology, they are initiating necessary dialogues. Until now, most of them have lived in the dark. Through this column, I hope to bring light to the issues that thrive in the darkest corners of our world, feeding off children’s silence.

Young minds have been scarred by everyday strife and conflict. Bullying, violence, discrimination — you name it and at least, one child will have witnessed it firsthand. The issues we face, as children, are often swept under the carpet. Our voices have been drowned out in the deluge. There are hardly any platforms where we express our views and anguish.

Our voices are young and yet, they are powerful. Today, we

see child activists like Malala Yousafzai, Marley Dias and Greta Thunberg speak up and make those around them listen. A 14-year-old Greta has inspired thousands of children and adults to protest against the sluggishness of global leaders in protecting the environment. With her rousing speech in the United Nations, Greta made the world’s leaders sit up and listen as she raved about how they had robbed the youth and the next generations of their future by destroying the environment. She set an example, showcasing the difference children can make, and in many ways, we, as children, are as capable as any adult. We all know how the photograph of her ice-cold, piercing stare at the former US President Donald Trump went viral.

Well now, a fresh shift in power means a potential change in diplomatic relations with var-



ious countries across the world, including India and China. The US President is the singular most powerful man in the world with enough power to make or break other nations. More importantly, if he wants to etch out a successful run as president, he needs to build a more inclusive and a sustainable environment. In this era of ‘Black Lives Matter’ and environmental damage on an irre-

versible and increasingly dangerous scale, we require the power to shift towards a more people-friendly approach, one that helps prevent discrimination. Not only that, but we need a leader who knows how to listen, especially to us, as children, as the youth.

The world has had many leaders who stood for the youth. One such leader was Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. He who valued

children’s endeavours and was a leader who knew the best to understand the youth and nurture the leader in them. He had said, “Children are like buds in a garden. They should be carefully and lovingly nurtured as they are the future of the nation and the citizens of tomorrow.”

History is evidence of how time and again young leaders have shaped the future and brought a

revolution. Maharaja Shree Chithira Thirunall of Travancore took the reins at a young age, creating a renaissance for the State through his innovative reforms in education, administration and the industrialisation of the city. His ground-breaking Temple Entry Proclamation to eradicate untouchability — a decision he took when he was 12 and implemented at 17 when he took over as the king — is the most remembered act of courage till date.

If empowered well, the youth can become agents of change and peace. Young voices matter, their action could change the course of history. A nation that fails to nurture its youth is destroying its future. In this 21st century, as the future beckons, the young voices matter. As Mary McLeod Bethune said, “We have a powerful potential in our youth and we must have the courage to change old ideas and practices so that we may direct their power toward good ends.”

(The author is a teen student activist.)

'Playing FC cricket gives us advantage in Tests'

Labuschagne says Australian players will get benefit of playing Sheffield Shield matches

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australia's rising star Marnus Labuschagne believes that the home team will enjoy a slight advantage going into the Test series against India as most of its top-order players will be coming in after having played a fair amount of first-class cricket.

Labuschagne, who contributed a solid 70 off 61 balls in the second ODI which Australia won by 51 runs on Sunday, has scored two hundreds in three Sheffield Shield matches.

"It definitely helps to have a few games under your belt just to get the pace and the timing of the game from T20s to one-dayers to four-day cricket," he replied to a query during a virtual media interaction on Monday.

The Indian players, who had played IPL and now ODIs, last played red-ball cricket in New Zealand and will only have two three-day games to get into the groove.

"But a lot of these (Indian) players were talking about, they've been doing it for a long time, they're not new to the changes of format. I'd be surprised if they didn't shift back into gear very quickly."

"I will say that it's a slight advantage, four out of our top six have been playing Shield cricket and got that rhythm as a batting group."

With David Warner ruled out of the last ODI as well as the upcoming T20 Internationals, Labuschagne won't mind a chance to open the innings if he is asked about it.

"Certainly, if I got asked to open the batting absolutely. It's an

opportunity that I would enjoy taking. We'll wait and see how our team shapes up for the next game and see the balance of the side, but yeah, I would love doing it," Labuschagne said.

"My role at No 4 is just to read the situation of the game and play my role accordingly," he said.

Asked how Warner is emotionally dealing with the injury setback that happened during the second ODI,

Labuschagne insisted that he is fine.

"He is a strong character and he will come back. Also his absence is an opportunity for someone else."

Steve Smith's form is something that will obviously help Australia in the Test series, feels Labuschagne.

