

OPINION 8
FEAR
OF PEACE

WORLD 11
TRUMP EXPECTED TO FLEX
PARDON POWERS

SPORT 14
PSG BEAT MAN UTD IN
CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

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12 VIVACITY

Marathon talks fail as farmers stick to their guns

Next dialogue on Saturday; unions' leaders present five-point demands to Govt, say won't accept anything less than repeal of all three farm laws

STAFF REPORTER/AGENCIES ■
NEW DELHI

The eight-hour-long fourth round of talks between the agitating farmer unions and the Government on Thursday failed to end the standoff over the new farm laws as the protestors refused to accept anything less than the repeal of all the three farm laws. Another round of discussions will be held on Saturday in a bid to forge a resolution.

Although the Government side, led by Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, assured the group of nearly 40 farmer leaders that all their valid concerns would be discussed and considered with an open mind, but the farmers stuck to their demand of repealing the three "hastily-passed" farm laws, saying there were several loopholes and deficiencies.

Bharatiya Kisan Union (Ambarta) president Rishipal said, "The Government noted all points. Ministers assured that they will look into them and sought one day's time."

The farmer leaders emphasised on a five-point set of demands that seeks to frame a specific law on Minimum Support Price (MSP) and end the punishment provision for stubble burning.

Farmer leader Kulwant Singh Sandhu said the government made many proposals including on MSP and procurement system, which would be discussed among the farmer organisations on Friday, before the next meeting.

The farmers emphasised that the provision to register a case for stubble burning should be ended, and asked why the Government wasn't ready to



Farmer leaders arrive at Vigyan Bhawan for their meeting with the Govt over the farm laws in New Delhi on Thursday
Ranjjan Dimri | Pioneer

give them "written assurance" on MSP despite its earlier statements that MSP will continue.

The farmer union representatives emphasised that a new law on MSP be framed in a special session of Parliament, demanding that it must guarantee them MSP not only now but in the future as well.

The farmer leaders said, "Let us assume that MSP will continue but the procurement would stop. The MSP will have no meaning then."

The farmer union representatives said the Government had said the three farm laws were brought in with the interests of farmers in mind.

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Farmers squat on Delhi-Meerut e-way, roads blocked

SHEKHAR SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

As protesting farmers continued to be adamant on their demand for scrapping of the Centre's agriculture reform laws and stayed put at the national Capital's borders with Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, the police on Thursday closed routes on two national highways connecting Ghaziabad to Delhi as the farmers sat on the Delhi-Meerut Expressway.

The protesting farmers had on Wednesday threatened to block other roads of Delhi if their demands were not met.

"The local police have closed the routes on NH-9 and NH-24 from Ghaziabad to Delhi. On NH-1, both sides of the route have been closed



Farmers block a part of the Delhi-Meerut Expressway during their protest march against the new farm laws, on Delhi border on Thursday
PTI

near Shani Mandir," the Delhi Traffic Police tweeted. The crowd of farmers continued to swell at Ghazipur, prompting the police to close the Delhi-UP border on NH-24.

"The Ghazipur border on NH-24 is closed for traffic from Ghaziabad towards Delhi due to farmers' protests. People are advised to avoid NH-24 for coming to Delhi and use

Farmers' delegation rejects Govt's food, arranges own lunch

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Farmer leaders on Thursday refused the lunch offered by the Government during their meeting with three Union Ministers here and preferred to eat the food ferried in a van from the Singhu border, where thousands of their colleagues are sitting in protest against the new agri laws.

During the lunch break, a small van carrying food for around 40 people was seen outside the Vigyan Bhawan, where the meeting is underway.

"Our farmers' representatives did not accept the lunch

offered by the Government and we arranged it from the Singhu border," Lok Sangarsh Morcha president Pratibha Shinde told PTI.

Farmers' leaders told the Government to focus on resolving the issues instead of trying to be a good host by offering lunch, said the Lok Sangarsh Morcha president.

"How can we have lunch offered by the government when our fellow farmers are sitting on roads," said Shinde, whose organisation, Lok Sangarsh Morcha, is among the 40 farmers' groups engaged in the talks.

JJP threatens to withdraw support if farmers' MSP demand not met

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

NDA ally Jannayak Janata Party (JJP) in Haryana warned the BJP that it may not hesitate to step out of the Government if the demand of the agitating farmers was not met by the Centre.

JJP chief Dushyant Chautala, who is Deputy Chief Minister of the State with core electoral base of Jat farming community, has said his party would stand with farmers on the MSP issue.

If the standoff between the farmers and the Centre continues, pressure is expected to increase on all non-BJP Haryana MLAs who helped the BJP form the Government.

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Peeved Parkash Singh Badal returns Padma Vibhushan

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

The honour the BJP Government bestowed upon Punjab's five-time former Chief Minister Parkash Singh

Amarinder meets Shah, says protest affecting eco, national security

New Delhi: Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Thursday made an appeal to Union Home Minister Amit Shah and the protesting farmers to find an early resolution to the impasse over the new farm laws, saying the agitation is affecting Punjab's economy and the nation's security

Badal in 2015 has apparently ended up embarrassing the party. Often dubbed as the founder of the NDA, Badal on Thursday returned Padma Vibhushan — country's second highest civilian award — to protest "betrayal of farmers".

Rajya Sabha MP Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa too returned his Padma Bhusan award to oppose the farm laws. The BJP Government, in March 2019, had presented him the award after he announced to part ways with the Akali Dal following political differences with party chief Sukhbir Badal, in an apparent attempt to woo him.

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Vaccination to start by year-end or early Jan

There is good data available that vaccines are very safe, says Delhi AIIMS Director

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Director of AIIMS, Delhi, Dr Randeep Guleria on Thursday said he was hopeful that an emergency regulatory nod will be given to coronavirus vaccine by the end of this month or early next month to start vaccinating people.

Amid reports of allegations of an adverse event case against Covishield vaccine, he said that safety and efficacy of vaccine are not compromised at all. "Around 70,000-80,000 volunteers have received the vaccine and no significant serious adverse effects were seen. The data shows that in the short term, vaccine is safe," he said.

"There is good data available that the vaccines are very safe. We should get emergency authorisation from Indian regulatory authorities to start

giving vaccine to public," Dr Guleria said to a news agency here. Dr Guleria is also a member of the national task force on Covid-19 management.

He added, "Chennai trial case is an incidental finding rather than related to vaccine. When we vaccinate a large number of people, some of them may have some other disease, which may not be related to vaccine."

Elderly, people with comorbidities and front-line workers should be vaccinated first, said Dr Guleria.

On vaccine distribution, he said, "Work is going on at war-footing both at the Centre and the State level for vaccine distribution plan in terms of maintaining cold chain, having appropriate storehouses available, developing strategy, training vaccinators and availability of syringes."

On Covid-19 pandemic's new wave in India, he said, "Now, we've seen a decline in current wave and I hope this will continue if we are able to have a good Covid-19 appropriate behaviour. We're close to having a big change related to

a pandemic if we manage this behaviour for the next three months."

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STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	18,37,358	47,472	17,03,274
Karnataka	8,89,113	11,821	8,52,584
Andhra Pradesh	8,70,076	7,014	8,56,320
Tamil Nadu	7,86,163	11,747	7,63,428
Kerala	6,20,050	2,330	5,56,378
Delhi	5,82,058	9,424	5,43,514
Uttar Pradesh	5,49,228	7,848	5,18,390
West Bengal	4,90,070	8,527	4,57,377
Odisha	3,20,017	1,808	3,14,023
Rajasthan	2,74,486	2,370	2,46,572
Telangana	2,71,492	1,465	2,61,028
Chhattisgarh	2,40,863	2,919	2,18,195
Haryana	2,39,239	2,520	2,21,203
Bihar	2,37,349	1,281	2,30,503
Gujarat	2,14,309	4,031	1,95,455
Assam	2,13,171	983	2,08,666



Criminal networks may peddle fake vaccines: Interpol

Issues Orange notice, fears illegal advertising

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Interpol has warned law enforcement agencies across the globe that organised criminal networks could try to advertise and sell fake Covid-19 vaccines both physically and online.

In an Orange notice issued to all 194 member countries on Wednesday, the Lyon-based international police cooperation body warned agencies to prepare for potential criminal activity in relation to "the falsification, theft and illegal advertising of Covid-19 and flu vaccines".

"It also includes examples of crimes where individuals have been advertising, selling and administering fake vaccines," the Interpol said in a statement.

An Orange notice is issued to warn of an event, a person, an object or a process representing a serious and imminent threat to public safety.

The CBI, which is the national central bureau for India, is the nodal agency for coordination with the Interpol. The warning came on the day the UK became the first nation to approve a Covid-19 vaccine, leaving behind the US and the European Union in the race to approve a vaccine to contain the pandemic.

Continued on Page 11

CAPSULE

SPICE KING DIES AT 97 IN DELHI HOSPITAL

New Delhi: India's spice king and MDH Masala owner Mahashay Dharampal Gulati, familiar to all those who watched him in his company's ads over the years, died here on Thursday morning. He was 97. Gulati, who was awarded the country's third-highest civilian award Padma Bhusan last year, was undergoing treatment at the Mata Chanan Devi Hospital where he breathed his last, sources said.

NAINITAL: DOLIS FOR PREGNANT WOMEN

Nainital: Addressing the needs of rural women who have to walk miles to reach the nearest hospital even during pregnancy, the Nainital administration has introduced a palanquin service for ferrying women in labour to hospitals. District Magistrate Savin Bansal released ₹10 lakh to the chief medical officer to arrange 500 "dolis" to bring pregnant women to the nearest road head or hospital.

Govt increases domestic flight cap to 80% of pre-Covid level

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Government on Thursday increased the cap on domestic flights up to 80 per cent of the pre-Covid levels. The domestic carriers were operating at 70 per cent of their capacity. Domestic air travel is steadily reviving after being allowed to resume on May 25 following a two-month suspension.

While making the announcement, Union Minister of Civil Aviation Hardeep Singh Puri said the domestic operations in India, which recommenced with 30,000 passengers on May 25, have touched a high of 2.52 lakh passengers till November 30, 2020.

Continued on Page 11

Bid to change status quo at LAC warrants deployment: Navy Chief

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Navy Chief Admiral Narambir Singh on Thursday said attempts to "change the status quo" on the northern borders (Line of Actual Control) has impacted the security situation and prompted the Navy to periodically deploy its aircraft and drones at the borders for reconnaissance in the last six months.

"The year was defined by the challenge of Covid pandemic which has permeated and disrupted every aspect of our lives. A near simultaneous attempt to change status quo on our northern borders has increased the complexities in our security situation," he said.

Outlining the operational readiness of the armed forces, Singh said, "This dual challenge

scenario continues as we speak. The Army, IAF and Navy were working in close coordination to produce the desired results at the border and ensure security. The Navy is ready to face any threat."

Addressing the annual Press conference on the eve of the Navy Day on Friday, the Navy chief termed the present tension at the LAC as still ongoing.

Replying questions about the role of the Navy in meeting the challenge at the LAC in Eastern Ladakh and other parts, Singh said the Navy several times deployed its P-8I long range reconnaissance aircraft from the Northern borders during the ongoing standoff.

"The P-8I is a potent platform that has certain equipment that can be used on the

border. Based on the requirements of the Army and IAF we have deployed the P-8I on several occasions. We have also deployed the Heron Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) from one of the Northern bases," the Navy chief said in response to a question.

The reconnaissance aircraft was also used during the 73-day long face-off in Doklam near Sikkim in 2017 to get real time picture. The situation was defused following parleys at the highest diplomatic and political levels then.

On the possible deployment of the two MQ-9B Predator drones that were leased from the US recently at the LAC, the Navy chief said it depends on the requirements of the Army or IAF.

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New Delhi plays down report of dam by China on Brahmaputra

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has said it is monitoring development related to reports that China plans to build a major dam on the Brahmaputra. New Delhi also said it intended to remain engaged with China on the issue of trans-border rivers to safeguard its interests.

At a media briefing, External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava played down reports about dam construction and said the Chinese side has repeatedly conveyed to India that it was only undertaking run-of-the-river hydropower projects, which do not involve diversion of the waters of the Brahmaputra.

Continued on Page 11

Rajinikanth to name his political party on Dec 31

'We will change TN politics'

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu's tryst with spiritual politics materialised on Thursday as reigning superstar of Tamil cinema Rajinikanth declared the formation of his political party.

"If it is not now, it is going to be never. We will change everything associated with Tamil Nadu politics. My victory will be yours and your victory will be mine," declared the actor in a specially convened Press meeting at the courtyard of his Poes Garden Residence in Chennai.

He said he would declare the name of the party and plan



of action on December 31. "We will surely contest the next Assembly election and form the Government which the people have been waiting for long," said the superstar. As expected, Rajinikanth was accompanied by

Tamilaruvi Manian, his Man Friday who has been working steadfast since 2016 with the actor for forming the political outfit. Manian is a former chief of Tamil Nadu Congress Committee and belongs to the school of titans like K Kamaraj, C Subramaniam and R Venkatarman. Arjunamurthy, one of the BJP leaders, too joined the Rajinikanth bandwagon on Thursday as adviser.

What culminated on Thursday was the preparations that began more than four years ago by Rajinikanth to usher in a new politics and way of thinking in the State dominated by Dravida Maya, according to Kolahala Srenivaas, political thinker and author.

Continued on Page 11

Yogi: Skilled youth to get employment at doorstep

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that his government was committed to opening new vistas of opportunity for the youth and was hence focusing on the micro, small and medium enterprise (MSME) sector so that trained youth could get employment at their doorsteps.

"The MSME sector has started turning the tide towards development. The government is committed to providing all necessary assistance for MSME development and to traditional craftsmen as they form the base of realising the dream of a self-reliant India. There would be no dearth of capital for youths wanting to start a new venture and loans are being provided as per their requirements," he said.

Addressing a virtual programme at his official residence in Lucknow on Thursday, Yogi disbursed loans of over Rs 10 crore for capital requirement of



Chief of Defence Staff General Vipin Rawat along with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath at Gorakshnath temple in Gorakhpur on Thursday

3.54 lakh MSME units which included 29,914 new units.

While the chief minister distributed loans to eight entrepreneurs at the programme, others were provided loans at district level. "Small-scale industries form the basis of a powerful state and the state government's efforts to speed up

industrial development is going to bring prosperity in everyone's life," he said.

"During COVID-19 period, the Central and UP governments jointly made efforts to encourage migrant labourers, traditional craftsmen and MSMEs," the chief minister added.

"When Prime Minister

Narendra Modi released the first economic package during lockdown on May 14, the next day the UP government provided loans of Rs 2002 crore to 56,754 new MSME units under Online Self Employment Programme. In addition, MSME Saathi portal and app were also launched to solve problems of these units," Yogi

Adityanath said. More than four lakh MSME units were given loans of Rs 10,999 crore after the prime minister launched the Atmanirbhar Uttar Pradesh Rojgar Abhiyan on June 26. In addition, over 2.50 lakh MSME units were also given loans of Rs 7,841 crore in the third phase. Lauding the role of banks, Yogi Adityanath said that large-scale loan fairs were being organised in coordination with banks.

"The MSME units in the state are moving towards self-reliance and recently 15 units got listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange in an effort to meet their capital requirements. This innovative endeavour will also play the role of a motivator for other MSMEs," the chief minister added.

Yogi Adityanath also virtually distributed advanced tool kits related to handlooms, handicrafts, textiles, metal crafts, food processing, and pottery, to 5,000 beneficiaries.

6 killed in Banda road accident

Lucknow (PNS): Six people were killed in a collision between a bus and a tempo in Banda on Thursday evening. Inspector General of Police Satya Narayan said the accident occurred near Jamalpur in Kotwali Dehat police station area of Banda. The IG said five passengers of the tempo died on the spot and another succumbed to his injuries in the hospital while three were seriously injured and were undergoing treatment.

भारत सरकार
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
कार्यालय प्रधान मुख्य आयकर आयुक्त, उ.प्र. (पूर्वी)
O/o THE PR. CHIEF COMMISSIONER OF INCOME-TAX, UP(EAST)
5-अशोक मार्ग, लखनऊ
ASHOK MARG, LUCKNOW
Phone & Fax : 0522-2233205, E-mail: lucknow.ito.hq.pr@incometax.gov.in
फा.सं. : प्र.मू.आ.आ./आ.अ.वि. (उ.प्र.)/लख./स्टाफ कार/बॉक्स-3/2020-21 दिनांक : 03.12.2020
निविदा सूचना
स्टाफ कार किराए पर लेने हेतु
प्रधान मुख्य आयकर आयुक्त, उ.प्र. (पूर्वी), लखनऊ आयकर विभाग लखनऊ में किराए पर वाहन लेने हेतु व्यक्ति प्राप्त व्यक्तियों/फर्मों से दो बोली प्रस्ताव के अधीन कोटेशन आमंत्रित करते हैं। निम्न व शर्तों को समझित करते हुए विस्तृत निविदा दस्तावेजों को आयकर विभाग की वेबसाइट www.incometaxindia.gov.in से डाउनलोड किया जा सकता है। इन्हें तब तक विधिवत नरे हुए निविदा फॉर्म कार्यालय प्रधान मुख्य आयकर आयुक्त, उ.प्र. (पूर्वी), आयकर भवन, 5 अशोक मार्ग लखनऊ में 18 दिसंबर 2020 को 2.00 अपराह्न तक या इससे पहले जमा हो जाने चाहिए निविदाओं को वही दिन 3.00 बजे अपराह्न को खोला जाएगा। निविदाओं को खोलते समय बोलीदाताओं के अगमन को स्वागत है।
(एस. एच. कर्माचारि) आयकर अधिकारी (जनसम्पर्क)
कार्यालय प्रधान मुख्य आयकर आयुक्त, लखनऊ

UP police station among top 10 best in India

Lucknow (PNS): Once infamous for corruption and high-handedness, UP Police have been recognised for smart policing, better work culture, transparency and cooperation. A recent report of the Union government on the country's police system has endorsed just that.

As per a Union Home Ministry report, Kanth police station of Moradabad has figured among the 10 best police stations working across the country. While Nongpok Semkai police station of Thoubal (Manipur) was ranked first for best work, a police station in Tamil Nadu and an Arunachal police station were ranked second and third.

Kanth police station of Moradabad in UP clinched the 8th spot.

Besides, one police station each of Goa, Chhattisgarh, Sikkim, Telangana was also included in the top 10 list.

Apart from UP, no police stations from Maharashtra, Delhi, Punjab,

Rajasthan, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal could make it to the coveted list. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is believed to have a direct role in changing the work culture and image of UP Police. During the present regime, the police were given a free hand to take on criminals and also work transparently and have a cordial interface with the public.

UP cabinet minister Sidharth Nath Singh said that the positive change in police system was part of the policy of continuous improvement and self-review of the Yogi government. In 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi suggested that criteria be set for grading police stations based on feedback and performance while addressing DGPs of various states in Kutch (Gujarat).

Thereafter, 19 criteria were set to identify techniques for improving police stations and people were consulted for feedback on the functioning of police stations.

Dandupur railway station to be renamed Maa Barahi Devi Dham

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Dandupur railway station situated between Pratapgarh and Badshahpur on Lucknow-Varanasi rail section will now be named Maa Barahi Devi Dham.

The Union government has given its consent after which Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath gave his nod to the renaming of the railway station.

Giving this information on Twitter, the CM Office posted that a notification would be issued in this regard after getting approval from the chief minister. There has been a long-standing demand to change the name of Dandupur railway station in Raniganj tehsil of Pratapgarh. The chief minister initiated the process to give recognition to local religious and spiritual sites while respecting public aspirations.

Many express and passenger trains, including Kashi-Vishwanath Express, Rae Bareilly-Jaunpur Express, Lucknow-Varanasi Intercity, and other trains have a halt at Dandupur railway station. There is a temple of Maa Barahi Devi in Parsarampur village, six kilometres from the railway station and an annual fair is organised there that is visited by a large number of devotees.



सूचना

मो 0 फिरोज S/o मो 0 इशाहाक, 41/19 नई सड़क, परेड कानपुर के प्लॉट की सेलडीड के मूल अभिलेख (बही नं 1, जिल्द नं 3366, पेज 1-6, सीरियल नं 2747 विद ओरिजिनल नं 2746 दि. 20. 3.1979 खो गये हैं, इनका प्रयोग कानूनन अमान्य होगा।

NOTICE

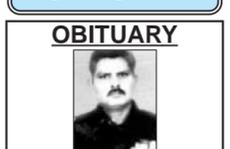
Be it known to all that date of birth 15.07.1947 of my wife is wrongly registered in my service record which is wrong. Her correct date of birth is 21.07.1947. This should be read and written in future for all purpose. Ram Sanahi H/O Smt. Ramlali, 12 B Chandpur Salori, Po-Teliarganj, Prayagraj.

सूचना

मैंने अपना नाम दलजीत सिंह से बदलकर दलजीत सिंह सचदेवा पुत्र स्व 0 देशा सिंह सचदेवा कर लिया है। भविष्य में मुझे समस्त अभिलेखों में इसी नाम से जाना व पहचाना जाये। निवासी 3/15 अमन पटेल कामप्लेक्स B-3 विष्णुपुरी नवाबगंज कानपुर मो 9838767676

OBITUARY

OBITUARY



NAIB SUBEDAR RAM SROOP 04 APR 1977 - 27 OCT 2020

ALL RANKS OF ARMY MEDICAL CORPS SOLEMNLY PRAY TO THE ALMIGHTY TO BESTOW PEACE TO THE DEPARTED SOUL AND GRANT STRENGTH TO THE BEGRIEVED FAMILY TO BEAR THE GREAT LOSS OF NAIB SUBEDAR RAM SROOP WHO DIED WHILE SERVING WITH 303 FIELD HOSPITAL.

FROM: MAJ GEN NAVEEN AGGARWAL AND ALL RANKS OF ARMY MEDICAL CORPS

IT dept to set up CoE in Noida to help MSMEs

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Adding another feather to its cap, the IT and Electronics department of UP is going to set up a centre of excellence (CoE) in Noida (Gautam Buddha Nagar) for products based on Li-ion cells.

Deputy Chief Minister Dinesh Sharma who holds the IT and Electronics portfolio, said the centre of excellence would provide crucial technical inputs to start-ups and MSMEs for production of mass market electronics accessories up to prototype stage.

"Besides, the state government would be able to nominate diploma and ITI certificate holders, and BSc, MSc in electronics degree holders as certification engineers, thereby creating enormous employment opportunities," he said.

Underlining the importance of the centre of excellence, Additional Chief Secretary (IT and Electronics) Alok Kumar said that the state's electronics policy provided for setting up of centres of excellence as world-class infrastructure for enabling research, innovation and entrepreneurship in electronics system design and manufacturing, skill development (ESDM) industry.

"In view of availability of a well-established necessary ecosystem at Noida, Indian Cellular and Electronics Association (ICEA) proposed the setting up of a product based Li-ion cells (post cell) centre of excellence in Noida. This has been approved in principle and work on its establishment would commence as soon as the sanction is received from the Government of India," he said. Kumar said that the government would set up three centres of excellence in collaboration with the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology and industrial associations.

The UP government would bear 25 percent of the cost, while 75 percent of the cost

CS orders setting up of biodiversity parks

Lucknow (PNS): Ordering the setting up of biodiversity parks in 25 districts on Ganga river banks, Chief Secretary Rajendra Kumar Tiwari directed the departments concerned to take appropriate action on the orders of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) immediately. At a review meeting on Thursday, Tiwari said that regular monitoring should be done to determine the time-table for completion of all works.

"In order to save the Ganga from pollution, dumping of any kind of solid and other waste be done away with in and around the river. Old deposits of wastes should also be cleaned. Setting up biodiversity parks in 25 districts adjacent to the Ganga should be completed in a time-bound manner," he added.

The top bureaucrat of the state also directed officials to take action at the earliest regarding problems of industrial units on residential and agricultural land. He said that the work of preserving seven wetlands of international importance of Ramsar should be completed soon. "Besides, additional steps should be taken to prevent noise and air pollution," he said.

The meeting was organised by the Environment, Forest and Climate Change department for the review of compliance status of government directions in response to National Green Tribunal directives. Officials of Agriculture, Urban Development, Rural Development, Namami Gange departments, Jal Nigam and other departments participated in the meeting.

The top official was informed that in respect to the NGT order, work of providing clean water in 103 villages of 148 villages affected by groundwater in Doaba area of Hindan river was completed by UP Water Corporation under Pipe Drinking Water project. The remaining work in 45 villages would be completed by December 31, 2020.

JEWAR AIRPORT: A meeting of PMIC (Project Monitoring Implementation Committee) for Jewar Airport chaired by Chief Secretary was held in which studies of technical consultants regarding extension of two runways at Jewar Airport from 4 to 6 were discussed.

Consulting body PWC and Chief Executive Officer of Noida Airport and Yamuna Authority Dr. Arun Veer Singh made the presentation in which feasibility of five runways was voiced. In the first phase, 1,365 hectares of land would be acquired for the third runway and in the second phase, a total of 3,418 hectares land would be acquired for three runways.

would be borne by the Government of India and industrial associations. "Once operational, these centres will boost high-end manufacturing of Li-ion cell based products, such as battery monitoring system for electric vehicles, solar system battery pack, GPS navigation system, ticket vending machines for trains and buses, power banks,

bluetooth speakers, chargers, wireless chargers, smart lighting systems, radio, UPS system and routers," he said.

"The new centre will aid in building an excellent ecosystem for designing and development hub for power banks and Indian mobile handsets in Uttar Pradesh, which is a major mobile phone manufacturing hub in India," Kumar said.

यूनियन बैंक Union Bank of India
Kanjpur Regional Office : 117/H-1/240, Pandu Nagar Kanpur-208005
Head Office : 239, Vidhan Bhavan Marg, Nariman Point, Mumbai - 400 021

SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable assets under the securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 Read with Proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rule, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the secured creditor, the constructive possession of which has been taken by the authorized officer of Union Bank of India (Secured Creditor), will be sold on "As is Where is," "As is What is," and "Whatever there is" on the date mentioned below, for recovery of dues as mentioned hereunder to Union Bank of India from the below mentioned Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s). The Reserve Price & the Earnest Money Deposit or also mentioned hereunder.

Branch Name : Rawatpur • Address : Gurdev Palace Building, Rawatpur, Kanpur, Branch Head : Shri Ajay Barik • Mob. : 8839678707

Name of Borrower : Maharana Infrastructure and Professional Services Limited (M.I.P.S.),
Address : 117/Q/66, Sharda Nagar, G.T. Road, Distt. Kanpur (U.P.). **Directors :** (1) Smt. Surabhi Bhadoriya, Address : 117/Q/66, Sharda Nagar, Distt. Kanpur (U.P.), (2) Shri Rustam Digshaw Bhatiwala, Address : 117/Q/66, Sharda Nagar, Distt. Kanpur (U.P.), (3) Shri Meet Kamal, Address : 13/117, K-Block, Sarodaya Nagar, Distt. Kanpur (U.P.), (4) Shri Jai Kishan Pandey, Address : 13/149, Parmat, Distt. Kanpur (U.P.), (5) Shri Punyatma Singh, Address : 17, Nawshel Dham, Kalyanpur, Bithoor Road, Distt. Kanpur (U.P.) **Guarantor :** (1) Shri Shailendra Bhadoriya (2) Shri Gaurav Bhadoriya (3) Smt. Surabhi Bhadoriya, All Address : 117/Q/66, Sharda Nagar, Distt. Kanpur (U.P.).
O/s Amount as per Demand Notice : Rs. 3,26,06,354.00 Intt. + Other Charges

(1) Property situated Plot No. 17, Arazi No. 369-B, Sale Deed Dated 05-02-2014 on cover no. 6414, from Page 37 to 52, On Serial No. 698, Baikunthpur, Bithoor, Kanpur. **Owner of Property :** Shri Gaurav Bhadoriya, **Area :** 83.53 Sq. Mtr., **Bounded :** North-Plot No. 18, South-7.62 Mtr. Road, East-6.09 Mtr. Road, West-Land (Khasra No. 343) **Date & Time of E-Auction : 23-12-2020 at 11.00 am to 4.00 pm**
Reserve Price : Rs. 6.39 Lac, Earnest Money to be deposited Rs. 0.64 Lac. For detailed terms and condition of the sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in/english/TendelViewAllAuction.aspx>

(2) Property situated Plot No. 13, Arazi No. 369-B, Sale Deed Dated 05-02-2014 on cover no. 6414, from Page 53 to 68, On Serial No. 699, Baikunthpur, Bithoor, Kanpur. **Owner of Property :** Shri Gaurav Bhadoriya, **Area :** 83.53 Sq. Mtr., **Bounded :** North-25 Ft. Road, South-Plot No. 14, East-Plot No. 11, West-20 Ft. Road. **Date & Time of E-Auction : 23-12-2020 at 11.00 am to 4.00 pm**
Reserve Price : Rs. 6.39 Lac, Earnest Money to be deposited Rs. 0.64 Lac. For detailed terms and condition of the sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in/english/TendelViewAllAuction.aspx>

(3) Property situated Plot No. 16, Arazi No. 369-B, Sale Deed Dated 05-02-2014 on cover no. 6414, from Page 69 to 84, On Serial No. 700, Baikunthpur, Bithoor, Kanpur. **Owner of Property :** Shri Gaurav Bhadoriya, **Area :** 83.53 Sq. Mtr., **Bounded :** North-7.62 Mtr. Road, South-Private Plot No. 15, East-6.09 Mtr. Road, West-Land No. 369 & 343, **Date & Time of E-Auction : 23-12-2020 at 11.00 am to 4.00 pm**
Reserve Price : Rs. 6.39 Lac, Earnest Money to be deposited Rs. 0.64 Lac. For detailed terms and condition of the sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in/english/TendelViewAllAuction.aspx>

(4) Property situated Plot No. 15, Arazi No. 369-B, Sale Deed Dated 05-02-2014 on cover no. 6414, from Page 85 to 100, On Serial No. 701, Baikunthpur, Bithoor, Kanpur. **Owner of Property :** Shri Gaurav Bhadoriya, **Area :** 83.53 Sq. Mtr., **Bounded :** North-Private Plot No. 16, South-Land No. 369, East-6.09 Mtr. Road, West-Land No. 369 & 343, **Date & Time of E-Auction : 23-12-2020 at 11.00 am to 4.00 pm**
Reserve Price : Rs. 6.39 Lac, Earnest Money to be deposited Rs. 0.64 Lac. For detailed terms and condition of the sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in/english/TendelViewAllAuction.aspx>

(5) Property situated Plot No. 10, Arazi No. 344, Sale Deed Dated 05-02-2014 on cover no. 5875, from Page 307 to 322, On Serial No. 1234, Baikunthpur, Bithoor, Kanpur. **Owner of Property :** Shri Gaurav Bhadoriya, **Area :** 91.02 Sq. Mtr., **Bounded :** North-Other Land, South-20 Ft. Road, East-Private Plot No. 08, West-Plot No. 12, **Date & Time of E-Auction : 23-12-2020 at 11.00 am to 4.00 pm**
Reserve Price : Rs. 6.96 Lac, Earnest Money to be deposited Rs. 0.70 Lac. For detailed terms and condition of the sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in/english/TendelViewAllAuction.aspx>

(6) Property situated Plot No. 12, Arazi No. 344, Sale Deed Dated 05-02-2014 on cover no. 5875, from Page 323 to 338, On Serial No. 1235, Baikunthpur, Bithoor, Kanpur. **Owner of Property :** Shri Gaurav Bhadoriya, **Area :** 91.02 Sq. Mtr., **Bounded :** North-Other Land, South-20 Ft. Road, East-Private Plot No. 10, West-Land of Chhotelal, **Date & Time of E-Auction : 23-12-2020 at 11.00 am to 4.00 pm**
Reserve Price : Rs. 6.96 Lac, Earnest Money to be deposited Rs. 0.70 Lac. For detailed terms and condition of the sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in/english/TendelViewAllAuction.aspx>

(7) Property situated Plot No. 11, Arazi No. 344, Sale Deed Dated 05-02-2014 on cover no. 5875, from Page 339 to 354, On Serial No. 1236, Baikunthpur, Bithoor, Kanpur. **Owner of Property :** Shri Gaurav Bhadoriya, **Area :** 91.02 Sq. Mtr., **Bounded :** North-6.10 Mtr. Road, South-Land No. 345, East-Private Plot No. 09, West-Land of Chhotelal, **Date & Time of E-Auction : 23-12-2020 at 11.00 am to 4.00 pm**
Reserve Price : Rs. 6.96 Lac, Earnest Money to be deposited Rs. 0.70 Lac. For detailed terms and condition of the sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in/english/TendelViewAllAuction.aspx>

(8) Property situated Plot No. 09, Arazi No. 344, Sale Deed Dated 05-02-2014 on cover no. 5875, from Page 355 to 370, On Serial No. 1237, Baikunthpur, Bithoor, Kanpur. **Owner of Property :** Shri Gaurav Bhadoriya, **Area :** 91.02 Sq. Mtr., **Bounded :** North-6.10 Mtr. Road, South-Land No. 345, East-Private Plot No. 07, West-Private Plot No. 11, **Date & Time of E-Auction : 23-12-2020 at 11.00 am to 4.00 pm**
Reserve Price : Rs. 6.96 Lac, Earnest Money to be deposited Rs. 0.70 Lac. For detailed terms and condition of the sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in/english/TendelViewAllAuction.aspx>

(9a) Property situated at Arazi No. 565, Sale Deed Dated 30-07-2008 on cover no. 3928, from Page 111 to 130, On Serial No. 2404, Mauza Bagdaudhi Kachar, Pargana & Tehsil - Kanpur Nagar. **Owner of Property :** Shri Gaurav Bhadoriya, **Area :** 0.2316 Hectare, **Bounded :** North-Land No. 583 & 566, South-20 Ft. Link Road, East-Land No. 566, 567 & 564, West-Land No. 592
(9b) Property situated at Arazi No. 565, Sale Deed Dated 12-08-2008 on cover no. 3950, from Page 185 to 210, On Serial No. 2694, Mauza Bagdaudhi Kachar, Pargana & Tehsil - Kanpur Nagar. **Owner of Property :** Shri Gaurav Bhadoriya, **Area :** 0.2316 Hectare, **Bounded :** North-Land No. 583 & 568, South-20 Ft. Link Road, East-Land No. 566, 567 & 564, West-Land No. 592
Date & Time of E-Auction : 23-12-2020 at 11.00 am to 4.00 pm
Reserve Price : Rs. 180.00 Lac, Earnest Money to be deposited Rs. 18.00 Lac. For detailed terms and condition of the sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in/english/TendelViewAllAuction.aspx>

(10) Property situated at Arazi No. 423, Sale Deed Dated 30-11-2005 on cover no. 3142, from Page 109 to 128, On Serial No. 3856, Khatoni No. 00209, Village Bagdaudhi Kachar, Pargana & Tehsil - Kanpur Nagar. **Owner of Property :** Shri Gaurav Bhadoriya, **Area :** 0.349 Hectare, **Bounded :** North-Land No. 424 & 427, South-Land No. 420, East-Land No. 404 & 405, West-Land No. 429 & 430
Date & Time of E-Auction : 23-12-2020 at 11.00 am to 4.00 pm
Reserve Price : Rs. 141.00 Lac, Earnest Money to be deposited Rs. 14.10 Lac. For detailed terms and condition of the sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in/english/TendelViewAllAuction.aspx>

(11) Open Plot Part of House No. 117/Q/49-B, Sale Deed Dated 10-11-2014 on cover no. 1, from Page 125 to 148, On Serial No. 11224, Sharda Nagar, Kanpur Nagar. **Owner of Property :** Shri Gaurav Bhadoriya, **Area :** 374.99 Sq. Mtr., **Bounded :** North-18 Mtr. Wide Road, South-Plot No. 757 & 758, East-Juj Part of House No. 117/49-B, West-House No. 117/Q/66
Date & Time of E-Auction : 23-12-2020 at 11.00 am to 4.00 pm
Reserve Price : Rs. 160.00 Lac, Earnest Money to be deposited Rs. 16.00 Lac. For detailed terms and condition of the sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in/english/TendelViewAllAuction.aspx>

Name of Borrower : Maharana Pratap Education Center, Address : 117/Q/66, Sharda Nagar, G.T. Road, Distt. Kanpur. (1) **Chairman :** Shri Ram Singh Bhadoriya (2) **Secretary :** Shri Shailendra Bhadoriya (3) **Joint Secretary :** Shri Gaurav Bhadoriya, (4) **Joint Secretary :** Smt. Surabhi Bhadoriya, (5) **Member :** Smt. Sakshi Tiwari, Above All R/o : 117/Q/66, Sharda Nagar, Distt. Kanpur. **Guarantor :** (1) Shri Ram Singh Bhadoriya (2) Shri Shailendra Bhadoriya (3) Shri Gaurav Bhadoriya, (4) Smt. Surabhi Bhadoriya, (5) Smt. Sakshi Tiwari W/o Shri Ratnesh Tiwari, (6) Smt. Shiv Kumari, Above All R/o : 117/Q/66, Sharda Nagar, Distt. Kanpur. (7) Late Shanker Singh Bhadoriya through heirs as (a) Smt. Mamta Singh - Daughter (b) Smt. Neha Bhadoriya - Daughter (c) Smt. Parul Bhadoriya - Daughter (d) Shri Aman Bhadoriya - Son, All R/o : 117/K/5, Sarodaya Nagar, Distt. Kanpur. (8) Sakshi College of Management and Information Technology through Authorised Signatory Smt. Sakshi Tiwari, Address : 117/L/437, Naveen Nagar, Kakadeo, Distt. Kanpur. (9) M/s Mairi Rajput Educational Society through Authorised Signatory Smt. Surabhi Bhadoriya, Address : Adilr High School, Pocket-II, Sector-24, Rohini New Delhi. (10) Maharana Infrastructures and Professional Service Pvt. Ltd. through Authorised Signatory Smt. Surabhi Bhadoriya, Address : 117/Q/66, Sharda Nagar, Distt. Kanpur. (11) Smt. Nidhi Bhadoriya, Address : 117/K/5, Sarodaya Nagar, Distt. Kanpur.
O/s Amount as per Demand Notice : Rs. 55,58,76,832.53 + Intt. + Other Charges

(12) Property : Commercial land & building situated at premises No. 117/K/05, Gutaiya Bazar, Plot No. 04 at Block-X/1 Rawatpur Crossing, Kanpur Nagar. **Owner of Property :** Shri Ram Singh Bhadoriya, Shri Shanker Singh Bhadoriya & Smt. Shiv Kumari, **Area :** 181 Sq. Yard, **Bounded :** North-G.T. Road, South-Railway Line, East-Premises No. 117/K/06, West-Premises No. 117/K/04
Date & Time of E-Auction : 23-12-2020 at 11.00 am to 4.00 pm
Reserve Price : Rs. 110.78 Lac, Earnest Money to be deposited Rs. 11.08 Lac. For detailed terms and condition of the sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in/english/TendelViewAllAuction.aspx>

(13) Property : Flat No. 216, 2nd Floor Situated at Premises No. 12/483, Microbertganj, Kanpur. **Owner of Property :** Shri Shailendra Bhadoriya, **Area :** 66.44 Sq. Mtr., Undivided Share in Land 30.40 Sq. Mtr. **Bounded :** North-Flat No. 215, South-Open Land, East-Open Land, West-Common Passage and Flat No. 213, **Date & Time of E-Auction : 23-12-2020 at 11.00 am to 4.00 pm**
Reserve Price : Rs. 39.40 Lac, Earnest Money to be deposited Rs. 3.94 Lac. For detailed terms and condition of the sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in/english/TendelViewAllAuction.aspx>

(14) Property : Land & Building situated at Khata No. 186, Arazi No. 556 Situated at Mauza Bagdaudhi Kachar, Pargana & Tehsil - Kanpur Nagar. **Owner of Property :** Shri Ram Singh Bhadoriya, **Area :** 0.0715 Hectare or 715 Sq. Mtr., **Bounded :** North-Agriculture Land 554, South-Chak Road, East-Agriculture Land 555, West-Agriculture Land 557,
Date & Time of E-Auction : 23-12-2020 at 11.00 am to 4.00 pm
Reserve Price : Rs. 43.44 Lac, Earnest Money to be deposited Rs. 4.35 Lac. For detailed terms and condition of the sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in/english/TendelViewAllAuction.aspx>

For Registration and Login and Bidding Rules visit

Vishwas Khand, Aliganj saw max deaths in Nov

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Maximum Covid deaths in November took place in Vishwas Khand (Gomtinagar) and Aliganj in the state capital, according to a senior health official. The officials have carried out plotting of Covid deaths on Google Earth to identify these areas. "We will carry out sampling in these specific areas. The plotting was carried out as our teams needed to be aware of why the deaths were occurring. We needed to know if there was any delay in shifting of patients to hospitals," he said.

On Thursday, 331 persons tested positive for coronavirus in the city while 244 patients recovered. Lucknow's death toll stands at 1015 while there are 3,529 active cases in the district. The fresh cases included 34 from Gomtinagar, 27 from Indiranagar, 22 from Chowk, 21 from Rae Bareilly road, 19 from Alambagh, 18 from Cantt, 16 from Vikas Nagar, 14 from Jankipuram, 11 from Aliganj, and 10 each from Ashiyana, Hasanganj & Hazratganj.

Across the state, 1,967 persons tested positive, including

220 in Meerut, 113 in Ghaziabad, 113 in Varanasi, 120 in Gautam Buddhagar and 53 in Muzaffarnagar, taking the UP tally to 5,49,228. There were 31 deaths across the state, including seven in Lucknow, five in Meerut, three in Kanpur, two each in Agra, Ayodhya, Shahjahanpur & Amroha, and one each in Prayagraj, Varanasi, Barabanki, Muzaffarnagar, Lakhimpur Kheri, Mahariganj, Sitapur, Sultanpur & Mahoba taking the toll to 7,848. Besides, 1,696 patients recovered, taking UP's recoveries to 5,18,390. There are still 22,990 active cases in the state.

In a meeting with District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash, it was decided that the deaths due to coronavirus had to be curtailed. "Though ambulances reach the doorstep of patients, they don't want to be hospitalised. However, we will now be strict in this regard and any patient with co-morbidities will have to go to hospitalised," the official said.

A 14-day targeted sampling of the hotspots will begin from December 4. "It will be a special drive to make sure that the circulation of virus in five

CM: Make better treatment accessible to Covid patients

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Directing officials to maintain an effective management of prevention and treatment of COVID-19 cases, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Thursday said the Uttar Pradesh government was committed to providing quality medical facilities to the public.