"Cricket's a massive confidence game and even though it's a different format, it still gives you

a lot of confidence when you're scoring runs consistently and the way Steve and Davey (David Warner) are batting currently, I've got no doubt they'll be able to transfer that into the Test summer.

"But right now there's still a lot of games to be played before that, we've just got to make sure we finish this one-day series well and then straight into the T20s where we start really well."

Smith's second ODI hundred is one of the best according to Labuschagne and he called his form scary.

"That was one of the best innings I've seen in one-day cricket, not only from Steve but from anyone," the 26-year-old said.

"I think the way he batted yesterday (Sunday) was superb. It almost felt like he didn't give an opportunity, didn't really take any risk, but he got a hundred off 62 balls."

"When someone's doing that, that's kind of scary."

About his own innings, he was happy to have a partnership with Smith.

"It was really nice to build that partnership with him, 136, it was just nice to keep ticking it over and we were really busy through that middle part when we came together. Then towards the back end, Steve really took the game on and that's how we got 390."

"They're two very big scores in the last two games, thanks obviously to Steve."

Injured Warner out

Short will replace Aussie opener for white ball series; Cummins also rested

PTI ■ SYDNEY

In-form Australian opener David Warner has been ruled out of the remainder of the limited-overs series against India due to a groin injury that he suffered during the second ODI on Sunday, while top pacer Pat Cummins has been rested as part of his workload management.

Warner, who scored 69 and 83 in the first two ODIs, hurt himself on Sunday while fielding at the SCG in the second one-dayer.

The dashing opener has returned home to begin his rehabilitation and will be looking to get fit ahead of the opening Test at Adelaide starting December 17.

"Pat and Davie are critical to our plans for the Test series," coach Justin Langer was quoted as saying by the Australian media.

"Davie will work through his injury rehab and in Pat's case it is important all of our players are managed well to keep them mentally and physically fit throughout what is a challenging summer."

"The priority for both is being fully prepared for one of the biggest and most important home Test series we have played in recent years, especially with World Test Championship points up for grabs."

Left-handed batsman D'Arcy Short, who was the leading run-scorer in two series in the Big Bash League, has been named Warner's



replacement in Australia's white-ball squad.

India and Australia will play one more ODI on Wednesday before competing in three T20 Internationals, starting Friday, followed by the much-anticipated four-match Test series.

All-rounder Marcus Stoinis, who missed the second ODI after suffering a side strain in the opening game, will stay in the squad.

But all-rounder Mitchell Marsh, who is recovering from an ankle injury sustained while playing in the IPL, will not be playing the warm-up game between India A and Australia A starting on Sunday.

He will now continue his rehabilitation and no replacement has been named for him in the A squad.

No captain would give Bumrah two-over opening spell: Gambhir

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former opener Gautam Gambhir feels India skipper Virat Kohli committed a tactical blunder that no other captain would, by giving his premier pacer Jasprit Bumrah just a two-over opening spell in the series-conceding second ODI loss to Australia.

Gambhir, who has been pretty critical of Kohli's tactical acumen as captain, felt that the difference between the two sides so far was how Australian captain Aaron Finch handled his most successful pacer Josh Hazlewood in the first two ODIs that the hosts won easily.

"I find it difficult to comprehend that if you have a bowler of Jasprit Bumrah's calibre and you give him only two overs upfront. It's not a tactical mistake but a tactical blunder," Gambhir said in ESPN*Cricinfo's* show *Match Day Hindi*.

A five-over spell would have allowed Bumrah and Mohammed Shami to at least try and pick up two wickets upfront.

"...I was expecting Bumrah and Shami to bowl five-over spells each upfront and tried getting a couple of wickets each. So, I don't think there is any captain in world cricket who would give Jasprit Bumrah, two overs with the new ball," Gambhir said as it is.

With all top three Australian batsmen — Aaron Finch, David Warner and Steve Smith — striking form at the same time, Gambhir feels that if any bowler had a chance of getting the trio out, it had to be Bumrah.

"Now Finch, Warner and Smith, the top three are in prime form and who has the best chance of taking their wicket? It's Jasprit Bumrah

"... And you give him 2 overs and bring him after 10 overs, when the ball is a tad old and it gets warmer and you expect him to get wickets in these conditions. He is human too."

He then cited the example of how Finch used Hazlewood in the first two games.

"First game, Finch gave him six-over spell and second game a five-over first spell and six overs when Starc had a bad day. Hazlewood has been the standout bowler."

Gambhir was impressed with how Australia's sixth bowling option (the combination of Marcus Stoinis and Glenn Maxwell in first and Moises Henriques and Maxwell in second) controlled the proceedings.