The chief minister, who was presiding over an unlock review meeting at his official residence here on Thursday, also directed officials to pay special attention to Lucknow, Kanpur Nagar, Meerut, Agra

and Varanasi districts. "The medical education minister should hold a meeting with the chiefs of SGP GIMS, KGMU and RMLIMS and review the treatment facilities of these institutions," the chief minister said.

He also directed the divisional commissioners and district magistrates to visit the medical colleges in their administrative jurisdictions and hold meetings with the authorities.

"It should also be ensured that specialist doctors take regular rounds of Covid wards and make better treat-

ment accessible to patients. The patients should not face any difficulty in getting admitted to Covid hospitals and after reviewing the requirement of beds in these hospitals, efforts should be made to arrange for additional beds," the chief minister said.

He said awareness campaigns should be organised regularly and the Integrated Command and Control Centres should be operated actively. He also directed officials to maintain effective contact tracing and surveillance systems.

"We feel privileged that we got an opportunity to do our bit in the fight against coronavirus. We would like to take this opportunity to thank SGP GIMS administration, corona warriors working since March, their families, and all those who have contributed towards

this noble cause and stood with us," she stated.

"Our team conducted 7,748 RT-PCR tests in a single day on December 2 and it has been the highest number of tests done by any lab in the country in a day. We are adopting several innovative ways to

do the sampling faster. Earlier, we were not opening our pool of samples on the same day, but we are doing it now," she added. There are 70-75 team members and some of them tested positive due to being exposed to this deadly virus.

Meanwhile, DM Abhishek Prakash, in a meeting held for containing the spread of virus, said that on December 5, a meeting will be organised with religious leaders, NGOs and traders in which they would be made aware about how to break the chain of coronavirus infection.

The meeting also discussed the increase of beds in hospitals such as SGP GIMS and KGMU. The DM directed the officials at Integrated Control and Command Centre to shift patients to hospitals within 24 hours or be ready to face the music. Reviewing the contact tracing and tracking being carried out in the district, the DM said this should be expedited and community health centres should ensure 100 per cent contact tracing and tracking with door-to-door surveillance teams separating ILLI and SARI patients to ensure testing.

Dragon Mall razed to ground by LDA



PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a crackdown against land mafia, Lucknow Development Authority on Thursday demolished an illegally constructed Dragon Mall in Lalbagh after four days of operation. On Sunday, the LDA began the demolition drive of the mall.

Earlier on November 3, Allahabad High Court had barred LDA from taking action against the illegal construction for one month. As soon as the month-long period was over, the LDA officials swung into action. According to reports, Dragon Mall, a commercial project, was built on a plot meant for hostel of Lalbagh Girls' Degree College. The LDA had sealed the property a month ago. Later, the mall owner challenged the order in

the high court. The court, in its order, had stayed the LDA action for one month.

Joint secretary Ritu Suhas told reporters that action has been going on since 2017 against the Dragon Mall, illegally constructed on the land of Lalbagh Girls College. The mall was sealed but the high court had put a stay on it, which was in effect till June 30, 2017.

After this, enforcement zone-6 demanded that the mall be re-sealed. According to the LDA order, Mohammad Salim had taken permission for the construction of the three-storey Dragon Mall, but constructed five-storey commercial building, including the basement. Later, LDA took the action on the illegal construction of the mall under sections 16 and 27.

Three labourers electrocuted

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a tragic incident, three labourers were electrocuted to death while carrying band and lights during a baraat procession in Kakori on Wednesday night. The deceased were identified as Kamal Rawat aka Raj Kumar (32), Raju Rawat (42) and Jagdish Rawat (50), all of Hardoi.

As per reports, a baraat procession from Sarojinagar reached the house of Benchalal Lodhi of Rani Kheda village in Kakori on Wednesday night. The baratis entered the house around 10:30 pm on Wednesday, with labourers carrying lights on their heads. When the procession was passing from near a transformer installed in the village, one of the lamps came in contact with the transformer and the above-named persons suffered a powerful electric shock.

They were rushed to KGMU Trauma Centre where they were declared brought dead. The police said they were yet to get any complaint in this regard. Sources said the deceased were from poor families and their case was not taken up on priority.

In another case, a 58-year-old man, identified as Banwari Lal of Banthra, was found hanging from an electric pole with a rope

tied around his neck on Thursday. Reports said the man was found hanging on Thursday morning by some villagers.

Meanwhile, police got a vital clue about the miscreants who had kidnapped a dentist, Akhilesh Chaturvedi, in Vibhuti Khand police station area on Tuesday night. The clinic of Akhilesh (of Gudamba) is situated in Khurram Nagar. A group of men kidnapped the dentist near a hospital where he had gone for some work. Akhilesh stopped to relieve himself on the roadside when the miscreants reached near him and asked him about some address. The miscreants bundled him in their car, took him to an apartment close to DGP headquarters and thrashed him. The next day, the doctors made a call to his friend asking him to give Rs 30 lakh as ransom. He was asked to reach the clinic in Vikas Nagar on Wednesday night. When the money was to be exchanged, Akhilesh played some trick and fled the scene. He ran as fast as he could and reached near Vikas Nagar police station where he saw a police jeep and sought help. He was later taken to Vibhuti Khand police station where he narrated his ordeal to ADCP (East) Qasim Abdi.

Counting for Council elections marred by objections, delayed

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Amidst protest and boycott of counting by all the opposition parties candidates in Lucknow, Bharatiya Janata Party was all set to give a major setback to the teachers group leader Om Prakash Sharma in Meerut.

Though no official announcement has been made, but BJP candidate Shresh Chandra Sharma is all set to defeat veteran and eight-time MLC Om Prakash Sharma by over 4,300 votes.

Sharma held the seat for over four decades. In the graduate constituency of Meerut also, BJP's Dinesh Goyal was leading.

In Moradabad-Bareilly division also, BJP's Hari Singh Dhillon defeated Samajwadi Party's candidate Sanjay Mishra by a margin of 7,960 votes.

Bareilly Divisional Commissioner Ranveer Prasad confirmed the victory of Dhillon. The BJP candidates were also leading in Lucknow and Agra teachers constituencies.

In Lucknow, BJP's Umesh Dwivedi was leading by 2,000 votes over teachers group-supported candidate Mahendra Nath till the second round of counting. However, counting was disturbed as alleging large-scale irregularities, Samajwadi Party candidate Ram Singh Rana and all other opposition candidates sat on dharna, boycotting the process. They alleged that the seals of the ballot boxes were not opened before the candidates. They also accused the presiding officers of malpractices.

Lucknow District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash had to be



Counting of votes underway at Ramabai Ambedkar Sthal and opposition leaders raising issues with officials



any complaint, he could submit it in writing.

In Gorakhpur-Faizabad zone, outgoing MLC Dhruv Tripathi had a little edge over other candidates when the report last came in. In Agra, BJP's Dinesh Vasishth was leading by over 208 votes.

In Allahabad-Jhansi graduate seat, BJP's four-time MLC Yagyadutt Sharma was trailing behind SP candidate Dr Man Singh Yadav when the reports last came in.

called to resolve the issue. Prakash assured the candidates

that the counting would be free and fair and if anyone still had

Zoo to organise centenary year celebrations

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Lucknow zoo is gearing up for its centenary year celebrations next year. Director RK Singh said they would be holding a meeting of Zoo Advisory and Board would be held on December 16. The zoo will complete its 100 years on November 29 next year.

The director said discussion would include not only for planning the grand celebrations but also for

initiatives for bringing the zoo under the state government since it is still under a trust. Singh said they are planning to invite some big personalities for the celebrations. Lucknow's is the oldest zoo in north India. Others which have completed 100 years are Kolkata and Mysore zoos.

The zoo was established to commemorate the arrival of the Prince of Wales to India by the then Governor, Harcourt Butler, and he

converted Banarasi Bagh into a zoo. "Banarasi Bagh was a mango orchard which was established by Nawab Nasir-ud-Din Haider in 1827 complete with a Baradari to enjoy the evenings. It was called Banarasi Bagh because it had trees bearing Banarasi mangoes. It was named Prince of Wales Zoological Gardens by Harcourt Butler," he said.

It was named Lucknow Zoo in 2001 and Nawab Wajid Ali Shah

Lucknow Zoological Garden in 2015. The employees working at the zoo are under a trust and they are given salaries and allowances as their state government counterparts.

The trust is under the chairmanship of principal secretary, Forest.

The first butterfly park of the state was inaugurated at the zoo by Forest Minister Dara Singh Chauhan in 2018.

KGMU's General Surgery dept to host 46th UPASICON

Lucknow (PNS): The General Surgery department of KGMU is hosting the 46th annual conference of the UP chapter of Association of Surgeons of India online in association with Association of Surgeons of Lucknow from December 5-6. A senior faculty member said the conference would be a virtual academic feast consisting of various named orations, guest & keynote lectures, symposiums, PG teaching-based case discussions and competitive as well as free paper presentations.

This conference will be organised under the aegis of UPASI with KGMU Vice-Chancellor Dr Bipin Puri as its chief patron. "The theme of the conference is 'Safe surgeon and safe surgery: Integrated approach'. Various speakers from different surgical subspecialties, including paediatric surgery, endocrine surgery, trauma surgery, laparoscopic surgery,

thoracic and vascular surgery, will deliver lectures and orations.

Dr Ali Zamir Khan from the UK will deliver a guest lecture on video-assisted thoracic surgery training while Dr Parvez Sheikh and Dr Kushal Mittal from Mumbai will be delivering a guest lecture on anorectal diseases. Dr Gyan Chand (SGPGI) will deliver a lecture on endoscopic thyroid surgery, Dr VK Kapoor (SGPGI) on gall bladder diseases, Dr AK Khanna (BHU) on varicose veins and Dr Parveen Bhatia from Delhi and Dr MM Ansari on hernia surgery.

"This year, UPASICON-2020 will have detailed virtual case discussions presented by PG residents and moderated by senior surgical teachers. Students will also have a chance to present their research work, thesis on competitive and free paper presentation sessions.

Members of two families clash

Lucknow (PNS): Members of two families fought fiercely in Thakurganj on Thursday morning and several persons from both sides sustained injuries. The brawl erupted reportedly over an issue related to some woman and a long-standing enmity between the two families living in the same house. The complainant, Soni Singh of Balaganj, said she was busy in household work when Rajesh, who lives in the same house, reached the scene. "Rajesh was with his wife Aneta and two unidentified men. They attacked me and my family members without any provocation, leaving me, my son and two other women in the family injured," she alleged. Soni further alleged that Rajesh's children pelted the house with stones at the same time. "They ransacked my house. Rajesh and his aides misbehaved with women members in our family," she alleged.

However, Rajesh's wife Aneta alleged that male members of Soni's family — Mukesh, Arun, Krishna and Dilip — and Soni herself attacked her while she misbehaved with her. A cross-FIR was registered in this connection the police started a probe into the allegations and counter-allegations.

Police stop marriage of interfaith couple

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Para police on Wednesday night stopped solemnisation of marriage between an interfaith couple invoking the Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance which was promulgated by the UP governor recently.

The police action came as a dampener for both the families as it was said that they had given consent for the marriage without any coercion. Both the families are now scheduled to appeal to the district magistrate to seek nod for the marriage. As per reports, the girl of Duda Colony was getting married to Adil in the area on Wednesday night and both the families had made arrangements. Police reached the place and quizzed parents of the bride and groom.

ADCP Suresh Rawat said both the parties were summoned to the police station and were apprised of the new law. "The families were asked to take permission from the district magistrate. Both the parties agreed and gave an undertaking that they would abide by the law," he said. The legislation calls for curbs on religious conversions for the sake of marriage. The new

law provides for imprisonment up to 10 years for any violation.

In another incident, a Chinhat police team arrested two person on the charges of chain-snatching during an encounter with them in Hardasi Kheda of Chinhat on the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday. The accused were identified as Dheerendra Kumar and Kaushendra Soni, both of Barabanki. The police said both were planning their next strike when a trap was laid for them. Dheerendra suffered injuries in the exchange of fire.

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY Notification No. 135/2020
It is notified for information of general public that following Special Trains will run from 05.12.2020 as per revised time table as under:-

REVISED TIME TABLE					
1. 05070/05069 Aishbagh-Gorakhpur-Aishbagh Special Train			05069 Ex. Gorakhpur		
Arr.	Dep.	Station	Arr.	Dep.	
---	16:30	Aishbagh	10:40	---	
16:51	16:56	Badshahnagar	09:58	10:00	
17:28	17:30	Barabanki Jn.	09:19	09:20	
18:50	18:53	Gonda Jn.	07:50	07:53	
19:37	19:39	Balrampur	06:52	06:54	
20:11	20:13	Tulsiapur	06:25	06:27	
20:41	20:43	Pachperwa	06:00	06:02	
21:07	21:09	Barhni	05:43	05:45	
21:32	21:34	Shohratgarh	05:19	05:21	
21:56	21:58	Siddharth Nagar	05:00	05:02	
22:33	22:35	Anand Nagar	04:30	04:32	
23:45	---	Gorakhpur Jn.	---	03:45	

2. 02530/02529 Lucknow Jn.-Patliputra-Lucknow Jn. Special Train					
02530 Ex. Lucknow Jn.			02529 Ex. Patliputra		
Arr.	Dep.	Station	Arr.	Dep.	
---	05:00	Lucknow Jn.	02:45	---	
05:25	05:27	Badshahnagar	02:08	02:10	
07:30	07:33	Gonda Jn.	23:48	23:53	
08:34	08:36	Basti	22:35	22:38	
10:00	10:10	Gorakhpur Jn.	21:25	21:35	
11:04	11:06	Deoria Sadar	20:00	20:02	
12:03	12:08	Siwan Jn.	18:58	19:03	
13:09	13:14	Chhapra	18:06	18:11	
13:46	13:48	Dighwara	17:05	17:07	
14:50	---	Patliputra	---	16:30	

Please Note: • Days of run and rake composition will be same as notified earlier • These trains will run with full reserved accommodation • It is mandatory for the passengers to follow the guidelines issued for prevention and safety from COVID-19.
CPROT-60A Chief Passenger Traffic Manager/Gorakhpur
About any passenger amenity complaint SMS on Mob. No. 09794845955
Do Not smoke Bidi/Cigarette in train

Notice Inviting e-Tender
No. SSA/Sp/Trang/Procurement/ 05/334/2020/3129 Date:01.12.2020
Mission Director, Axom Sarba Siksha Abhijan Mission (Samagra Shiksha), Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, Assam invites tender through e-Tendering process from manufacturing of uniform for supply of Dress for learners of RSTC-NRSTC Centre.
To participate in the tender process through e-procurement document, bidder should have valid Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) and have to register in the portal <https://assamtenders.gov.in> by themselves.
The Bidder who have downloaded the tender schedules containing the tender details, terms and conditions, from the website shall submit their tender on-line on the website <https://assamtenders.gov.in>, with proof of payment of non refundable tender processing fee of Rs. 5000/- (Rupees five thousand) only in the form of demand draft/Bankers Cheque drawn in favour of Mission Director, Axom Sarba Siksha Abhijan Mission, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, Assam, from any nationalized/Scheduled Bank and payable at Guwahati. The tender should be submitted on-line as per date and time of submission as per prescribed schedule.
Sd/-Executive Director, SSA, Assam
Kahilipara, Guwahati-19

OFFICE OF THE PROJECT MANAGER
CONSTRUCTION UNIT UTTARAKHAND PEYJAL NIGAM
COLLECTORATE COMPOUND, RUDRAPUR, DISTT- UDHAM SINGH NAGAR
 No 1778/ Tender/305 E-Tender Notice Dated 01.12.2020

1. Name of the work- CONSTRUCTION OF REMAINING WORKS AT PRIMARY SCHOOL, KUNWARPUR, BLOCK SITARGANJ (UDHAM SINGH NAGAR).

2. Estimated Cost- Rs. 34.97 Lakh

3. Period of Completion- 06 Month

4. Date and Time of availability of Bid documents in the portal- 03.12.2020 (12.00 hrs)

5. Last date/Time of receipt of bids in the portal- 22.12.2020 (17.00 hrs)

6. Date & Time of Technical bid Opening- 24.12.2020 (12.00 hrs)

7. Name and Address of the Officer inviting bid:- Er. Om Prakash, Collectorate Compound, Rudrapur (Udham Singh Nagar).

8. Pre-bid meeting details (if required) Date & Place- 07.12.2020 (13.00 hrs) Project Manager, Construction Unit, Uttarakhand Pey Jal Nigam, Rudrapur (U.S. Nagar).

9. For further details, details of subsequent Amendment / correction documentation etc. may be obtained from the e-Procurement portal www.uktenders.gov.in

PROJECT MANAGER

फाइल नं. : 10(22)/2007-08/ESF/Pur.

राष्ट्रीय शर्करा संस्थान

आइड0एसओ 9001:2015 प्रमाणित संस्थान
 उच्चतम मानक खाद्य एवं सार्वजनिक वितरण मंत्रालय
 (खाद्य एवं सार्वजनिक वितरण विभाग) (भारत सरकार)

कल्याणपुर, कानपुर
 दिनांक : 03.12.2020

सूचना

विषय: निविदा प्रस्तुत करने की तिथि में विस्तार हेतु

संस्थान की प्रायोगिक प्रयोगशाला में "6500 कुंतल शीघ्र" विक्रय हेतु निविदा सं. 10(22)/2007-08/ESF/Pur. दिनांक 11.11.2020 के संदर्भ में निविदाएं प्रस्तुत करने की अंतिम तिथि बढ़ाकर दिनांक 14.12.2020 अपराह्न 01:00 बजे तक कर दी गई है, निविदाएं तदनुसार प्रस्तुत की जा सकती हैं। अन्य सभी नियम व शर्तें अपरिवर्तित रहेगी।
 (योगेश चन्द्र श्रीवास्तव)
 प्रशा. सह क्रय एवं विक्रय अधिकारी

Institute of Digital Education and Employment Development
डिजिटल शिक्षा तथा रोजगार विकास संस्थान
 प्रधान कार्यालय - पारधी (टीक) राजस्थान-304801

Expression of Interest (EOI)

नागरिक जागरूकता एवं ई-गवर्नान्स कार्यक्रम के लिये भारत के प्रत्येक जिले में स्थानीय सेवा प्रदाता एवं ग्राम पंचायत स्तर पर प्रशिक्षण केन्द्रों के लिये EOI के माध्यम से ई-बिड के आवेदन आमंत्रित किये जाते हैं।

योजना में भाग लेने वाले इच्छुक पंजीकृत संस्था, फर्म, कंपनी, ट्रस्ट भारत सरकार के CPPP के माध्यम से स्थानीय सेवा प्रदाता के आन्वयित आवेदन भारत सरकार के <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app> अथवा dsrvs@india.ac.in पोर्टल से किये जा सकेंगे। CPPP Tender ID - 2020_DSRVS_599983_1 Processing Fees 17700

पंचायत स्तर पर प्रशिक्षण केन्द्रों के आवेदन <https://eprocure.gov.in/epublish/app> पोर्टल से दस्तावेज डाउनलोड करके आवेदन ऑफलाइन माध्यम से भेजे जायेंगे।
 CPPP Tender ID - 2020_DSRVS_574031_2
 Tender EOI Fees 2360 Processing Fees 5900
 EOI संबंधी अधिक जानकारी के लिये विभाग की वेबसाइट dsrvsindia.ac.in पर जायें।
 आवेदन की अंतिम तिथि 28/12/2020 Tender Inviting Authority, DSRVS

प्राणीय रक्षक दल एवं युवा कल्याण महानिदेशालय, उत्तर प्रदेश, लखनऊ

संख्या-1971/तीन-12/प्रा.वि.द./2020-21 दिनांक-27 नवम्बर, 2020

निविदा सूचना

युवा कल्याण एवं प्राणीय रक्षक दल मुख्यालय पर माह-दिसम्बर, 2020 से फरवरी, 2021 तक विभिन्न तिथियों में आयोजित होने वाले विभिन्न राज्य स्तरीय कार्यक्रमों के दौरान निम्नलिखित व्यय करने हेतु जी.ओ.एफ.डी पर पंजीकृत फर्मों से ऑफलाइन निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है।

- कार्यक्रम के प्रतिभागियों की आवासीय व्यय/टैम्पेज से सम्बंधित सामग्री की आपूर्ति।
- वित्त एवं सार्वजनिक व्यय।

इच्छुक एवं पत्र फर्म उपरोक्त व्यय हेतु अलग-अलग ऑफलाइन निविदा दिनांक 14.12.2020 को अपराह्न 02:00 बजे तक महानिदेशालय के स्टार अनुभाग में रखे निविदा बॉक्स में डाल सकती हैं। प्राप्त निविदा इसी दिनांक को अपराह्न 03:00 बजे निविदा समिति के समक्ष युवा कल्याण एवं प्राणीय रक्षक दल महानिदेशालय पर खोली जाएगी। फर्मों की पात्रता तथा निविदा के नियम एवं शर्तों के सम्बन्ध में विस्तृत जानकारी महानिदेशालय के स्टार अनुभाग से किसी भी कार्यदिवस में प्राप्त की जा सकती है तथा निर्धारित बुक जमा कर निविदा प्राप्त क्रय किये जा सकते हैं। फर्मों को अपने कार्य के दौरान केंद्र सरकार एवं उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार द्वारा कोविड-19 के दृष्टिगत निर्गत दिशा-निर्देशों/प्रोटोकॉल का पालन करना अनिवार्य होगा।
 (अजातशत्रु शाही)
 उप निदेशक
 मुख्यालय
 उत्तर प्रदेश, लखनऊ

उपरो 157440, दिनांक-02.12.2020
 विज्ञापन वेबसाइट www.up.gov.nic.in पर उपलब्ध है।

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY, PRAYAGRAJ

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-tender Notice Number: CV-CS-CP-TDL-2020 Dated : 01.12.2020

Following e-tender on prescribed tender forms are invited by the Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Divisional Railway Manager's Office, North Central Railways, Prayagraj on behalf of President of India.

1 e-tender No.	125/2020
2 Name of work and Station	Cycle/Scooter/Motor Cycle Cum Car Parking Stand Contract at Tundla Railway station.
3 Period of Contract	Five Years
4 Minimum Reserved L/Fee of Contract for 05 years	₹ 4443516.00
5 Minimum Reserved L/Fee of Contract for 01 years	₹ 862400.00
6 Earnest Money	₹ 20000.00
7 Cost of Tender Form	₹ 3540.00
8 Time & date for the opening of tender	At 15:00 hrs. on 28.12.2020
9 Website & Notice where the full detail of tender can be seen	E-tender forms shall be available on www.ireps.gov.in upto 13:00 hrs on 28.12.2020 from the date of opening of the e-tender. The e-tender Notice can also be viewed on Railway's web site www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in 1329/20 (SP)

North central railways www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in @CPRONCR

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY, PRAYAGRAJ

E-tender Notice Number : CV-CS-CP-PRVJ-City Side-2020 Dated : 01.12.2020

Following e-tender on prescribed tender forms are invited by the Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Divisional Railway Manager's Office, North Central Railway, Prayagraj on behalf of President of India.

(1) E-tender No.	(2) Name of work and Station	(3) Period of Contract	(4) Minimum Reserved L/Fee of Contract for 05 years (in ₹)	(5) Minimum Reserved L/Fee of Contract for 01 year (in ₹)	(6) Earnest Money (in ₹)	(7) Cost of Tender Form
123/2020	Cycle/Scooter/Motor cycle cum Car parking Stand Contract at City Side of Prayagraj Railway station.	Five Years	2,25,72,016.00	42,50,850.00	25,000.00	11,800.00

(8) Time & date for the opening of tender : At 15:00 hrs. on 28.12.2020 (9) Website & Notice where the full detail of tender can be seen:- E-tender forms shall be available on www.ireps.gov.in upto 13:00 hrs. on 28.12.2020 from the date of opening of the e-tender. The e-tender Notice can also be viewed on Railway's website www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in. 1331/2020 V

North Central Railways www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in @CPRONCR

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY, PRAYAGRAJ

AUCTION NOTICE Dated 02.12.2020

Auction of Abandoned old VIP FOB connection of PF No. 1, 2/3, 4/5 & Civil Lines circulating area at Prayagraj station. The details are as under:-

Location	Name of Item	Stock Holder	Auction date & time	Amount of Security by deposited before binding	Period allowed for removal of material (days)	Auction Place
Abandoned old VIP FOB at Prayagraj station	Complete FOB items	SSE/Bridge/PRYJ	At 11.00 Hrs. on 14.12.2020	₹ 19,960	30 Days	Office of the AXEN/Br/Line/PRYJ

Note: (1) The highest bid shall be accepted as per term and condition by AXEN/Br/Line/PRYJ. The highest bidder is required to deposit for bid amount i.e. value of auction material within the seven days from the date of acceptance by the competent authority. (2) The bidders are required to inspect the site of abandoned FOB for their auction and take note of attached condition. The bidder should quote rate keeping the conditions in view. (3) The work is executed by 400 Ton capacity Road Crane. (4) The bidder should have completed at least one similar single work like FOB girder launching/delaunching in station area. Bidder should submit the experience certificate at the time of auction. Non submission of a copy of experience certificate by the bidder shall not be entertained in auction. (5) The work shall be executed as per NCR/HQ's approved TAD plan No. NCR/ENGG/BR/FOB/TAD/20-2020. Approved TAD is available in the office of AXEN/Br/Line/PRYJ. 1334/20 FA

North central railways www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in North Central Railway@CPRONCR

First arrest made under anti-conversion law

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Within a week of a new anti-conversion law being promulgated, the Bareilly police made the first arrest after a man accused a youth of harassing his daughter to change her religion on Wednesday.

On November 28, Governor Anandiben Patel had given her assent to the UP Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020 to thwart forcible or fraudulent religious conversions. The law provides for imprisonment of up to 10 years and a maximum fine of Rs 50,000 under different categories.

The case, the first of its

Owais Ahmad was arrested from the Richha railway gate of Bahedi area on Wednesday. He was produced before a local court which sent him to 14-day judicial custody

kind in the state, was registered at Devarniya police station of Bareilly district against Owais Ahmad based on a complaint by Tikaram of Sharif Nagar village on November 28.

In his complaint, Tikaram mentioned that his daughter and Ahmed studied together

in Class 12. He stated that three years ago, Ahmed started pressuring his daughter to convert to Islam and marry him and when the girl opposed, he threatened to kidnap her. Tikaram's daughter married someone else in June but Ahmad continued to harass her and her family.

The accused was charged under various sections of the Indian Penal Code and the anti-conversion law. "This is the first arrest under the new law. Owais Ahmad was arrested from the Richha railway gate of Bahedi area on Wednesday. He was produced before a local court which sent him to 14-day judicial custody," DIG, Bareilly Range, Rajesh Kumar Pandey, said.

Boy's body stolen from grave in Bulandshahr

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a shocking incident, the body of a child was found missing from a grave in Khanpur police station area of Bulandshahr.

The kin of the deceased and the locals staged a demonstration at the graveyard. Later, senior officers backed by local police rushed to the spot and pacified the protesters by assuring them that the culprits would soon be arrested.

As per reports, a four-year-old child died of fever at Thona village on Wednesday and was buried in a nearby graveyard. However, the next day, the kin found the body missing from the grave.

informed other residents of the village and they created a ruckus on the spot. The kin alleged that the body of the child was removed for carrying out occult practices (tantra mantra).

Later senior officers and the police reached the spot and pacified the people. Police teams were formed and all efforts were being made to identify and nab the miscreants and recover the body.

Meanwhile in Mirzapur, the autopsy report of three missing minors whose bodies were recovered on Wednesday, confirmed that they were murdered. Three children of a family, Hariom (14), Sudhanshu (13) and Shivam (12) of Bami village of Lalganj

(Mirzapur), had gone out for a picnic at Kushira forest on Tuesday afternoon after which they disappeared.

Their families were busy in a marriage ceremony and noticed their absence in the evening. After their search failed to yield results, the family members reported the matter to the police. On Wednesday, the bodies of the missing kids were found near an embankment in the forest. The victims had injuries and their eyes had been gouged out.

The bodies were sent for autopsy which confirmed that they had been murdered. Initially, trying to pass the deaths as accident, the police have now altered the case to one of murder.

Didi outreach steps try to undo loss of clout with Adhikari's exit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday announced a host of "out-reach" measures that could to some extent offset probable the loss of clout with the exit of powerful mass leader Suwendu Adhikari who is almost on the verge of quitting the party the ruling Trinamool Congress.

The Chief Minister told reporters her Government decision to cap the price of RTPCR test for ascertaining corona infection to Rs 950/- . Earlier the test was priced at Rs 1,250. "I have told that no one will be allowed to charge more than Rs 950/- Banerjee said. Initially the tests cost anywhere between Rs 4,000 and Rs 4,500 which was later reduced by the Chief Minister to Rs 2,000 and then to Rs 1,500.

Apart from reducing the charge of corona test Banerjee also announced that about one million students of government schools would be provided with tabs for continuing with their online classes. "There are about 9.5 lakh students (class XII) in 14,000 government aided schools and 636 madaras... they have been facing immense problem in continuing their online classes. So we have decided to provide them with tabs so that they can carry on their education," Banerjee said adding to help the students in lesser classes the government schools will be provided with computers for facilitating online education.

Apart from this the Chief Minister also announced 3 per cent dearness allowance for state government employees in January. "We have limited resources still we will provide 3 per cent DA to our Government employees in January," Banerjee said even as BJP leader Samik Bhattacharya said that "these decisions are aimed at winning back the fleeing electorate ... but people have tolerated her for ten years they are not willing to see her coming to power again... so these measure will not help her win elections."

Apart from reducing the charge of corona test Banerjee also announced that about one million students of government schools would be provided with tabs for continuing with their online classes

Launching a scathing attack on the Chief Minister, State BJP president Dilip Ghosh said the populist schemes --- including Duarey Sarkar (Government at the door steps) --- that the Government is unleashing are aimed at the voters but the Chief Minister will have to answer as to what she was doing all these years. Why her officers did not meet the people then... why the people would have to return empty handed from the BDO offices... so these schemes will not work for her now."

On rebellions in the TMC Ghosh said that "there are more police men guarding the TMC leaders than they are guarding the people because the TMC is afraid of these leaders leaving the party like the ones who are coming out of Trinamool now?"

Though he would not name Suwendu Adhikari inside sources said that the powerful TMC leader had already been contacted by two very senior BJP leaders including an MP.

Earlier even as the efforts to pacify him failed the TMC leadership said they would not communicate with him any longer. "We are not going to him again. Now he will have to take his decision... We have communicated our mind to him," senior leader and TMC MP Saugato Roy who was holding dialogues with him as emissary of the Chief Minister said.

Mumbai gets Sea Harrier Monument



TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In an effort to motivate the youth of Mumbai to serve the nation with pride, a Sea Harrier Monument was dedicated to the city of Mumbai by Maharashtra's Tourism and Environment Aditya Thackeray on Thursday, a day ahead of the Navy Day. Held in the presence of Rear Admiral V Srinivas, Flag Officer Commanding Maharashtra Naval Area, the dedication of the monument to the citizens of Mumbai marked "reassurance of devotion and commitment of Indian Navy towards safeguarding our maritime boundaries".

Located at the popular junction of Bandra Band Stand, the monument stands tall and proud next to the sea, reminding of the heydays of the aircraft's illustrious service

towards safeguarding the maritime frontiers of the Nation. The monument showcases the Indian Navy's aviation capabilities as also keeping the legacy of INS Viraat alive from whose deck the aircraft operated. The Indian Navy became only the second country to fly the Sea Harrier when it was inducted in 1983. The aircraft operated from the deck of INS Viraat. Built by the British Aerospace, the Sea Harrier was a Short Take-Off and Vertical Landing/Vertical Take-Off and Landing (STOVL/ VTOL) jet fighter, reconnaissance and attack aircraft. The aircraft formed part of INAS 300 squadron popularly known as "White Tigers" whose legacy is being continued by the latest MIG 29 K fighters onboard INS Vikramaditya.

Repeal farm laws or face nationwide stir: Mamata

SAUGAR KENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has extended her support to the farmers' movement and asked the Centre to repeal the three "oppressive laws" threatening a nationwide movement by her party if the "anti-people" legislations were not taken back immediately.

Farmers from Punjab, Haryana, UP, Bihar and elsewhere were protesting in Delhi against the enacting of the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020; the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020 and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020 passed by the Centre.

"I am very much concerned about the farmers, their lives and livelihood. GOI [government of

India] must withdraw the anti-farmers bills. If they do not do so immediately we will agitate throughout the state and the country. From the very start, we have been strongly opposing these anti-farmer bills," Banerjee said. Bengal's ruling Trinamool Congress was likely to hold a meeting on Friday to discuss the strategy regarding the proposed movement even as a number of leaders are in favour of taking a large number of farmers from Bengal to Delhi to support the movement.

The Chief Minister tweeted saying "We will discuss how the Essential Commodities Act is impacting common people and resulting in skyrocketing prices. The central government must withdraw this anti-people law."

She earlier told in a meeting how the three laws were complimentary to each other and would hit the farmers, townsmen, poor and the mid-

dle class equally hard in the days to come.

"This Government is not happy with selling the government properties to the privateers. Now they are selling the farmers to the private businessmen... They have brought a ruinous law that will send the farmers at the mercy of the corporate houses who will buy off their produce for low prices. The other laws would allow the same corporate to collect the produce and hoard them without police intervention till the prices go up ... this is blatant throwing of the common people at the mercy of the rich," she said. On the large-scale privatization she said, how "the Government of India is selling everything. You cannot sell Railways, Air India, Coal, BSNL, BHEL, banks, defence etc. Withdraw ill-conceived disinvestment and privatization policy."

CITY BRIEFS

MOU SIGNED

Indian Bank is one of the pioneers in supporting MSMEs by leveraging various MSME-specific products. Recently, the bank has also introduced an online programme, "MSME Prerana" to train MSMEs in basic accounting, maintenance of account books, government/bank schemes for MSMEs etc. Indian Bank on November 30 signed an MoU with Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) for usage of product by MSME borrowers. The MoU was signed in the presence of MD & CEO of Indian Bank Padmaja Chunduru, executive directors MK Bhattacharya & K Ramachandran, and SIDBI MD

Manoj Mittal. The MoU was executed on behalf of SIDBI and Indian Bank by SIDBI GM Chitra Alai and GM (MSME) of Indian Bank KS Sudhakara Rao.

FIRST PRIZE

Vritika Soni, a student of City Montessori School, Aliganj Campus II, won the first prize in an inter-school speech and fancy dress competition. The competition was organised online under the aegis of Lotus Social Welfare Charitable Trust in which students of various noted schools of Lucknow participated. Vritika impressed the judges by displaying her expressive ability, creative thinking and attractive costumes.

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION
 Notice is hereby given to all users of Railway lines and premises situated on the completed section of the under noted section of the North Eastern Railway that the 25000 Volt, 50Hz. A.C. overhead traction wires will be energized on or after the date specified against the section. On and from the same date the overhead traction line shall be treated as live at all times and no unauthorized person shall approach or work in the proximity of the said overhead lines.
Sr.No. :- 1., Section:- Chhapra (Excl.) - Gautamsthan (Incl.).
Date :- 03.12.2020.

Chief Electrical Engineer,
 Gorakhpur
 CPRO/EL-67
 About any passenger amenity complaint
 SMS on Mob. No.: 09794845955
 Do Not Smoke Bidi/Cigarette in train

EXTENSION OF PERIODICITY OF FESTIVAL SPECIAL TRAINS

For the convenience of rail passengers, Railways have decided to extend the period of run of the following Festival Special Trains as per the details given below :-

Spl Train No.	Station From	Dep. Time	Station to	Arr. Time	Days of Run	Period of Extension
01077	PUNE	17:20	JAMMU TAWI	10:00	DAILY	Up till further advice
01078	JAMMU TAWI	23:40	PUNE	15:55	DAILY	Up till further advice
01115	PUNE	16:15	GORAKHPUR	00:55	THU	Upto 31.12.20
01116	GORAKHPUR	15:30	PUNE	04:05	SAT	05.12.20 to 02.01.21
02167	LOKMANYA TILAK T.	00:35	MANDUADIH	04:25	DAILY	Upto 31.12.20
02168	MANDUADIH	09:50	LOKMANYA TILAK T.	12:25	DAILY	Upto 01.01.21
02135	PUNE	16:15	MANDUADIH	20:10	MON	07.12.20 to 28.12.20
02136	MANDUADIH	04:10	PUNE	08:05	WED	09.12.20 to 30.12.20
01407	PUNE	22:00	LUCKNOW JN.	02:40	TUE	Upto 29.12.20
01408	LUCKNOW JN.	06:30	PUNE	11:05	THU	Upto 31.12.20
01033	PUNE	16:15	DARBHANGA JN	06:40	WED	Upto 30.12.20
01034	DARBHANGA JN	16:47	PUNE	07:20	FRI	04.12.20 to 01.01.21
02165	LOKMANYA TILAK T.	05:23	GORAKHPUR	11:25	THU, MON	Upto 31.12.20
02166	GORAKHPUR	15:45	LOKMANYA TILAK T.	21:30	FRI, TUE	04.12.20 to 01.01.21
01021	LOKMANYA TILAK T.	16:40	SAMASTIPUR JN.	04:00	WED, SAT	Upto 30.12.20
01022	SAMASTIPUR JN.	09:50	LOKMANYA TILAK T.	18:40	FRI, MON	04.12.20 to 01.01.21
01079	LOKMANYA TILAK T.	15:50	GORAKHPUR	00:20	THU	Upto 31.12.20
01080	GORAKHPUR	05:30	LOKMANYA TILAK T.	16:00	SAT	05.12.20 to 02.01.21
02031	PUNE	16:15	GORAKHPUR	22:30	TUE, SAT	Upto 29.12.20
02032	GORAKHPUR	01:15	PUNE	08:05	THU, MON	Upto 31.12.20
02143	PUNE	16:15	BARAUNI JN	03:00	FRI, SUN	04.12.20 to 27.12.20
01144	BARAUNI JN	08:30	PUNE	20:20	SUN, TUE	06.12.20 to 29.12.20
01665	HABIBGANJ	17:00	AGARTALA	21:30	WED	Upto 30.12.20
01666	AGARTALA	14:00	HABIBGANJ	17:10	SAT	05.12.20 to 02.01.21
02191	JABALPUR	18:55	HARIDWAR JN.	14:05	WED	Upto 30.12.20
02192	HARIDWAR JN.	16:20	JABALPUR	11:40	THU	Upto 31.12.20
02549	KAMAKHYA	12:40	ANAND VIHAR (T.)	21:50	DAILY	Upto 31.12.20
02550	ANAND VIHAR (T.)	07:40	KAMAKHYA	16:40	DAILY	Upto 02.01.21
09017	BANDRA TERMINUS	13:05	HARIDWAR JN.	15:50	WED	Upto 30.12.20
09018	HARIDWAR JN.	18:30	BANDRA TERMINUS	22:00	THU	Upto 31.12.20
01093	C SHIVAJI MAHARAJ T	00:10	VARANASI JN.	03:30	DAILY	Upto 31.03.21
01094	VARANASI JN.	10:00	C SHIVAJI MAHARAJ T	11:25	DAILY	Upto 31.03.21

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

SP candidate, party workers stage protest

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Amid tight security arrangement, the counting of the votes polled to the Teachers' and Graduates' constituencies for Varanasi division began at Pahadia Mandi here on Thursday. The Samajwadi Party (SP) candidate for Graduates' constituency Ashutosh Sinha along with party workers staged a protest at the counting venue levelling serious allegations of tampering with ballot boxes. The counting continued till the filling of this report.

Levelling serious allegations of tampering with the ballot boxes, Sinha along with party workers staged a protest at counting venue. It led to utter chaos there and the police force along with PAC personnel reached there. The SP candidate put his protest before the returning officer and Divisional Commissioner Deepak Agrawal alleging that a ballot box was not sealed. Though, the officers on duty ruled out the allegation.

Earlier, the counting began amid tight security arrangements. The ballot papers were



SP workers protesting outside counting site at Pahadia Mandi in Varanasi on Thursday

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mixed by making 25 bundles of both teachers' and graduates' constituencies each under the supervision of Assistant Returning Officer and District Magistrate Kaushal Raj Sharma and thereafter the counting began. 14 tables have been installed in counting halls for the counting of votes of teach-

ers' and graduates' constituencies each. Only pass-holders were allowed entry at the counting venue.

It is pointed out that 68.83 and 39.33 per cent polling was recorded for teachers' and graduate constituencies respectively.

The counting continued

till the filling of this report. In the initial rounds of counting, the independent candidate and supported by the BJP Chet Narayan Singh and BJP candidate Kedar Nath Singh have taken edge to their nearest candidates in teachers' and graduates' constituency respectively.

BJP govt making all-round devtpt of Uttar Pradesh: Maurya

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The state government led by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is making all-round development of Uttar Pradesh. Especially successful efforts are being made to provide employment opportunities as well. This process of development will not stop. Those who oppose will always do the same while those who develop will be committed for the development.

Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya has expressed these aforesaid views. He further said that in Uttar Pradesh there is a BJP government, in Maharashtra also BJP is the biggest party. Along with Mumbai's Film City, Noida's Film City will also be made in which actors from Hollywood and Bollywood would like to come. And why are the people of Shiv Sena and Congress worried about this is beyond understanding, he added.

The Deputy Chief Minister further said that Uttar Pradesh is a state with a population of



Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya addressing a press conference

over 24 crores. It is the responsibility of the Government of Uttar Pradesh to create a platform for the employment opportunities in the region which is being played under the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. The Chief Minister of Maharashtra is being annoyed unnecessarily.

The Congress, Shiv Sena, NCP will not be able to stop Uttar Pradesh from becoming a state with the best state, a state full of development, providing opportunities to the talent with the upliftment of the poor and farmers. The BJP government has put Uttar

Pradesh on the path of development. This sequence will continue further as well. The people here have opened the path of development for themselves by choosing this government. The state government is doing development work only by understanding its responsibility, Maurya added.

Minister gives accessories to Divyangs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Various programmes were organised at different places in the city here on Thursday on the occasion of International Day of Disabled Persons. At a function organised at Circuit House, UP Cabinet Minister Anil Rajbhar gave several accessories to Divyangs (Disabled persons) at a programme organised under the auspices of Divyangjan Empowerment department. Besides, under the leadership of the head of Orthopaedics Department, Institute of Medical Science (IMS), Banaras Hindu University (BHU) Prof AK Rai, a discussion on achievements of PMR Project was organised. He said that the OPD of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation has been running at Sir Sunderlal Hospital (SSH) in BHU for almost two years whereas earlier the same was conducted only once a week but now it is being held thrice a week.