"It happened in the first match as well. First match, Marcus Stoinis gave some 25 runs in 6 overs that he bowled and that was done by Henriques in the second game. So that's the difference you had."

"So, if your sixth bowler can give 6 to 7 overs, then you don't need to bowl with a front-liner who is having an off day like Mitchell Starc."

"Imagine had Hardik not bowled those overs, what kind of pressure it would have been on Shami and Navdeep Saini," he said.

While Virat Kohli, with close to 11,500 runs and 43 hundreds, has a staggering record, Gambhir feels that Smith for all practical reasons isn't too far behind even if the numbers suggest otherwise.

"I don't think there is a lot of difference between Kohli and Smith. If you go by numbers, Kohli always gave better numbers than Smith but if you look at his (Smith) record, in the previous five or seven ODIs, he has had three hundreds, so difference is not much."

"He has scored 62 ball hundreds back to back. Obviously you will call Kohli, the greatest ODI player as per numbers but not much difference between him (Smith) and Kohli."

SINGLES



Kiwi pacer Lockie Ferguson poses with Player of the series trophy and pay cheque after end of T20I series between New Zealand and West Indies on Monday

NEW ZEALAND POCKET T20 SERIES 2-0

MOUNT MAUNGANUI: New Zealand on Monday claimed the T20 series against the West Indies 2-0 after the third and final match of the rubber was washed out here. Persistent rain played spoilsport to left-arm spinner Mitchell Santner's debut as New Zealand's T20I captain and the final match of the series was called off after just 2.2 overs. Ferguson was named the Player of the Series for his six wickets. Both the teams will now head to Hamilton, where they will play the first Test of the two-match series, starting December 3.

NO LEWA, NEUER FOR ATLETICO GAME

MUNICH: Bayern Munich will leave Robert Lewandowski and Manuel Neuer at home for the Champions League game at Atletico Madrid on Tuesday, coach Hansi Flick said on Monday. Lewandowski and Neuer "will be rested" along with midfielder Leon Goretzka, while midfielder Corentin Tolisso has a minor injury, Flick said. Backup goalkeeper Alexander Nübel is set to replace Neuer and make his European debut for Bayern.

4 OLY-BOUND BOXERS INCLUDED IN TOPS

NEW DELHI: Four Olympic-bound Indian boxers — two men and as many women — have been included in the sports ministry's Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS), SAI said on Monday. World Bronze-medallist Simranjeet Kaur (60kg), Asian medallist Pooja Rani (75kg) joined M C Mary Kom in the elite group. Asian Silver-winner Ashish Kumar (75kg) and Asian Games bronze-winner Satish Kumar (+91kg) have been included in a group which already featured Amit Panghal (52kg), Manish Kaushik (63kg), and Vikas Krishan (69kg) among the Tokyo-bound.

LOW TO REMAIN IN CHARGE OF GERMANY

BERLIN: Joachim Low will remain in charge of Germany for next year's delayed European Championship despite a series of poor recent results, the German football federation announced on Monday. "The presidential committee of the DFB decided unanimously this Monday during a teleconference, to continue with coach Joachim Low on the difficult path of renewal started in March 2019," it said in a statement. Low, 60, has been in charge of the Germany team since taking over from Jurgen Klinsmann following the 2006 World Cup and led the nation to a fourth world title, and first since reunification, in Brazil in 2014. However, Germany are in crisis following a 6-0 defeat to Spain and recent draws with Switzerland, twice, and Turkey.

HAZARD FACES ANOTHER SPELL ON SIDELINES

MADRID: Real Madrid attacker Eden Hazard faces another spell on the sidelines after the club confirmed on Monday he sustained an injury to his right thigh in the weekend loss to Alaves. The Belgium international was substituted after just 28 minutes of Saturday's 2-1 home loss to Alaves. The club said in a statement that Hazard had been diagnosed with an injury to his right quadriceps and that his "recovery will continue to be assessed". Real did not provide a timeline for Hazard's return, but local media reported he could be ruled out for at least two weeks.

WOMEN'S CAMP IN GOA FROM TODAY

NEW DELHI: The Indian women's football team will start its first training camp in nine months in Goa from Tuesday under national coach Maymol Rocky in a strict bio-secure environment put in place by the AIFF in wake of the Covid-19. Women's coach Rocky said that the team is excited to resume training with an eye on their big-ticket event — AFC Asian Cup in 2022.