According to him, through



UP Minister Anil Rajbhar at International Day of Disabled Persons programme in Varanasi on Thursday

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this project, we try to remove the disabilities of the differently-abled persons, so that they can make their identity in the society according to skills and can be able to do daily routine work easily. 'We are always making continuous efforts with our team for the all-round development of Divyangs. Our team consists of physiotherapists, occupational therapists, vocational counsellors, psy-

chologists, social workers, prosthetists and orthopaedists as well as other health professionals. State-of-the-art surgical equipment is available to remove the disabilities of the patients,' he said. The function was also attended by Dr Saurabh, Dr Vinita, Dr Ashish, Dr Niharika, Neeraj Kumar, Priya Singh, Nidhi, Vipin Rai, Sumita Rai, Akash Rai, Mamta, Moushumi and Dr SS Pandey.

The vote of thanks was proposed by Dr OP Singh.

Besides, a national symposium on 'Disability and Social Challenges' was organised under the joint auspices of National Service Scheme (NSS), BHU and Saksham which was inaugurated by social worker Ramashish. In his address, he praised the Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his continuous efforts to provide opportunities to Divyangs. Prof Manisha Malhotra of the Department of Economics said that we need to make continuous efforts in the process of enabling disabled persons. Prof Gangadharan stressed the need for connecting the disabled persons with the mainstream of the society.

The function was presided over by Prof Kuldeep Singh. Earlier, the guests were welcomed by Dr Bala Lakhendra, Programme Coordinator of NSS BHU. Convener Satya Prakash Malviya proposed the vote of thanks. On the occasion, several persons were honoured.

58 more test positive in Prayagraj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The falling graph of corona infection is relieving once again for the denizens of the Prayagraj. On Wednesday, the graph of COVID-19 infected patients has reached a fortnightly position. Only 58 positive patients were found for COVID-19 in 24 hours.

Earlier on November 9, this was the figure of the infected. More than 78 people defeated the corona. The number of

active patients has come down to 784. An infected patient died during treatment.

According to Nodal Officer for Corona Dr Rishi Sahai, there are three doctors of the SRN Covid Hospital among the infected on Wednesday. One doctor is a Medicine department, while the other is a junior in this department. The third physician was on Covid duty. The Assistant Professor of the Department of Anesthesia has also been infected.

According to the nodal officer, the number of infected people has so far reached 26,743. At the same time, the percentage of healthy people has also increased.

The number of those who beat corona has increased to 25,616. About 47 patients are being treated at SRN L3 Hospital, 20 at Beli and 21 at United Medicity. With the death of one patient on Wednesday in the district, the death toll from Covid infection

has increased to 345.

Two personal assistants posted at the Municipal Commissioner's office, have been infected with coronavirus. Of them, one has been admitted to the Covid ICU of a Halat Hospital, Kanpur. At the same time, among those whose reports have been received positive, including senior assistant posted in DPO office of Vikas Bhawan, assistant manager of Axis Bank Karali branch, a constable of CRPF.

Rich tributes paid to Dr Rajendra Prasad

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Agricultural Education Day was celebrated at Lal Bahadur Shastri Intermediate College, Darekhun on the birth anniversary of Dr Rajendra Prasad, the first President of India, here on Thursday under the auspices of Institute of Agricultural Sciences, Banaras Hindu University (IAS-BHU). Hundreds of students participated in the celebrations.

Addressing the students, IAS-BHU Director Prof Ramesh Chand motivated the rural students to take interest in agricultural education informing them about various types of employment. He also informed them about various entrance examinations to get admissions in different undergraduate and postgraduate courses of agricultural sciences being conducted by the Indian Council of Agricultural



IAS-BHU Director Prof Ramesh Chand addressing students on Agricultural Education Day in Varanasi on Thursday

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Research (ICAR). According to him, better employment opportunities are available in agriculture if the student gets his bachelor's or master's degree from a good institute. The students were also made aware of the hard work and various

course materials for admission in good institutes.

Dean of Agriculture Faculty, IAS-BHU, Prof Anand Prakash Singh also informed the students about the importance and achievements of agriculture. He also apprised

the students about new experiments in agriculture, agricultural education and employment.

The Principal Phoolchand Prasad Verma encouraged the students for agricultural education and gave a vote of thanks.

Meanwhile, the 136th birth anniversary of 'Bharat Ratna' Dr Rajendra Prasad was celebrated as Advocate's Day in the Banaras Bar Association (BBA) auditorium. Paying their rich tributes to Dr Rajendra Prasad, the advocates garlanded the statue installed there and lighted the lamp. They also highlighted the contributions of Dr Rajendra Prasad.

The function was attended by BBA president Mohan Yadav, general secretary Arun Kumar Singh Jhappa, Nityanand Rai, Suresh Pal, Vivek Singh and Dhananjay Sharma.

89 new Covid cases in Varanasi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

As many as 89 new COVID-19 patients have been detected in the district, increasing the total number of cases to 19,390 on Thursday. The day saw two more deaths, increasing the toll to 313. During the day, the follow-up negative reports included 45 and out of them, 40 have been recovered from home isolation, while five from the hospitals, increasing the number to 15,407 and 2,873 respectively. The total number of patients who have been recovered so far is 18,280, leaving 797 active cases. The recovery rate is 94.27 per cent, while the mortality rate is 1.61 per cent. Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr VB Singh has informed that in the first report of the day, 27 positive patients were found out of 2,917 reports received. Till then, the total test reports received were 4,33,891

and the results of 1,547 are awaited. Out of them, 4,14,563 were negative, while 19,328 positive. The total number of samples collected was 4,53,887. Earlier, a male aged 80 from Pahadia succumbed to COVID-19 at Sir Sunderlal Hospital, Banaras Hindu University (SSH BHU). With the addition of five new red zones, the total number of hotspots has increased to 2,520 including 221 red zones. Three green zones have been converted into the red zones once again. There are 2,299 green zones with five new ones.

Meanwhile, on the instructions of the District Magistrate (DM) Kaushal Raj Sharma, mass/group antigen tests conducted at marriage/banquet halls, catering units, band parties, flower/light decoration units etc and on Wednesday, at 40 sampling sites, 664 people were tested and all of them

were found negative. Out of them, 440 samples were sent for RT-PCR testing. The passengers continued to be tested both at Varanasi Junction (Cantt.) and Manduadih railway station but all the 115 and 66 tests were found negative there respectively. Besides, two out of 220 tests have been found positive at Shree Shiv Prasad Gupta (SSPG) Hospital, Kabirchaura and one out of 72 at Swami Vivekanand Hospital, Bhelupur but all the 145 tests at Government Women's Hospital, 48 at CHC Shivpur, 92 at LBS Hospital, Ramnagar and 125 at SSH BHU have been found negative.

NEW IIT-BHU DEANS: Three new deans have been appointed at the Indian Institute of Technology, Banaras Hindu University (IIT-BHU) for the tenure of the three years. All the deans have taken charge on Tuesday.

Professor Rajnesh Tyagi of the Department of Mechanical Engineering has been appointed as Dean, Faculty Affairs, Professor Pradeep Kumar Mishra of the Department of Chemical Engineering as Dean, Student Affairs and Professor Rajeev Srivastava of the Department of Computer Science & Engineering as Dean, Resource and Alumni. Further, the tenure of Professor Rajiv Prakash of the School of Material Science and Technology, already working as the Dean of Research and Development has been extended for one more year. The IIT-BHU Registrar has informed that this order has been issued with the approval of the Chairman, Board of Governors. The Director of the Institute Prof Pramod Kumar Jain has welcomed all the deans and congratulated them on their appointment.

'Nuzhat died of internal head injuries'

ALLAHABAD (PNS): Nuzhat Bano, who was found dead at her in-laws' house on the very next day of 'nikah' at Puree Mian ji locality, under the Mauaima police station, died of internal head injuries. Postmortem report revealed this fact. This also shows that her death might be an accident. However, the police said that the picture would be crystal clear only after the husband is arrested.

The postmortem of the body took place on Tuesday evening. A panel of two doctors performed the autopsy amid videography. According to sources, no external injury marks were found on her body during this period. However, an internal head injury was found and this injury was also the rea-

son for her death. Due to the injury, blood was also shed inside his head, but it could not come out. Police said that the postmortem report has revealed that there are no external injuries on her body. SP trans-Ganga Dhawal Jaiswal said that investigation is being done. Many things will be clear only after the husband is caught. He is currently being searched. It may be pointed out here that the body of a 28-year-old bridegroom's body was found in her bedroom of the wedding house. The groom escaped overnight. The incident took place under the Mauaima police station in Prayagraj. On hearing the information, the members of the deceased girl who came weeping and wailing has filed

a case of murder against the groom and his family by giving a complaint to the police.

Mohammad Nafees, son of Khalil Ahmad, a resident of Mianji Mohalla of Mauaima town, was married to Nuzhat Bano, daughter of Mohammad Naseem, a resident of Sevali village under the Soraon police station. Nafis Ahmed's baraat arrived from Mauaima on Sunday. After a late evening farewell ceremony after 'nikah', he came to his house in Mauaima with other family members. After having dinner on Sunday night, the bride and groom went to the room. When the women of the house reached the bride's room on Monday morning, they were shocked to see the view there. Seeing the bride's corpse on the

bed and the groom disappearing, the women screamed. As soon as information was received about the incident, a crowd of people gathered around. In the meantime, the family members of the girl also reached the house weeping and wailing. They also reported the incident to the local police. After the information, the police reached the spot after investigation and took the body and sent it for post-mortem. Inspector Ramveel Patel, in charge of the Mauaima police station, said that report of murder have been lodged against the family members, including the groom, on the basis of the written complaint being given by the family members of the deceased. Police are investigating the case.

23 convicts yet to return to jail

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

As many as 23 convicts out of the total 39 released on parole earlier in the year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, who were slated to return to Naini central jail on or before November 25, are yet to show up.

Officials, meanwhile, said that the parole term of all the 39 convicts ended on

November 21. A week after the expiry of their parole period, authorities of Naini central jail have written letters to the District Magistrate, and Senior Superintendents of Police (SSPs) concerned, seeking immediate action and arrest of the errant convicts.

Senior Superintendent of Naini central jail, PN Pandey said that 'We have written to DM/SSPs of the concerned districts and sought their

immediate intervention regarding the return of convicts back to Naini central jail.'

He added, 'Only 16 out of the total 39 short term convicts (less than seven years), released on parole in April and May, have returned to the Naini central jail so far.'

Last week, a total of 2,256 convicts from 72 jails across the state released on parole by the jail authorities to check the spread of COVID-19, were

sent notices by state authorities asking them to return to their respective prisons on or before the expiry of their parole extensions. As per jail authorities, the convicts were given 3-4 extensions after the expiry of their first parole of eight weeks on various dates initiated since the last week of March. The date of their return depended on the date of their release from the jail and expiry of the extension period.



Kanpur Divisional Commissioner, Raj Shekhar, carried out surprise inspection of Paddy Purchase Centre at Naubasta on Thursday

Pioneer

Notice to NAFED, NCCF officials for delay in payments to farmers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Divisional Commissioner Raj Shekhar has issued show cause notices and warnings to the divisional incharges of NAFED and NCCF for the unnecessary delay in payments to the farmers.

He directed the RFC and ADM (Finance & Revenue) to monitor the payment on a daily basis and ensure timely payments to the farmers.

Addressing the officials after his surprise visit to Naubasta Mandi paddy purchase centres on Thursday, the divisional commissioner said that

paddy purchase from farmers on minimum support price was the priority of the government and it had set up dozens of purchase centres in each district for the convenience of the farmers.

He said on an average, the procurement at the purchase centre was going on smoothly and around six farmers were present with their paddy for sale.

He also took feedback from the farmers and enquired if they were facing any problem at these purchase centres.

He was informed by the officials that on an average around

400-500 quintals of paddy were being purchased from the farmers and the payments were being made within three to four days. The officials claimed that in case of holidays or festivals, the payments were delayed by a day or two.

The divisional commissioner said the daily purchase stock of last five days was pending for being picked up by the rice mills although it should have been done on a daily basis.

He asked the ADM (F&R) to ensure that the purchased paddy was picked up and delivered at the rice mills the same day or latest by next day so that delay in payment of any kind was avoided.

While going through the registers, the divisional commissioner asked the officials why the contact details of farmers were not noted down and why the signatures of the farmers were not taken on the 'Rejection Register' in case of rejection of the paddy. He directed the ADM (F&R) to ensure that this was done at all the purchase centres.

It may be mentioned here that the mobile phone number helps the checking officer to cross-check the complaint or the rejection issues.

The divisional commissioner was informed by the

officials that the Kanpur divisions purchase percentage was 26.48 per cent.

On an average, 1.5 to 2 per cent increase in paddy purchase per day has been witness for last one week.

Shekhar said the Kanpur division would achieve its target of paddy purchase by the end of January, 2021 as the purchase would continue till February 2021.

He said as per the feedback, out of the total Rs 175 crore due, around Rs 117 crore was paid to the farmers and around Rs 58 crore was pending for payment which was of the last one week.

The divisional commissioner directed the officials to ensure that the pending payment was made to the farmers in the next three days without fail and to report to the commissionerate.

Meanwhile, in the entire Kanpur division, one nodal officer of SDM, ACM, tehsildar and nayab tehsildar rank has been nominated for two purchase centres each and have been asked to review and random cross-check the purchases daily and make field visits.

It may be mentioned here that the divisional commissioner and all the district magistrates are monitoring and

reviewing the paddy purchase on daily a basis so that directions of the government are complied with.

GANGA BIODIVERSITY PARK

Meanwhile, the divisional commissioner visited the proposed site of the Ganga Biodiversity Park along with KDA VC and secretary, DFO, apar nagar ayukt and several other officials.

The National Green Tribunal has mooted the setting up of the biodiversity park near Ganga under the National Mission on Clean Ganga (NMG) and both the state and Central governments were implementing many projects to ensure Clean and Abundant Ganga. This project had been caught in a legal hurdle and got delayed by four years. Now the KDA and Forest department have jointly planned to convert the Botanical Garden place as the biodiversity park.

The park would cover an area of 50 acre and will have all the biodiversity of the Ganga belt starting from origin of the river. It will also have an activity centre, display and audio visual presentation for public awareness, watch towers, food courts, toilets, Ganga museum and Green Building plans.

63 more test positive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Nagar reported 63 more coronavirus positive cases on Thursday evening. Chief Medical Officer Dr Anil K Mishra said that 63 more people had tested positive for coronavirus infection between Wednesday evening and Thursday evening taking the tally of confirmed cases to 30,887 cases. He said that 14 cases were discharged from hospital. He said one COVID-19 death in the city was reported till Thursday evening keeping the death toll to 787. The CMO said at present 1062 active cases were undergoing treatment. Dr Mishra said 4338 samples were sent for testing in the city.

Three boys found dead

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

Three boys were found dead in a small dam located in the forest area under Lalganj police station on Wednesday. Reports said that the three cousin brothers, Shivam (15), son of Rakesh Tiwari, Sudhanshu (14), son of Rajesh Tiwari, and Hariom (14), son of Munna Tiwari, residents of Baami Dhasara village, had gone to the forest for collecting fruits on Tuesday. When they did not return home till late at night their family members launched a search for them. When they failed to trace the boys they lodged a report about their going missing at Lalganj

police station on Wednesday. Taking instant action the police launched a search and found the clothes of the boys on the bank of Lehanda dam. The police launched a search in the small dam and found the bodies of the boys in the water. Their death was believed to be due to drowning but as their eyes had been gouged out and there were some injuries on their bodies too their relatives mounted pressure on the police to register a case of murder. However, they said that after the post-mortem examination any such step would be taken.

APPEAL: Vice-president of BJP, Kashi province unit, Awadhesh Gupta, has appealed

to workers to use the voter list revision time to reach every family. While addressing a meeting of workers organised at the office of Mirzapur unit on Wednesday, he advised them to first contact those whose names were not included in the voters' list as well as those who had become eligible. He expected from the people's representatives too to cooperate with workers and come forward to achieve the target of including 10,000 new names in each assembly segment of voters' list. Prominent among those who spoke on the occasion were MLAs Ratnakar Mishra and Shuchismita Maurya and veteran party leaders, Ganga Sagar Dubey and Shyam Sundar Keshari.

Two killed in road accident

CORRESPONDENT ■ HAMIRPUR

Two persons were killed when a truck hit a Bolero going to Kanpur on Thursday morning. The incident occurred when the Bolero was carrying a patient who had been referred to Kanpur from the district hospital. As a result the patient and Bolero driver died on the spot.

According to the police, Jagat Singh (50), a resident of Bhaunia village in Sumerpur area, suddenly became seriously ill. His family took him to the district hospital on the Bolero and got him admitted there where the doctors on duty referred him to Kanpur in view of his critical condition. The accident occurred when the Bolero reached Lakshmi Bai trijunction in

Hamirpur city. As a result the driver, Shivpujan, and the patient, Jagat, died on the spot. Meanwhile one of the occupants of the Bolero was seriously injured and referred to Kanpur. The police sent the bodies of the two deceased for the post-mortem examination. The driver fled leaving the truck behind which had been impounded by the police.

Gadkari to deliver Rajaram Jaipuria lecture on Dec 5

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Seth Anandram Jaipuria Educational Society (SAJES) Chairman Shishir Jaipuria said that the second Dr Rajaram Jaipuria Memorial Lecture will be delivered by Union Road Transport & Highways, and MSME Minister Nitin Gadkari live on Facebook and YouTube channel of Seth Anandram Jaipuria School from 5:30 pm to 6:15 pm on December 5.

He said Gadkari would take the centre stage to share his thoughts on the role of leadership in turbulent times. He said the 45-minute lecture on the topic 'Role of Leadership in Turbulent Times', would begin with an invocation song by folk singer Malini Awasthi, followed by a welcome address by the SAJES chairman. Thereafter, a green certificate will be handed out to Gadkari by SAJES member Yash Jaipuria.

He said this certificate was the result of a great initiative of planting 501 trees spearheaded by the Jaipuria Group.

He said once the address was over, Saket Jaipuria would propose the vote of thanks. The virtual lecture will be attended by a large numbers of students, teachers, principals and faculty members of the Jaipuria Group of Educational Institutions.

Besides, government officials, corporate houses and entrepreneurs have also been invited and are likely to attend the lecture online.

The first lecture was held in 2019 and Vice President Venkaiah Naidu was the chief guest. The Dr Rajaram Jaipuria Memorial Lecture was inspired by the life experiences and teachings of Dr Rajaram Jaipuria who practised and taught ethical values and succeeded in running an industrial empire and delivering education despite intense challenges.

The memorial lecture was in fact an initiative by Seth Anandram Jaipuria Group of Educational Institutions to commemorate Dr Rajaram Jaipuria's contribution to society.

Lawyers demand hike in Adhivakta Kalyan Nidhi

KANPUR (PNS): On the occasion of Adhivakta Divas, dozens of lawyers staged a demonstration at the district magistrate's office on Thursday, demanding that the Adhivakta Kalyan Nidhi be increased to Rs.10 lakh from Rs.1.25 lakh.

Adhivakta Kalyan Sangharsh Samiti convenor Ravindra Sharma said the state government should now fulfil its commitment made during assembly elections to increase the lawyer's welfare fund. He said since 1989, the Adhivakta Kalyan Nidhi was still Rs.1.25 lakh after a long period of 25 years. He also demanded pension of Rs.10,000 per month for the elderly lawyers and incentive of Rs.10,000 per month to young lawyers for initial five years of their registration. ACM (III) Anil Kumar Agnihotri received the memorandum on behalf of the district magistrate and said it would be sent to the chief minister for further action. Prominent lawyers present included Avinash Bajpai, BL Gupta, Vijay Kumar, Anoop Sachan, Satraghun Sachan, Aditya Gupta, Alok Mishra, Vijay Sharma, & many more.

CPCB to enforce NGT guidelines on firecrackers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Central Pollution Control Board has decided to strictly enforce the directive of the National Green Tribunal under which sale and exploding firecrackers has been totally banned.

It said in view of the resurfacing of COVID-19 in, it had been decided to impose this rule strictly in Kanpur Nagar.

It may be mentioned here

that Kanpur Nagar has once again been ranked as the city with dangerously polluted air.

Ironically, despite the ban on sale and exploding of firecrackers on Diwali, the people here had openly flouted the norms causing the air pollution to shoot up dangerously.

CPCB Senior Engineer AK Singh said as per the new norms, use of firecrackers had currently been restricted to two hours only in villages,

towns, cities and metros. He said only green firecrackers could be sold and used on occasions.

He said as per NGT Chairman AK Goyal, for approaching Christmas and New Year, the government should restrict the use of firecrackers. He said for Christmas, sanction would be given between 11:55 pm to 12:30 am only. He said those violating norms would be fined and legal action would be taken

against them.

He said in Kanpur Nagar, the air pollution level was far dangerously high. He said today it had become a trend to explode firecrackers for over two to three hours in marriages starting from the beginning of the baraat. He said the air quality of Kanpur Nagar was the worst and with the AQI shooting up to the 352 it was ranked as the fourth most polluted cities in India.

Exports showed a single-digit negative growth in November

KANPUR (PNS): Federation of Indian Export Organisation president Sharad Kumar Saraf said that exports showed a single-digit negative growth of 9.07 per cent in November due to supply side disruptions and declining petroleum exports on account of fall in crude prices.

He said in addition to this, the farmers' agitation in some of the hinterland states had also affected exports during the month. He said exports were seeing signs of revival as order booking position had continuously improved and more new orders were in the offing.

He reiterated that the forecast of the arrival of the COVID-19 vaccine along with gradual lifting of lockdown across the country and the globe had also helped in boosting the business sentiments for the sector as a whole, which could be expected to be seen from the positive figures of the

upcoming months. He said going by the trend, it was expected to end the financial year 2020-21 with an overall merchandise exports of about US \$ 290 billion. He added that exporters had continuously been receiving a lot of enquiries and orders further adding to the positive sentiments with signals of further resilience in the global supply chain. Saraf said the litmus test for the traditional sectors of exports would be the Christmas and New Year sales and if that went well, the inventory would be liquidated, adding to further demand. He said the exports of other cereals along with oil meals, iron ore, rice, ceramic products and glassware, handicrafts excluding hand-made carpet, cereal preparations and miscellaneous processed item, carpet, jute manufacturing, including floor covering, spices, drugs and pharmaceuticals, tobacco, cot-

ton yarn, fabrics, made-ups, handloom products etc. were seeing positive signs. He said besides fruits and vegetables, tea, gems and jewellery, mica, coal and other ores, minerals including processed meat, dairy and poultry products and electronic goods showed either a very high or impressive growth or were in positive territory showing signs of further revival. The FIEO chief said that reduction in exports of major products, including petroleum products, leather and leather manufactures, cashew, plastic and linoleum, marine products, oil seeds, man-made yarn, engineering goods, organic and inorganic chemicals, coffee and textiles, which were major constituents in India's export basket and related to labour-intensive sector of exports, had also been key concern during the month. He said, however, reduction in imports during

November, 2020 by 13.33 per cent to US \$ 33.39 billion compared to the same period during the previous fiscal led to a trade deficit of just US \$ 9.96 billion with a substantial decline of 21.93 per cent during the month. Saraf urged the government to address some of the key issues, including adequate availability of containers, softening of freight charges, release of the required MEIS benefits, resolving risky exporters issues, immediate introduction of RoDTEP across all sectors, introduction of NIRVIK Scheme, demand for the creation of a fund for marketing of Brand India products and various other infrastructure bottlenecks with regard to customs and port clearances, which would further help in reviving the exports during the remaining four months of the fiscal, showing impressive performance for the sector as a whole.

Spl trains to run as per revised timetable

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The railway administration is revising the timings of special trains being run for the convenience of passengers from December 5. As a result the following special trains will be run at the revised time. All the 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.

AISHBAGH-GKP SPL: As per the revised timetable the 05070 Aishbagh-Gorakhpur Intercity Express special train will depart from Aishbagh at 16:30 hrs, from Badshahnagar at 16:56 hrs, from Barabanki at 17:30 hrs, from Gonda at 18:53 hrs, from Balrampur at 19:39 hrs, from Tulsipur at 20:13 hrs, from Pachperwa at 20:43 hrs, from Badni at 21:09 hrs, from Shohratgarh at 21:34 hrs, from Siddharthnagar at 21:58 hrs from Anandnagar at 22:35 hrs and will reach Gorakhpur at 23:45 hrs. During the return jour-

ney the 05069 Gorakhpur-Aishbagh Intercity Express special will depart from Gorakhpur at 03:45 hrs, from Anandnagar at 04:32 hrs, from Siddharthnagar at 05:02 hrs, from Shohratgarh at 05:21 hrs, Barhni at 05:45 hrs, Pachperwa at 06:02 hrs, Tulsipur at 06:27 hrs, Balrampur at 06:54 hrs, Gonda at 07:53 hrs, Barabanki at 09:20 hrs, Badshahnagar at 10:00 hrs and reach Aishbagh at 10:40 hrs. The days of run and rake composition of this train will remain as notified earlier.

MANDUADIH-NEW DELHI SPL: The 02581 Manduadih-New Delhi special train will depart from Manduadih at 23:10 hrs, from Gyanpur Road at 23:55 hrs, on second day from Prayagraj at 01:40 hrs, from Kanpur Central at 04:10 hrs, from Ghaziabad at 04:45 hrs and reach New Delhi at 11:30 hrs. During the return journey the 02582 New Delhi-Manduadih special will depart from New Delhi at 22:50 hrs, Ghaziabad at 23:22 hrs, the sec-

ond day Kanpur Central at 04:35 hrs, Prayagraj at 07:45 hrs, Gyanpur Road at 09:05 hrs and reach Manduadih at 10:15 hrs. The days of run and rake composition of this train will remain as notified earlier.

LKO JN - PATALIPUTRA SPL: The 02530 Lucknow Jn - Patliputra special will leave Lucknow Jn at 05:00 hrs, Badshahnagar at 05:27 hrs, Gonda at 07:33 hrs, Basti at 08:36 hrs, Gorakhpur at 10:10 hrs, Deoria Sadar at 11:06 hrs, Siwan at 12:08 hrs, Chhapra at 13:14 hrs, Dighwara at 13:48 hrs and arrive at Patliputra at 14:50 hrs. During the return journey the 02529 Patliputra-Lucknow Jn will leave Patliputra at 16:30 hrs, Dighwara at 17:07 hrs, Chhapra at 18:11 hrs, Siwan at 19:03 hrs, Deoria Sadar at 20:02 hrs, Gorakhpur at 21:35 hrs, Basti at 22:38 hrs, Gonda at 23:53 hrs, on the second day at Badshahnagar 02:10 hrs and reach Lucknow Jn at 02:45 hrs. The days of run and rake composition of this train will remain as notified earlier.

Timing of Gkp-Kanpur Anwarganj spl revised

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The railway administration has decided to revise the timings of special trains being run for the convenience of the passengers from December 4. As a result, the following special trains will be run as per the revised timetable from December 4. All the coaches in them will be of reserved category, CPRO PK Singh said.

GORAKHPUR-KANPUR ANWARGANJ SPECIAL: The 05004 Gorakhpur-Kanpur Anwarganj special will leave Gorakhpur daily at 23:20 hours, Chauri Chaura at 23:57 hours, on second day Gauribazar at 00:12 hrs, Deoria Sadar at 00:35 hrs, Bhatni at 01:01 hrs, Salempur at 01:15 hrs, Lar Road at 01:28 hrs, Belthara Road at 01:44 hrs, Indara at 02:13 hrs, Mau at 02:35 hrs, Dulhapur at 02:57 hrs, Aunrihar at 03:30 hrs, Varanasi City at 04:04 hrs, Varanasi at 04:25 hrs, Manduadih at 04:38 hrs, Bhulanpur at 04:50 hrs, Madhosingh at 05:28 hrs, Gyanpur Road at 06:00 hrs, Handia Khas at 06:33 hrs, Prayagraj Rambagh at 07:50 hrs, Prayagraj at 08:22 hrs, Bharwari at 08:49 hrs, Sirathu at 09:05 hrs, Khaga at 09:26 hrs, Fatehpur at 09:51 hrs, Bindki Road at 10:12

hrs, Kanpur Central at 11:05 hrs and reach Kanpur Anwarganj at 11:52 hrs. The 05003 Kanpur Anwarganj-Gorakhpur special as per the revised timetable will leave Kanpur Anwarganj daily at 16:40 hrs, Kanpur Central at 17:00 hrs, Bindki Road at 17:45 hrs, Fatehpur at 18:12 hrs, Khaga at 18:42 hrs, Sirathu at 19:10 hrs, Bharwari at 19:27 hrs, Prayagraj at 21:05 hrs, Prayagraj Rambagh at 21:20 hrs, Handia Khas at 22:13 hrs, Gyanpur Road at 22:38 hrs, Madhosingh at 22:56 hrs, Bhulanpur at 23:32 hrs, Manduadih at 23:44 hrs, the second day Varanasi at 00:15 hrs, Varanasi City at 00:28 hrs, Aunrihar at 01:03 hrs, Dulahapur at 01:38 hrs, Mau Jn at 02:05 hrs, Indara at 02:25 hrs, Belthara Road at 02:50 hrs, Lar Road at 03:18 hrs, Salempur at 03:37 hrs, Bhatni at 04:05 hrs, Deoria Sadar at 04:33 hrs, Gauri Bazaar at 04:53 hrs, Chauri Chaura at 05:08 hrs and reach Gorakhpur 06:10 hrs. However, the days of run and rake composition of these trains will remain as notified earlier.

LKO JN- VARANASI CITY SPECIAL: The 05008 Lucknow Jn-Varanasi City special as per the revised timetable will depart from Lucknow Jn at 23:10 hrs, Lucknow City at 23:27 hrs,

Badshahnagar at 23:49 hrs, on second day Barabanki at 00:22 hrs, Burhwal at 00:48 hrs, Gonda at 02:20 hrs, Mankapur at 02:45 hrs, Basti at 03:50 hrs, Khalilabad at 04:30 hrs, Domingarh at 5:35 hrs, Gorakhpur at 06:20 hrs, Gorakhpur Cantt at 06:35 hrs., Chauri Chaura at 07:04 hrs, Gauribazar at 07:36 hrs, Deoria Sadar at 07:52 hrs, Bhatni at 08:27 hrs, Salempur at 08:44 hrs, Lar Road at 08:57 hrs, Belthara Road at 09:13 hrs, Kiriharpur at 09:29 hrs, Indara at 09:49 hrs, Mau at 10:15 hrs, Dulhapur at 10:42 hrs, Jakhnian at 10:55 hrs, Sadat at 11:09 hrs, Aunrihar at 11:37 hrs, Sarnath at 12:01 hrs and reach Varanasi City at 12:20 hrs. The 05007 Varanasi City-Lucknow Jn will leave Varanasi City at 17:00 hrs daily and after stopping at Sarnath, Aunrihar, Sadat, Jakhnian, Dulhapur, Mau, Indara, Kiriharpur, Belthara Road, Lar Road, Salempur, Bhatni, Deoria Sadar, Gauribazar, Chauri Chaura, Gorakhpur, Dominagarh, Jagatbela, Khalilabad, Basti, Mankapur, Gonda, Burhwal, Barabanki, Gontinagar, Badshahnagar, Lucknow City arrive at Lucknow Junction at 06:15 hours. The days of run and rake composition of these trains will remain as notified earlier.

MoU signed for construction of community buildings

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

Northern Coalfields Limited (NCL), a miniratna company of the Government of India, besides strengthening the infrastructure in its nearby areas and providing basic facilities to villagers and tribals, through proper education and skill development is making remarkable efforts to link them to the mainstream of development. Under the Dudhichua region of NCL under corporate social responsibility (CSR) for the construction of new community buildings in 11 gram panchayats in Singrauli district has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) worth ₹2.75 crore with the Rural Engineering Service, Singrauli. Regional General Manager, Dudhichua, Bipin Kumar, and Executive Engineer Anil Singh Bagole of Rural Engineering Services, Singrauli, signed on the MoU in the presence of District Collector, Singrauli, Rajiv Ranjan Meena and General Manager (CSR), NCL, Atmeshwar Pathak. On the occasion, Staff Officer (Personnel), Dudhichua region, Kavita Gupta and Chief Manager (Civil) Rajeev Ranjan were also present. According to the said MoU, NCL Dudhichua region will release a sum of ₹25 lakh per com-



munity building for the construction of 11 community buildings in a phased manner and the construction work will be done by Rural Engineering Services department. It is worth mentioning that under this scheme under Devsar block in Khutar, Mada, Gahilra, Karsualal and Makroh, under Solang panchayat Vaidhan block's Bargawan, Charaki and Aamo and under Chitrangi block in Khirwa and Pondi-3 panchayats community buildings will be constructed.

FLAG HOISTED: General Manager of NCL's Jayant Project RB Prasad hoisted the 40-metre high high mast national flag in the GM's office. It can be seen from almost all the places of Jayant. On the occasion all departmental heads, labour representatives, other officers and employees were present. The CISF contingent saluted the tricolour. General Manager RB Prasad in his address said that despite the Covid-generated difficult circumstances the personnel of Jayant had discharged their responsibilities while remaining safe. Due to it Jayant project has been successful in performing excellently in every field. On the occasion chairperson of Samparita Mahila Samiti Meenu Prasad and its entire members were present.

Covid caseload past 95L mark

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's Covid-19 caseload breached the 95-lakh mark on Thursday while the total number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 89.73 lakh pushing the national recovery rate to 94.11 per cent, according to the Union Health Ministry.

The total coronavirus cases mounted to 95,34,964 with 35,551 new infections being reported in a day, while the death toll climbed to 1,38,648 with 526 new fatalities.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 89,73,373 pushing the national recovery rate to 94.11 per cent, while the Covid-19 case fatality rate stands at 1.45 per cent.

The active Covid-19 caseload continued to remain below 5 lakh. There are 4,22,943 active coronavirus infections in the country which comprises 4.44 per cent of the total caseload, the data stated.

India's Covid-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23 and 40 lakh on September 5. It went past 50 lakh on September 16, 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, and surpassed 90 lakh on November 20.

India has reported more daily recoveries than the daily



new cases during the past 24 hours. While 35,551 persons were found to be infected with Covid in India, during the same period, India has registered 40,726 new recoveries. It has led to a net decline of 5,701 cases from the total Active Caseload in the last 24 hours.

The new recoveries continue to overtake the daily new cases continuously since the past 6 days. India's active caseload has fallen under the 4.5 per cent mark.

The trend of more daily recoveries than the daily cases has led to a continuous contraction of India's Active Caseload. It has ensured that India's present active caseload of 4,22,943 consists of just 4.44

per cent of India's Total Positive Cases.

New Recoveries outnumbering the daily New Cases has also improved the Recovery Rate to 94.11% today. The total recovered cases stand at 89,73,373. The gap between Recovered cases and Active cases is steadily increasing and presently stands at 85,50,430.

With 5,924 persons recovering from COVID, Kerala recorded maximum number of recoveries. Delhi registered another 5,329 daily recoveries while Maharashtra 3,796 new recoveries.

Ten States/UTs have contributed 75.5 per cent of the new cases, said the Ministry.

No directive for affixing posters outside homes of Covid patients, Govt tells SC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre informed the Supreme Court on Thursday that its guidelines do not contain any instructions regarding affixing posters and signages outside the homes of Covid-19 patients and there cannot be any stigma attached to it.

The Government said this before a bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan which reserved order on a plea seeking directions to do away with the practice of pasting posters outside the homes of those

infected by coronavirus.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta referred to the affidavit filed in the apex court by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) and told the bench, also comprising Justices R S Reddy and M R Shah, that the guidelines do not require any such affixation of posters.

"The Central government guidelines do not require this," he said, adding, "There cannot be any stigmatisation".

The bench asked Mehta whether the Centre can issue an advisory that this should not

be done.

To this, Mehta said the central government has already done this.

"We will close it. Heard. Judgement reserved," the bench said.

The counsel appearing for the petitioner told the bench that there are no such instructions in the guidelines to affix posters outside the home of those found COVID positive but the "reality is very different".

"Posters are also affixed with names of COVID positive patients on it," the counsel said.

Congress demands immediate withdrawal of all three farm laws

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday stepped up the demand for the immediate scrapping of the farm laws in view of the farmers' protest in the national capital.

Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi said in a tweet, "Accepting less than scrapping of three black farm laws will be deceit to farmers and the country".

Rahul said it would be a betrayal of India and its farmers if the Centre fails to repeal the farm laws.

The grand old party has been attacking the government over the use of force against the protesting farmers, and urged them to withdraw the new farm laws and redress the grievances of the protesters.

Taking to Twitter ahead of talks between farmers and government, Rahul Gandhi wrote, "Accepting anything less than the complete withdrawal of black farm laws would be a betrayal of India and its farmers".

Rahul's remarks come at a time when farmers from several states are protesting at Delhi borders against the Centre's new agriculture reform laws.

A day before, Rahul had attacked the Centre over its claim of doubling farmers'



income and alleged that their income in fact "halved" under the "suit-boot" government, while that of its cronies friends has grown four times.

"They said farmers' income will be doubled. What they did was increase the income of 'friends' four times and halved that of farmers. This is a government of suit-boot, lies and loot," the Congress leader said in a tweet.

Rahul also shared a video showing police using water cannons and firing tear gas shells during protests by farmers with a speech of Prime Minister Narendra Modi playing in the background wherein he says his government is taking steps to resolve the problems faced by farmers and double their income.

"Modi government, stop giving 'jumlas' (rhetoric) to farmers, stop the dishonesty and atrocities, stop giving them the falsehood of talks, (and) abolish all three black laws which are against farmers and labourers," Rahul Gandhi said.

CBSE's 10th and 12th exams to be held in conventional written mode

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Thursday said that the class 10th and 12th Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) exams for the year 2021 will be conducted in the conventional written mode and that as of now there is no consideration to conduct the exams online.

"The Board examinations of 2021 will be in the regular written manner and not online," the CBSE stated. The dates of examination, however, have not been decided yet, Education Ministry officials said.

Besides this, the CISCE, which conducts the ISC and ICSE board exams has written to the chief ministers of all states and union territories asking for permission to partially reopen schools from January 4 so that board exam students of classes 10 and 12 could participate in project works, practical works, SUPW, and doubt-clearing sessions.

According to the Ministry of Education, "Conducting the examinations is important to ensure the progress as well as for the better future of the stu-

dents". This year, amid the pandemic and 'new normal' scheme of things, a wide range of discussions have been underway among students, parents and teachers regarding the examinations.

From registration of Board exams to classroom operations, everything is being conducted virtually.

Earlier, Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank had said, "Online education is a big challenge for students who are constantly away from school and college. But students should always be ready to turn this challenge into an opportunity".

In view of all such possibilities, the government has taken a new initiative to conduct the examinations timely amid the Covid-19 situation.

The Education Minister has planned a three-stage dialogue with the alumni, parents and teachers for conducting the examinations. He is likely to communicate directly with students, parents and teachers through webinars on three different dates.

After this virtual dialogue,

the education minister will review the examinations to be held in the states and union territories. In this way, a detailed plan to conduct the examinations will be made according to the orders of the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Home Affairs.

"The biggest challenge is to study with better resolve and will, and to release the results on time so that students do not waste an entire academic year," he said, adding "for the better future of students, it is necessary to conduct examinations across the country on time".

The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) said in a statement that in case schools are allowed to reopen, they would follow all the safety guidelines and SOPs prescribed by the government.

CISCE has also asked the dates for the state elections to be held in April-May 2021 from the Chief Election Commissioner of India so that CISCE can finalise the ICSE board exam 2021 and ISC board exam 2021 dates, the commission said in their official statement.

Pet animals turn saviours in times of no contact

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In the absence of human-to-human contact due to coronavirus induced lockdowns, job losses and social isolation, pet animals filled the need by providing much-wanted comfort via cuddles, pats and a constant physical presence, according to a study published in the journal of Behavioural Economics for Policy (JBEP).

Researchers from University of South Australia asserted that as pets have played a lifesaving role in 2020, the Governments need take notice of this connections. Hospitals, hospices and aged care facilities should be encouraging pet connections with residents, they said in the study.

Lead author Dr Janette Young underlined that physical touch is a sense that has been taken for granted - even overlooked - until Covid-19 visited our door earlier this year.

"To fill the void of loneliness and provide a buffer against stress, there has been a global upsurge in people adopting dogs and cats from animal shelters during lockdowns. Breeders have also been inundated, with demands for puppies quadrupling some waiting lists," she said.

It is estimated that more than half the global population share their lives with one or



more pets. The health benefits have been widely reported, but little data exists regarding the specific benefits that pets bring to humans in terms of touch.

Touch is an understudied sense, but existing evidence indicates it is crucial for growth, development and health, as well as reducing the levels of the stress hormone cortisol in the body. It is also thought that touch may be particularly important for older people as other senses decline, she said.

In interviews with 32 people, more than 90 per cent said touching their pets both comforted and relaxed them - and the pets seemed to need it as well while many referenced pets' innate ability to just "know" when their human counterparts weren't feeling

well and to want to get physically close to them.

Kavita Kumar, a Defence Colony resident in New Delhi, agreed with the observation recalling how her furry pet, Muffin, has been a harbinger of peace and solace in these trying times. "He has been able to gauge my ups and downs and has provided me with sane and streamlines thoughts taking away the stress surrounding us," said Kumar a teacher in a Delhi school.

Unnati G Hunjan and Jayasankara Reddy, researchers from Christ University, Karnataka in their study in Sage Journals too have talked about various benefits of touch healing of pets. "It also releases biochemicals which can further boost the immune system and enhance health and well-being," they said.

HC grants custody parole to Bihar MP Shahabuddin

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has granted custody parole for three days to jailed former MP Mohd Shahabuddin, who is lodged in Tihar Jail and serving life term in a murder case, to meet his family in the national capital, noting that the police departments of Bihar and Delhi are in union that they cannot assure his safety in Siwan.

NIA arrests one in human trafficking case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The NIA has arrested accused Gopal Oraon of Khunti district, Jharkhand, in connection with a case relating to a human trafficking racket running in guise of placement agencies.

Oraon was a close associate of arrested accused Panna Lal Mahto and was actively involved in human trafficking racket, the NIA said on

Thursday.