AGENCIES

New ICC boss questions future of Test c'ship

Barclay is not convinced the current Test championship model is 'fit for purpose'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The International Cricket Council's newly-elected chairman Greg Barclay on Monday conceded that the ambitious World Test Championship hasn't quite achieved what it intended to and the disruption caused by Covid-19 has only highlighted its "shortcomings".

World Test Championship schedule has been thrown haywire by the pandemic and the ICC has come up with a percentage allocation of points as all the scheduled series before the 2021 final at the Lord's cannot be completed in a short span of time.

Has the Test Championship given the format a fillip that it was meant to? "In short, I don't think so. The Covid has probably highlighted its shortcomings of the championship," Barclay, who took charge earlier this month, said during a virtual media conference.

The New Zealander feels that a lot of problems with the current cricket-



ing calendar is due to the World Test Championship which was fitted in to popularise the format, something that didn't happen, according to him.

"...The issues that we have already got, I wonder whether some of it was because of an attempt to develop a Test Championship, clearly designed to drive interest back into Test cricket, provide a bit of context and relevance

around the Test matches," he said.

While it was good in theory but has probably flopped in practice.

"From an idealist's point of view, probably it had a lot of merit but practically, I do disagree, I am not sure whether it has achieved what it intended to do," he said.

In fact, Barclay dropped a hint that the inaugural WTC could well be the last one as smaller members can't afford Test cricket championship anymore.

"My personal view is let's get through with the little bit that we can in this Covid-19, with reallocation of points and all that."

"...But once we have done that, let's go back to the drawing board as I am not quite sure whether it (WTC) entirely fits the purpose and has achieved what it intended to after being conceptualised four to five years back."

"I think we need to look at it in context of calendar and not put cricketers in a situation where it's a lot more worse and not going to help us," the New Zealand lawyer asserted.

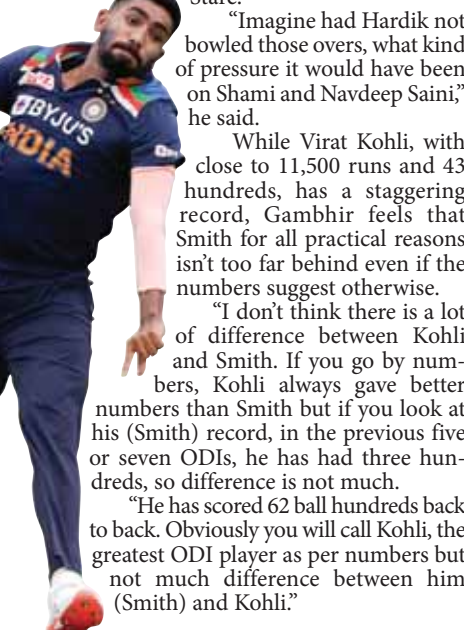
Smith wasn't sure if he would play

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Top Australian batsman Steve Smith has revealed that he suffered a "bad dose of vertigo" ahead of the second one-dayer and was not sure of playing the game in which he struck a series-clinching hundred.

Smith's quick-fire 62-ball-100 propelled Australia to a mammoth 389 for four in the second ODI, which they defended easily to secure a decisive 2-0 series lead.

However, the former skipper said he "didn't look great there for a while". "I didn't know I was playing today (Sunday). I had a really bad dose of vertigo this morning and I was struggling until... I came down early to have a hit and a bit of a run around," Smith told *cricinfo.Com.Au* after receiving his second successive Man of the match award. "Just pleased to be able to get out here and play another good innings and help the team."



Wolves hunt Gunners

AP ■ LONDON

Wolverhampton beat Arsenal in an away match for the first time in more than four decades, winning 2-1 in the Premier League in a game overshadowed by a serious head injury to Wolves forward Raul Jimenez.

The 29-year-old Jimenez was taken away on a stretcher in the fifth minute and then to a hospital, after a collision with Arsenal defender David Luiz while both challenged for a corner from Willian.

While Wolves players were visibly upset by the incident, they went on to take control of the match.

Wolves opened the scoring in the 27th when Pedro Neto slotted in a rebound after Leander Dendoncker's header crashed off the crossbar and fell to Neto in the six-yard box. Adama Traore created the chance, beating Kieran Tierney with a run down the right before the winger lifted the ball into a dangerous area.

Gabriel equalized for Arsenal three minutes later with a towering header as four defenders, including one pulling his shirt couldn't stop the Brazilian from scoring. Wolves made it 2-1 in the 42nd when Daniel Podence took advantage of the rebound after goalkeeper Bernd Leno couldn't collect Neto's shot, which bounced off his legs for Podence to volley home.