The case arose out of FIR No. 07/2019 dated July 19, 2019 registered at PS-AHTU, Khunti, Jharkhand under various Sections of the Indian Penal Code and relevant Sections of the Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act.

The NIA re-registered the case as RC-09/2020/NIA/DLI on March 4 this year and took up the investigation.

84.7% PwDs forced to borrow food in lockdown

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The lockdowns due to Covid-19 were harder for people with disabilities (PwDs) with a study noting that about 84.7 per cent participants interviewed had to borrow food to cope with financial crisis, 81 per cent reported experiencing high levels of stress while 28 per cent postponed their scheduled medical appointments.

The CBM India, in collaboration with IIPH Hyderabad and Humanity & Inclusion had conducted the study across 14 States on the Impact of Covid-19 on PwDs with an aim to understand the level of disruption on their living conditions and related restrictions.

"The aim was also to generate evidence to be prepared for future pandemics or emergencies," said Prof GVS Murthy, Director, IIPH Hyderabad. The observations were distressing as study revealed that the pandemic impacted the health/ mental health and rehabilitation, education, livelihood and social

participation of PwDs. For instance, 42.5 per cent, i.e., two out of every five PwDs reported that lockdown had made it difficult for them to access routine medical care even as isolation, abandonment, and violence were other worrying psycho-social problems reported, reflecting the lack of empathy on the part of their family during the difficult times.

At least 81.6 per cent reported experiencing moderate to high levels of stress. Among the 34.5 per cent who stated that they needed information on mental health issues, only 25.9 per cent had access to such services.

Only 20 per cent were able to get regular mental health counselling or therapy related services during the lockdown period, and 11.4 per cent faced problems getting their regular psychiatric medicines. 58.2 per cent were unhappy that the therapy sessions for their child with disability has ceased during the lockdown, said the study. Participants with varied

impairments like physical, visual, intellectual and speech and hearing impairments were from Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Delhi, Uttarakhand, Assam, Meghalaya, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and Maharashtra.

"People with disability suffered significantly more than the rest of the population in accessing health and rehabilitation care during the Covid lockdown. We need to be adequately prepared so that we do not compromise their health needs," said Prof Murthy while Dr. Sara Varughese from CBM India, added "Many faced difficulties in even accessing basic necessities. Incomes were compromised and even withdrawing their money from their bank accounts was a challenge".

The lockdown also posed major difficulties in accessing medicines due to travel restrictions, out-patient services at hospitals/clinics, regular blood pressure monitoring, rehabilitation services.

Cong LS leader Chowdhry seeks short Winter Session to address farmers' issues

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress' Lok Sabha leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury on Thursday requested Speaker Om Birla to convene a short Winter Session of the House to discuss several issues including the farmers' agitation and preparation of COVID-19 vaccine.

In a letter to Birla, Chowdhury, also the West Bengal Congress chief, said that the winter session of the House be convened with all the COVID-19 protocols in place to help the people understand the important issues the country is facing at present.

"There are a number of very important issues that the nation is facing in present times. The most notable among them are the ongoing farmers' agitation and the status/preparation of the COVID-19 vaccine," the letter read.

Listing issues like "economic slowdown, unemployment scenario, continuous stand-off along the India-China border and unabated ceasefire violation along the India-Pakistan border", Chowdhury said, "There is a need for a thorough and transparent debate/discussion on all the above-mentioned important issues".

10 police stations get MHA awards for best policing

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Ministry on Thursday released a list of the top 10 police stations in India for the year 2020. Nongpok police station in Manipur topped the first followed by Suramnagalam AWP in Tamil Nadu and Kharsang police station in Arunachal Pradesh in the 2020's top 10 police stations in the country.

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in a statement said that 2020's survey for the best police station was done by MHA under "challenging circumstances" due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. It also said that Home Minister Amit Shah had noted that a "vast majority" of police stations shortlisted for the list were from small towns and rural areas.

Top 10 police stations award started in 2015 as per suggestion of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the DGPs conference. The best police stations were selected from a total of 16,671 police stations on certain parameters, said MHA. "From these, 75 police stations were selected for the next stage, out of which 10 were selected as the country's best police stations. A total of 4,065 respondents participated in the survey," said MHA.

The fourth best police station award was given to Jhilmili police station in Chhattisgarh, followed by Sanguem in Goa, Kalghat in Andaman, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Pakyong in Sikkim, Kanth in Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh, Khanvel in Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Jammikunta Town police station in Karimnagar, Telangana.

SC grants bail to ex-DGP Saini in 1991 alleged murder case

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Thursday granted anticipatory bail to former Punjab DGP Smedh Singh Saini in a fresh case lodged in the 1991 disappearance and murder of a junior engineer Balwant Singh Multani.

A bench of justices Ashok Bhushan, R Subhash Reddy and M R Shah allowed the appeal of Saini and set aside an order of the Punjab and Haryana High Court declining him the

pre-arrest bail in the 29-year-old case.

The top court directed Punjab Police to release Saini on bail in the event of arrest in the fresh case on furnishing of a personal bond of Rs 1 lakh and two sureties of the like amount.

It directed Saini to surrender his passport and to cooperate with the investigation in the fresh case without any prejudice to his rights and contentions in the pending proceedings before the top court for quashing of the FIR.

SC refuses to entertain IMA's contempt plea over non-payment of salaries to docs

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Thursday refused to entertain a contempt plea filed by Indian Medical Association (IMA) against the Delhi Chief Secretary for alleged non-payment of salaries to doctors and asked it to approach the high court which is dealing with the issue.

A bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan, R Subhash Reddy and M R Shah said the issue was being dealt with by the Delhi High Court and there is no point in entertaining this plea in the apex court.

Singh, appearing for IMA, said the salary for April and May was paid after the high court's intervention but no salary was paid again from June to October.

The bench said the high court had already passed its order on July 29 and it is monitoring the issue.

Singh submitted doctors are termed as frontline warriors and they have to be paid salary on time but there was no substantial hearing in the HC.

He said that after the contempt application was filed in the top court, salaries for the

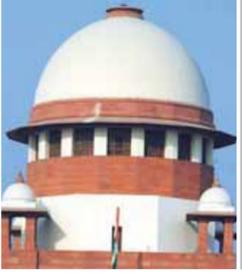
months of June to October were paid to the doctors.

Singh contended that doctors should be paid their salary on time to which the bench said that there is no doubt that salary has to be paid and Union of India has already passed an order in this regard.

On July 29, the Delhi HC had told the AAP Government to release to the North Delhi Municipal Corporation (NrDMC) the funds it requires to pay the stipends of the resident doctors in the six hospitals run by the civic body. PTI

A probing eye

SC makes CCTVs and audio recordings must at interrogation rooms in police stations, agencies and jails to curb custodial excesses



Finally, a process has been set in motion to hold the police to account for custodial excesses and crossing the line. In a landmark judgment, the Supreme Court has made it mandatory for all police stations and probe agencies — the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and Enforcement Directorate (ED) — to install CCTV cameras with night vision and audio recording facilities. States, too, have to deploy cameras with audio at all police stations. The court has even detailed the placement of such tracking devices at interrogation rooms, lock-ups, entries and exits, lobbies, offices of the inspector/sub-inspector and even outside washrooms lest officials find a way of hoodwinking technology. The video and audio recordings have to be preserved for 18 months for evidence and an independent panel can periodically source them to assess claims of human rights violations. After this overarching ruling, the police will undoubtedly find it difficult to justify brute practices in the guise of extracting vital information or cover up inconvenient truths under political pressure. The ruling assumes significance following the brutal custody death of two men in Tamil Nadu that had outraged our collective conscience and given us our own #lives matter moment. A father and son in Tuticorin, who were booked for running their shop 15 minutes beyond closure during a lockdown — a minor infraction by any stretch — ended up dead after the local police subjected them to a long, brutal and sustained interrogation, torture and sexual abuse in custody. Fifty nine-year-old P Jayaraj and his son, 31-year-old J Fenix, were booked under Section 188 of IPC (Disobeying the time restrictions ordered by a public servant), Section 383 (Extortion by threat) and Section 506 (Criminal intimidation). However, disobeying Section 188 is not so serious an offence that requires sustained questioning and night-long torture in custody. Apart from that, there were no witnesses to back up the need for the police to book the two men under Section 383 and Section 506. But witnesses living 500 metres away from the police station, where the two men were held, did hear their screams and cries for help through the night. The next day, when the men were released from custody, their clothes were found ripped and they were bleeding profusely from their private parts, forcing them to change their clothes at least 10-12 times in a few hours. Yet, they were given a clean bill of health by the doctor on duty who obviously did not want to incur the wrath of the all-powerful inspector. And then they died within hours for lack of critical care. This incident showed how common custodial deaths had become, particularly at the local levels of administration where the policing system had internalised the right to be judge, jury and executioner.

According to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) data, compiled over a decade till March 2020, 17,146 people were reported to have died in judicial and police custody, which means about five a day. The rights panel listed 914 deaths in custody, 53 of these under police watch alone, this year despite the long months of lockdown. Besides, there have been far too many reports of Dalits, the poor and the marginalised being at the receiving end of the cops' wrath lest they expose the ugly face of upper caste atrocities. Police torture has become routine simply because no errant officer has been booked since 2005. And considering that conviction in case of custodial torture is difficult because Government permission is required to prosecute public officials, who defend themselves saying they were just using a coercive tactic while discharging their official duties, there's little hope for redress. Besides, there's still no law against custodial excesses. Torture may have begun as a tested medieval ploy to get information out of suspects but has now become an intimidatory tactic by policemen who use it to settle scores, either on their own or at the behest of their political bosses, and close a case file according to a presumed, often pre-judged, course of events. The lack of policing reforms has meant that the forces are not trained in more modern and digitally-aided methods of interrogation and cross-examination that could do away with traditional methods of conducting an inquiry altogether. Besides, most deaths are attributable to the extended periodicity of custody. As the NHRC data shows, 92 per cent of the deaths were in judicial custody, which can extend up to 60 or 90 days. A person may be held in police custody for 24 hours but that can be extended to 15 days on the orders of a magistrate. Besides, not every custody death is reported though mandatory and "failure to report" is still not a crime. Over the last few years, rarely have errant cops been held accountable for overreaching their powers, especially in cases with a decidedly communal tilt, like those involving protesters against the new citizenship law. In the Mumbai of the 80s and even later, "encounter specialists" were treated as heroes of the forces for delivering instant justice and were even endorsed by civil society. Of course, the brutality during the lockdown isn't the only example worth noting. The visuals of the ferocious crackdown on dissenting students of Jamia and Aligarh Muslim University during the anti-CAA row haunt thousands of families even today as we wait for those responsible to be held accountable for the heinous misuse of power against peaceful demonstrators. And while the cases drag on in courts, the offenders would never be put on trial or would have been moved out of the public eye to other posts. Simply because the police has been reduced to being a malleable tool of the powers that be and is increasingly being used to serve their political will and agenda. At least, the Supreme Court has decided the police can be policed, too, when required.

Vaccine tourism

Rich Indians hope to fly to UK to get themselves inoculated though citizens there will get first preference



When the UK became the first country to approve the use of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine against COVID-19 next week onwards, little did it know that it would trigger a "vaccine tourism" trend. Given that it could take some time coming here, many well-heeled Indians are busy making plans to get the shot there and are flooding travel agents with queries. Such is their desperation that they are willing to overlook the fact that the UK would cater to its citizens first before visitors and there can be no jumping the queue. Given that the travel, tourism and hospitality sectors have suffered a body blow due to pandemic-induced restrictions, travel agents

are upbeat about the development and are doing all they can to assist. Some enterprising souls have come up with "packages" for Indians, planning on getting deals with airlines to offer fixed-price seats and with hotels and hospitals in the UK for "dosing" stays.

This desperation is fuelled by three factors. First, we are the second worst-hit country in the world after the US. Second, there are mixed signals from the Government. October saw the Prime Minister assure the country that every single citizen would get the vaccine as soon as it was ready, albeit in a phased manner with certain categories of people set to get it first. Now Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan says that the Government has not talked about vaccinating the entire population. Senior officials say that India may not need to vaccinate all of its 1.3 billion people if it manages to inoculate a critical mass and break the virus' transmission. Plus, there have been issues with the AstraZeneca and Oxford University vaccine with a trial volunteer suffering serious side effects and suing the company and the manufacturer earlier revealing that its high efficacy may have been in part due to a dosing error. Given the high efficacy of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, it's not surprising that those who can afford it want to opt for the UK protocol. Besides, the Pfizer shot is unlikely to be available in India any time soon because we cannot put a sub-zero cold chain infrastructure in place overnight. We have to work with what's best suited to us. Efficacy is more important than being the first in the race.

Fear of peace

For politicians like Netanyahu, peace delegitimises their political appeal and instead provocation, tension and violence strengthen the same



BHOPIINDER SINGH

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin "Bibi" Netanyahu is a stereotypical Israeli politician, who has served in the Israel Defence Forces (IDF). Hailing from a military family that includes elder brother Yonatan Netanyahu, who commanded the daring Operation Entebbe and became its only Israeli fatality, Benjamin himself was a team leader in the Sayeret Matkal (Special Forces Unit) and took part in multiple covert operations in Syria like Operation Gift and Operation Isotope. He was also shot in the shoulder during an anti-hijack operation. But today, Benjamin Netanyahu is also a great political survivor and the longest-serving Israeli Prime Minister (1996-1999, 2009-till date). The politician par excellence also has an unmatched CV in escaping tight spots. Foremost among them has been surviving the difficult tenures of former US Presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama (both of them were not policy hawks), surviving sex tapes, indifferent colleagues, accusations of media manipulation, ongoing criminal trials for fraud and bribery, and above all, facing yet another potentially complicated relationship with the incoming American administration under Joe Biden.

But it is yet another illustrious Israeli war hero and fellow-Sayeret Matkal colleague of Netanyahu's, Ehud Barak, who throws insights into the mind of the political escape-artist. Barak himself is the former Israeli Chief of the General Staff and the most decorated soldier in Israeli history. Later, he replaced Netanyahu as the Prime Minister in 1999. Barak, who has worked along with Netanyahu in the military and the Knesset, claims, "Netanyahu has shown that no legal regulations really interest him" and given the legal entanglements surrounding his fate, "he understands that he is going nowhere, and his priority will be anything that will get him out of a trial." Barak assesses that a desperate, amoral and reckless Netanyahu could create internal and external circumstances that would galvanise his political popularity and make him irreplaceable. Barak is joined by over 300 retired officers from the Israeli Army, Police, Shin Bet Security Service, Mossad and



multiple former IDF Chiefs of Staff like Gabi Ashkenazi, Moshe Yaalon and the temporarily aligned Benny Gaantz. Years ago, as the leader of the Opposition, Netanyahu had led infamous protests against the then Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (who had just signed the Oslo Peace Accord), where he walked at the head of a mock funeral procession, featuring an empty black coffin and chants of "Death to Rabin." Days later, Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by an Israeli opposed to the accord and that marked the return of extremist hardliners, among whom Netanyahu has been the most dominant player on the scene.

Now, Netanyahu has been bracing for a post-Donald Trump administration. The nomination of Anthony Blinken as the Secretary of State has accelerated his worries. Blinken is a known supporter of rapprochement with Iran, as also a rare critic of the controversial move to shift the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Netanyahu realises the inevitability of the looming change in the dynamics, as also of the very narrow window of a few weeks before Trump is eased out of the White House. Frenetic backdoor activities are in full swing to secure positions in the chessboard of the Middle East, among which was the not-so-secretive meeting between Saudi Prince Mohammad Bin Salman and Netanyahu at Neom. Beyond public posturing, political rhetoric and official denials, both Riyadh and Tel Aviv are more strategically aligned than

“BEYOND PUBLIC POSTURING, RHETORIC AND OFFICIAL DENIALS, BOTH RIYADH AND TEL AVIV ARE MORE STRATEGICALLY ALIGNED THAN EVER BEFORE, AND BETWEEN THEM, THE IRRECONCILABLE SECTARIAN ANGULARITY OF IRAN IS A UNIFYING FACTOR. IT IS A COMMON DREAD AND THE TARGET OF COVERT OPS”

ever before, and between them, the irreconcilable sectarian angularity of Iran is a unifying factor. The Iranians are militarily challenging the Saudis through their proxies in Yemen (Houthi rebels) and rallying against the Saudi-supported Sunni militia in the Syrian-Iraqi swaths whereas the Iran-backed Hamas in the West Bank and the co-sectarian Shia-Hezbollah in Lebanon are taking on the Israelis. Iran is the common dread and, therefore, the essential playground for accusations, intrigues and covert operations.

During a news conference at the Ministry of Defence in 2018, Netanyahu had spoken about and stood before the image of Iranian scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh. Pointing to the image, Netanyahu had chillingly warned, "Remember that name, Fakhrizadeh!" Last week when Fakhrizadeh was assassinated by unknown gunmen, the Iranians were unequivocal in blaming, "the mercenaries of the oppressive Zionist regime", referring to Netanyahu's Government. The timing was eerily ominous and Iranian President Hasan Rouhani alluded to the desperation of the very limited window of Presidential transition in the US when he said, "the enemies are experiencing stressful weeks."

It has been acknowledged by the international watchdog agency, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), that while Fakhrizadeh was indeed the head of the Iranian nuclear programme, there were no alarm bells in the Iranian reactivation status as yet despite the

unilateral pullout by the US from the Iran nuclear deal. Legally also, Iran was no longer bound to restrain its nuclear programme after the US had reneged on the deal, despite assurances from IAEA that Iran had fully complied with all commitments. If anything, Trump-Netanyahu had upped the ante with avoidable and provocative steps like killing the revered General Qasem Soleimani, who had played a pivotal role in destroying the dangerous edifice of the ISIL Caliphate in Iraq-Syria.

The killing of Fakhrizadeh cannot possibly make any material impact on the Iranian nuclear preparedness as it is not dependent on any individual, in any case, and the motives could only be purely political. This act looks intended to deliberately worsen the relations to draw retaliatory action from Iran, thereby prematurely stalling any thawing opportunities that are presumably forthcoming with the Biden administration. Details of Trump discussing a possible military strike against Iran just before the Presidential elections are already doing the rounds. From the same political playbook, heightened political tension between Tel Aviv and Tehran can also help shore up crucial and invaluable nationalistic fervour in favour of the much-corned Netanyahu. For politicians like him, peace delegitimises their political appeal and instead, provocation, tension and violence, strengthen the same.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands)

SOUND BITE

We are going to defend the honesty of the vote by ensuring that every legal ballot is counted and that no illegal ballot is counted.



US President — Donald Trump

We welcome great actor Rajinikanth's decision to enter politics... alliance can be formed with his party.



Tamil Nadu Dy CM — Panneerselvam

I'm very happy that Red Bull Campus Cricket will be conducting a women's edition. It will be a great platform for Indian women who want to play cricket professionally.



Cricketer — Smriti Mandhana

David (Dhawan) helped me shape my career in choreography through this film. I am excited to yet again collaborate with Davidji for his 45th film, Coolie No 1.



Choreographer — Ganesh Acharya

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Rajini in politics

Sir — At last, Thalaviva has taken the political plunge, ending years of vacillation and suspense. We are not quite sure whether superstar Rajinikanth took the decision to float his own political party at the turn of the year of his own free will or at the behest of somebody else. Either way, it has triggered speculation over the possible political churn it could stir in Tamil Nadu politics ahead of the Assembly elections. The actor is entering the political fray at an age most leaders think in terms of retiring from it. Certainly, his eagerness to do public service despite his age and ill-health is commendable. But what he represents — a slant to the right wing — could make the people quite wary of supporting him and limit his space in the political sphere.

He is close to the BJP and a fan of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He shares their ideology but can't afford to appear as an opponent of the Dravidian movement and its mores. His "spiritual politics" is, in a way, just a euphemism for "saffron politics." It is no secret that RSS ideology and Rajini aide

Why lab-cultured meat is better

Singapore's approval to the sale of cultured chicken, making it the first city-State in the world to give a go-ahead to the production of meat created in a lab, will prove to be a milestone in the history of food consumption. The benefits in a resource-challenged world are many. While the inhuman method of slaughtering animals and poultry can be done away with, cultured chicken is believed to have extremely low and significantly cleaner microbiological content than traditional chicken. Also, the product has a high protein content and no antibiotics. Apparently, it took a long time for the team of Singaporean scientists, product developers and regulation experts to develop the production process.

Studies on similar processes have been on at food labs of some other countries as well. With the rise of vegetarianism and veganism in the world, the demand for meat substitutes has certainly gone up. Moreover, post the pandemic that originated from a wet market selling animal meat for human consumption, people have



become conscious about their hygiene and food choices. With growing fears about similar pandemics in the future, people have shifted focus to building a strong immunity by depending on plant-based foods.

Besides, animal farming produces 15 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions while cultured meat generates up to 96 per cent lesser.

M Pradyu Kannur

S.Gurumurthy is the bridge between the actor and the Sangh Parivar. Who will back him with funds is not clear though.

Given his natural affinity for Hindutva, nobody expects him to stand up against the Central Government when it tries to implement its agenda to the detriment of Tamilian interests. Rajinikanth speaks of cleaning up politics and projects himself as a harbinger of change.

But the kind of change he has in mind may not advance the causes of social justice dear to Tamilians.

The rich cultural identity of Tamil Nadu stands between Rajinikanth and his success in politics. He must consider himself lucky if his fan base does not shrink when BJP cosies up to him.