Neto's run through Arsenal's shaky defense created panic in the penalty box and allowed Podence to drift in to pounce on the loose ball.

Traore nearly made it 3-1 in the fifth minute of injury time of the first half after cutting in from the right, but his shot crashed into the side netting.

Willian nearly equalized for Arsenal with a free kick in the 57th, but it rose just over the bar. Rob Holding also had an open header but couldn't connect with a Saka cross.



Pedro Neto celebrates after scoring

It was the first away win for Wolves against Arsenal since 1979, bringing the team up to sixth in the Premier League.

Arsenal, meanwhile, hasn't won a Premier League game since November 1, when the Gunners beat Manchester United, and languish in 14th place.

Jimenez had surgery for a fractured skull

AP ■ WOLVERHAMPTON

Wolverhampton Wanderers striker Raul Jimenez had surgery to treat a fractured skull after a clash of heads with Arsenal defender David Luiz during an Premier League game, the club said on Monday.

"Raul is comfortable following an operation last night, which he underwent in a London hospital," Wolves said in a statement.

"He has since seen his partner Daniela and is now resting. He will remain under observation for a few days while he begins his recovery,"

'Mourning' Napoli honour Maradona with big win

AP ■ NAPLES

Napoli beat Roma 4-0 in an emotional match in the Italian league as the team paid tribute to Diego Maradona.

It was Napoli's first Serie A game since Maradona died on Wednesday in his native Argentina. Maradona led Napoli to its only two Serie A titles in 1987 and 1990 and is considered a god-like figure in the southern city.

"Certainly I played with an extra motivation, so did all my teammates," Napoli captain Lorenzo Insigne said. "We've lost our idol and it hurts."

"Today without doubt we wanted even more than normal to get a result, for Diego, for our city which is suffering this loss."

We dedicate the victory to him."

The victory saw Napoli move level with Roma and Juventus, six points below leader AC Milan, which beat Fiorentina 2-0 earlier in the day.

There was a touching moment before the game when Insigne placed bouquets of flowers under banners dedicated to Maradona, displayed in the empty stands at either end of the stadium.

Napoli's Stadio San Paolo will officially be renamed the Stadio Diego Armando Maradona.

There was a tribute to Maradona in all Serie

A matches this weekend. That included a minute of silence for Maradona, while his image was also projected on the stadium screens again in the 10th minute, in honor of his shirt number. All players stopped to applaud.

Napoli players were wearing a special kit which bore a resemblance to the Argentina jersey in honor of Maradona.

"There is an air of sadness," said Napoli coach Gennaro Gattuso. "This is a wonderful city even when the weath-

er is bad and yet there is an atmosphere of mourning."

Insigne also held up a shirt with Maradona's name and number and kissed it after scoring the opening goal with a free kick in the 31st.

Fabián Ruiz doubled Napoli's lead in the 64th, finishing off a counterattack with a low shot into the bottom right corner.

Roma offered little and Napoli effectively sealed the match nine minutes from time when Antonio Mirante could only parry Elif Elmas' attempt and Dries Mertens turned in the rebound.

Substitute Matteo Politano added another goal five minutes later with a sensational solo run.

Cavani could face 3-game ban for social media post

MANCHESTER: Edinson Cavani's joy at scoring twice for Manchester United on Sunday could be dampened as he is to be investigated by the Football Association over a social media post he subsequently deleted.

The 33-year-old Uruguayan striker sent an Instagram post including the Spanish word "negrito" ("black") in reply to a message of congratulations after his brace completed a come-from-behind 3-2 win over Southampton. United said the word was clearly used in an affectionate manner and has different connotations in South America. The FA issued guidelines pre-season clamping down on racist and discriminatory language and behaviour, with offences on social media carrying a minimum three-game ban.



Grosjean to miss race after crash

AFF ■ SAKHIR

French driver Romain Grosjean will sit out next weekend's Formula One race after escaping a fiery crash in the Bahrain Grand Prix with just burns to his hands, his team Haas said on Monday.

Grosjean walked away from the wreckage after he collided with Daniil Kvyat's Alpha Tauri on the first lap of Sunday's race, causing the Haas car to split in half and burst into flames as it smashed through the safety barriers.

Haas said treatment for the burns that 34-year-old Grosjean suffered was "going well" and he was expected to be discharged from hospital on Tuesday.



Brazilian driver Pietro Fittipaldi — grandson of two-time world champion Emerson Fittipaldi — will make his Formula One debut in place of Grosjean in the Sakhir Grand Prix, also in Bahrain, next Sunday.