G.David Milton Maruthancode

Badal's statement

Sir — It is noteworthy that former Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal has launched his protest against the new farm Acts and shown support for the agitating farmers in Delhi by returning the Padma Vibhushan award. He received the second highest civilian honour in 2015.

Some sportspersons and coaches from Punjab have also

said that they would return their awards and will march to Delhi on December 5 in solidarity with the protesters. It is commendable that celebrities and notables of the State are standing by the farming community. The Central Government must negotiate a middle ground lest this becomes another battle of identities and mutates into a social uprising.

Noor Ahmad Hyderabad

Woof!

Sir — Someone has rightly said, "Don't trust a person that doesn't like dogs." Most families feel incomplete without a pet. So one of the most interesting news of the week was about Joe Biden getting hurt while playing with his dog. It's nice to know that the next US President is fond of animals like many previous ones. This President will be more relatable than his predecessors, like Obama and Bush among others, simply because he doesn't shy of projecting his home-life pleasures.

Dennis Fitzgerald Melbourne

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Face read tech is at a tipping point

For society to derive the most benefit from AI, the core of technology must be the means to serve the end of human needs, not otherwise



MEKHALA PANDEY

George Orwell, in his dystopian masterpiece *1984*, had envisioned a society which had progressed technologically. But the individual, constantly supervised and with little privacy, had become a cog in the wheel of a larger, albeit advanced machine. In his novel, Orwell introduced the concept of a device known as the "telescreen", situated in homes and public spaces, which could identify people and monitor and analyse their physiological and facial expressions. This device uncannily mirrors the conception and progression of Artificial Intelligence (AI) today, specifically the Facial Recognition Technology (FRT). It is a biometric technology that utilises unique facial features to identify people, the reading of which is then compared with the database in existence. The Centre has approved the setting up of a national Automated Facial Recognition System (AFRS) under the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) for "criminal identification, verification among police organisations." Thus, the need of the hour is to regulate and govern both the collection and analysis of personal data for FRT on the basis of the rule of law. As of today, there is no Act or regulation in place in the country which controls such data capture, storage and analysis. This is alarming considering the size of the population in India and the proposed exponential use of FRT in various sectors such as commerce, airports, identification and crime control by the police. For instance, the Airports Authority of India has planned to launch "Digi Yatra" or facial biometric-based air travel by December end. This disruptive technology brings to light two major concerns: First, whether the data collected in an effort to increase the accuracy of the FRT is secure? Second, whether the right to privacy of the individual is compromised in such a society wherein wide scale surveillance feeds the FRT?

The Supreme Court, in the *KS Puttaswamy vs Union of India* case, affirmed the Right to Privacy and stated that it extended to public spaces, and that citizens cannot be subject to unlawful collection or exploitation of their personal data. The court clarified that any infringement on the Right to Privacy, such as collecting personal data for law enforcement purposes, must be done keeping in mind the proportionality standard, which dictates that any collection and analysis of data must be done in pursuit of a legitimate aim, which is both necessary and proportionate. India's Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019, includes "facial images" as part of the biometric data. Clause 3(7) and such biometric data is categorised as "sensitive personal data" in Clause 3(36). Personal data cannot be processed without the consent of the data principle as per Clause 11. The Bill has addressed some of the privacy concerns and has incorporated laudatory provisions such as the rights of correction and erasure (Clause 18 and 58) in cases of biometric data (FRT) obtained without proper consent or such data being incorrect. Further, Clause 9 of the 2019 Bill requires data fiduciaries to not retain any personal data beyond the period necessary to satisfy the purpose for which it is processed and to delete the personal data at the end of the processing.

While formulating our home-grown regulations regarding data security and privacy of FRT data, one can consider the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) of the European Union wherein the processing of biometric data for FRT requires explicit consent. The European data protection board under the GDPR has issued guidelines on "processing of personal data through video devices." These guidelines incorporate Article 13 of the GDPR and have made video surveillance specific to a purpose and not a "roaming exercise impinging on the rights of the data subjects." The data subjects should be made aware of the fact that video surveillance is in operation (via warning signs over monitored premises). Thus, while safeguarding our own data security, India, too, can consider such transparent and full-disclosure methods of the GDPR and establishment of a regulatory board in formulating its own FRT Regulation regime. Globally, countries are becoming increasingly cautious while utilising FRT. The Information Commissioner of the UK has issued directions to the police to "justify" the use of FRT and has called on the Government for a statutory binding code of practice. In the US, the cities of San Francisco, Berkeley, Portland, Boston have banned the use of FRT by Government authorities and private businesses. However, Washington has struck a middle ground and has passed a law which regulates FRT through "meaningful human review." AI is subjected to human review so that any discrepancies or errors by the machine can be rectified and the data securely managed. Algorithms evolve in such a manner that the legal framework and regulations need to take the sophistication of the machine into account while formulating policies for its deployment. Thus, it can be compared to creating regulatory embankments on a constant digital flow of interconnections. To prevent such an intrusive evolution of the technology, a regulation driven Act supervised by a body similar to the European data protection board would be a good move. These regulations must entail room for constant review and upgradation, keeping at their core the idea of protection of an individual's data and legitimate processing of such data as per the terms of consent. AI is at a tipping point. For society and individuals to derive the most benefit from it, the core of the technology must be the means to serve the end of human needs and not to make citizens and consumers means to an end.

(The writer is a lawyer)

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

WEST BENGAL'S 'GOVERNMENT AT THE DOORSTEP' DRIVE HAS BEEN LAUNCHED TO ENSURE THAT NO ONE IS LEFT BEHIND. —MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS MINISTER FIRHAD HAKIM



THEY ARE USING PUBLIC MONEY FOR THEIR ELECTION CAMPAIGN. TMC LEADERS SHOULD BE ASHAMED OF THEMSELVES. —BENGAL BJP PRESIDENT DILIP GHOSH

Merger most foul

Was the selection of DBS India a rational consideration? Did LVB's pre-amalgamation valuation justify the denial of compensation to shareholders? These are big questions



SUBHASH CHANDRA PANDEY

On November 17, the Central Government imposed restrictions on the withdrawal of funds from the Lakshmi Vilas Bank (LVB) till December 16, (except for a maximum ₹25,000 per account as relief to small depositors) on the advice of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). Plus, the LVB's Committee of Directors was superseded. The RBI invited suggestions and objections "within three days" on a draft scheme of amalgamation of LVB with DBS Bank India. On November 25, the Central Government approved the scheme proposed by the RBI. The LVB-DBS merger came into force on November 27 and the moratorium imposed on withdrawals was lifted. Foreign banks may operate in India either by having their branches in the country directly owned/operated by them or by creating a wholly-owned subsidiary (WOS) registered here. The Singapore-based DBS Group Holdings Limited has been operating in branch mode since 1994 but switched to WOS model in March 2019.

All the assets and liabilities of LVB now stand transferred to DBS India. By June, DBS India had a sizeable customer deposit base of ₹24,700 crore, including ₹5,700 crore as low-cost deposits. It is now busy rebranding LVB branches and ATMs with its logo. The parent foreign bank is expected to bring an additional investment of ₹2,500 crore. DBS India, with just over 30 branches in the country (most of its business is in the branchless mode) now gets ownership of the LVB's fixed assets (historical, depreciated cost of ₹463 crore on March 31, mainly comprising 560 branches and 970 ATMs); cash and investments with the RBI (₹1,048 crore on March 31) and other investments (₹5,384 crore on March 31). The LVB gets access to deposits of ₹21,443 crore, including about ₹6,000 crore low-cost CASA (current and savings accounts) deposits. On the flip side, DBS has to service LVB's borrowings (₹756 crore on March 31). Out of the total advances (₹13,828 crore outstanding on March 31), about one-fourth were Non Performing Assets (NPAs). The gross NPA ratio had deteriorated from 15.3 per cent on March 31, 2019 to 25.39 per cent on March 31 this year and remained high at 24.45 per cent on September 30.

While the LVB's 20 lakh depositors and 4,000 employees can heave a sigh of relief, its over 97,000 investors have been hit hard. Forced mergers of banks are nothing new but in an unprecedented action in the LVB's case, the shareholders have been divested of their equity shareholding, reserves and surpluses. Since the value of equity shares is officially decreed to be zero, the erstwhile owners of the LVB will not get any share in the LVB+DBS banking entity. Also hurt are bondholders as all of LVB's Basel-III compliant Tier-2 bonds worth ₹318 crore were written down. Bondholders will not get back their invested money, nor interest on them. Significantly, strapping Tier-2 bonds is an unprecedented action. The move was thus both, swift and uncommon, but the problem had been brewing for some time. The LVB had been incurring losses for the past 10 quarters and the RBI initiated Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) in September 2019, which asked the bank to bring in additional capital, restrict further lending to corporates, reduce NPAs and improve the Provision Coverage Ratio to 70 per cent.

These actions/decisions of the Central Government and the RBI have been challenged by the LVB's shareholders in Mumbai and Madras High Courts (HCs). The Mumbai HC

SHAREHOLDERS CONTEND THAT THEY HAVE BEEN DEPRIVED OF THE LVB'S OWNERSHIP WITHOUT ANY MONETARY COMPENSATION. THIS AMOUNTS TO UNJUST ENRICHMENT OF A FOREIGN BANK. THE MANNER OF SELECTION OF DBS INDIA AS THE TRANSFEREE COMPANY HAS ALSO BEEN QUESTIONED. WHAT HAS FRUSTRATED THE LVB SHAREHOLDERS IS THE FACT THAT THE SAME DBS THAT HAS NOW ACQUIRED THE BANK WITH ZERO COMPENSATION TO SHAREHOLDERS HAD OFFERED TO BUY 50 PER CENT OF THE LVB'S SHARES FOR AT LEAST ₹100 PER SHARE IN 2018



declined to stay the amalgamation but kept the plea filed before it for monetary compensation pending. The Madras HC, too, declined to stay the amalgamation but passed some interim orders giving some relief to the LVB's shareholders on a petition filed by AUM Capital Market Private Limited, a retail investor holding shares in LVB.

Shareholders contend that they have been deprived of the LVB's ownership without any monetary compensation. This amounts to unjust enrichment of a foreign bank. The manner of selection of DBS India as the transferee company has also been questioned. What has frustrated the LVB shareholders is the fact that the same DBS that has now acquired the bank with zero compensation to shareholders had offered to buy 50 per cent of the LVB's shares for at least ₹100 per share in 2018. Since then, the LVB's value deterioration has been fast. The share price of the LVB lost 58 per cent this year and went to less than ₹10 a share. The LVB's total business shrank from ₹47,115 crore at the end of September 2019 to ₹37,595 crore at the end of September this year.

By then, the LVB's Tier-1 Capital Ratio and overall Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) as per Basel-III norms had turned negative. With a large gross NPA ratio of 24.45 per cent, the LVB had a negative net worth of ₹699 crore. Therefore, scrapping the shares and Tier-2 bonds of the LVB means that the bank has been practically wound up, with core investors asked to bear the accumulated losses. And the junked entity has been handed over to a white knight investor to take over in the interest of the LVB's 20 lakh depositors. Aggrieved shareholders contend that even if the authorities have the power

to reduce the share value during an amalgamation, reducing share value to zero cannot be done without very compelling reasons. And these reasons (if any) have not been disclosed.

Instances of commercial banks failing are rare. As the Government and the RBI are empowered to order consolidation, compulsory amalgamation and liquidation of small banks, no commercial bank has failed. Forced mergers of weak banks with stronger ones are a normal practice to safeguard depositors' interest.

The LVB is one of the oldest private banks. It was founded in 1926 with a fairly distributed ownership. At the end of March 2012, the LVB had 12.92 per cent non-resident shareholding, which increased to 43.1 per cent by March 2019. During the period, resident individual shareholding came down from 56.73 per cent to 27.7 per cent. Resident financial institutions increased their stake from 8.47 per cent to 20.9 per cent.

The 20.9 per cent Indian Financial Institutions and 38.4 per cent foreign companies, together commanding majority control of the LVB, failed to exercise due diligence and control the management even as the bank's lending portfolio became problematic. The LVB is a banking company registered under the Companies Act, 1956. Banking companies are governed differently from other companies in India. They are regulated by both the Companies Act and the Banking Regulation Act, 1949. And the Banking Regulation Act, being a specialised law, takes precedence over the conflicting provisions of the Companies Act. Section 45 of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 empowers the RBI to apply to the Central Government "for suspen-

sion of business by a banking company and to prepare a scheme of reconstitution of amalgamation." So the triggers, processes, control mechanism and so on for mergers and acquisitions are different than those for non-banking companies.

Just like the Companies Act, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code applies to banking companies, too, but the Banking Regulation Act prevails over the other two Acts. The one month "moratorium" imposed on the LVB on November 17 was akin to anaesthesia that is given before a surgery. Keeping the LVB under a moratorium for too long would have affected 20 lakh depositors. The RBI had to find an able and willing investor ready to take over. For the last two years, the LVB and its promoters have been trying to lure investors to infuse additional capital to meet regulatory norms.

For the takeover of financially-distressed non-banking companies, resolution professionals are appointed by the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT). This invites tenders from potential investors and the company is handed over to the highest bidder. In the case of weak banks that are in need of rescue, there is no such practice of inviting tenders. The transferee banking company is selected based on the professional judgment of the RBI. Whether the selection of DBS India was based on rational considerations and whether the LVB's pre-amalgamation valuation justified shareholders/bondholders being denied any monetary compensation are now sub-judice. Judicial review of regulatory wisdom is not unprecedented.

(The writer is former Special Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and Industry)

Coal dust changing the fate of Goa's wildlife

Beginning with severe respiratory problems, long term exposure to coal dust can decimate both plant and animal life in a biodiversity hotspot



KUNALIKA SINGH

On the night of November 1, thousands of Goans gathered on the railway lines at Chandor, South Goa to protest against the doubling of railway tracks for enhancement of coal transportation from the Mormugao Port Trust (MPT) to steel plants in neighbouring Karnataka. Currently, the State serves as a crucial link to coal transportation to Karnataka. However, despite the existing infrastructure, the Government is looking to fast-track the process by introducing three major infrastructure projects. Goa's fate was sealed by the "devil's dust" (fine particles of coal) in

2016 as the MPT led development programme, Sagarmala, received the Centre's nod aimed at converting Goa into a coal hub.

During the nationwide lockdown, the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and the National Board for Wildlife gave "virtual clearance" over a video conference to three interconnected infrastructure projects — four laning of the existing NH-4A (Goa-Karnataka Highway), laying a 400KV transmission line and doubling of an existing railway line from Mormugao to Londa. The three linear projects are situated within the same protected area. Reportedly, all three projects require felling of 70,000 trees and diversion of 216 hectares of forest and private land in Mollem National Park and Bhagwan Mahaveer Wildlife Sanctuary in South Goa. This forest is part of the Western Ghats, which is one of the eight biodiversity hotspots of the world and part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site. The protected area is home to more than 721 plant species, 235 bird species, 219

butterfly species, 70 mammal species, 45 reptile species, 44 fish species and 27 amphibian species. This includes endemic as well as rare and vulnerable species such as the tiger, dhole, mouse deer, gaur and the Indian pangolin among others. In addition, there are 18 bird species that are endemic to the Western Ghats and seven bird species that are of high conservation concern are found here. This area was marked as an Ecologically Sensitive Area by the Madhav Gadgil Committee in 2012.

The Bhagwan Mahaveer Wildlife Sanctuary and Mollem National Park, part of a larger contiguous forest, is a treasure trove of flora and fauna and is an important tiger corridor between Goa and the adjoining Kali Tiger Reserve in Karnataka. Of 240 sq km, the sanctuary and the national park constitute the largest protected area in Goa. The Western Ghats are one of the most important tiger habitats in the world. Expanding the highway and doubling of the South Western Railways will leave the southern part

of the Ghats disconnected from the north. This will lead to death and injuries to tigers and other numerous animals as they cross the tracks in their cyclic movements. The Tilari Dam and relentless mining have already decimated elephant habitats and other significant parts of the Ghats. Forests in the Western Ghats that have existed for thousands of years are irreplaceable. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Report, 2019, shows that the Western Ghats are one of the most resilient ecosystems that will buffer us from climate change.

Roads and power lines are known to fragment habitats, impacting flora and fauna in incalculable ways. The habitat where these projects are proposed is also home to a newly-discovered dragonfly species. Dandeli and Goa are believed to be an elephant movement route. Now tigers and leopards are also likely to move through here. While there are eight or nine underpasses proposed for wildlife, there is little information on where these will be constructed, and even less

is known about their scientific efficacy. Ironically enough, these projects have been cleared at a time when COVID-19 has revealed how loss of forest land, wildlife and biodiversity can increase zoonotic diseases.

The Government's move goes to show how India's wildlife laws are openly flouted with little or no regard to consequences. According to experts, a thorough verification of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and project proposals is rarely done, showing regulatory bodies' scant regard towards eco-sensitive zones. It is a sad reflection on the state of environmental governance that the MoEFCC and NBWL overlook crucial statutory requirements and have undermined the purpose of the EIA. The evidence put forth by naturalists, conservationists and the people living in these forests over centuries needs to be taken into consideration.

Coal dust causes a host of problems for wildlife. Beginning with severe respiratory problems, in the long term, increased exposure to toxic ele-

ments through coal dust can cause animals to suffer from a variety of life-threatening disorders and dysfunctions. According to the National Wildlife Federation, "Unless significant action is taken now, global warming will likely become the most important factor to affect wildlife since the emergence of mankind." Climate change, to which coal burning and dust are among the prominent contributors, has the potential to significantly alter ecosystems and cause mass extinction of species. In underground and surface waters, coal dust can cause decrease in aquatic oxygen content and in light penetration. This reduces the growth of aquatic plants. In turn, this leads to manifold increase in mortality of fish and other aquatic species that are dependent on aquatic plants as a food source.

Coal dust also decreases the ability of plants and trees to photosynthesise. If this natural process is stymied, most plants would begin to die. Although they could hold out for a few days, or in some cases, a few weeks,

how long they live would largely depend on how much sugar they had stored within their cells. Large trees, for example, may be able to soldier on for several years because of their energy stores and the slow rate of use. However, the majority of plants would die and so would the animals that rely on them for nourishment. With the herbivores dead, the omnivores and carnivores would soon follow.

Coal dust is affecting humans, too, as it is increasing incidents of respiratory ailments. In 2016-17, a consignment of 12.75 million tonnes of coal was unloaded at the MPT and carried across Goa to power stations and refineries. It is expected to grow to 19-21 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) by 2025 and to 34-40 MTPA by 2035. This will completely transform the face of Goa. Transport of such huge quantities of coal risks entire habitats, villages and towns; it is threatening the ecological resilience of Goa required to deal with the effects of climate change.

(The writer is Communications Associate, Wildlife SOS)

Sensex ends marginally higher; Nifty hits record peak

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Domestic equity benchmarks ended marginally higher on Thursday, with the Nifty settling at a fresh record, amid mixed cues from global markets.

After scaling an all-time intra-day peak of 44,953.01, the 30-share BSE Sensex pared some gains to end 14.61 points or 0.03 per cent higher at 44,632.65.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty touched a fresh intra-day high of 13,216.60, before settling 20.15 points or 0.15 per cent up at 13,133.90 — its life-

time closing high.

Maruti was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rallying around 7 per cent, followed by ONGC, Asian Paints, NTPC, SBI, Bajaj Finserv and Tata Steel. On the other hand, HDFC Bank, TCS, Bajaj Auto, Infosys and M&M were among the laggards.

"Indian market opened mixed following mixed global market cues in Asian markets. Trades in the global markets also remained lackluster...", said Narendra Solanki, head of equity research (fundamental), Anand Rathi.

During the afternoon session, markets briefly traded in the negative territory but later scaled back to trade in the positive zone.

On sectoral front, the gains were led by metals, financials and bank stocks while auto sector traded marginally negative. Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Hong Kong, Tokyo and Seoul ended with gains, while Shanghai was in the red.

Stock exchanges in Europe were trading on a negative note in early deals. Meanwhile, the global oil benchmark Brent crude futures rose 0.68 per cent to USD 47.92 per barrel.

research analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.12 per cent to 91.00.

India's service sector recovery weakens in November: PMI

New Delhi (IANS): India's services sector recovery weakened in November despite further upturn in new work supported business activity growth.

However, the sector reported the first rise in employment for nine months. Moreover, the overall level of positive sentiment climbed to the highest since February amid predictions that market conditions would normalise once a vaccine for the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) is rolled out.

Accordingly, the seasonally adjusted India Services Business Activity Index reading remained above the critical 50 mark that separates growth from contraction for the second month in a row during November. Despite falling from 54.1 (index reading) in October to 53.7 (index reading) in November, the latest reading was still indicative of a solid pace of expansion.

Companies that signalled output growth commented on better demand conditions and a relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions. New business inflows likewise rose for the second straight month and solidly, despite growth easing for October.

RBI likely to keep interest rates unchanged: Industry experts

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank is likely to keep the benchmark interest rate unchanged at its bi-monthly monetary policy review outcome to be announced on Friday, but may revise growth estimates in view of the September quarter GDP turning out to be better than RBI's earlier projections.

According to experts, the stubborn retail inflation, which has remained above the comfort level of the RBI of around 4 per cent, will refrain the central bank from reducing interest rate on Friday.

The RBI, however, is expected to revise its growth projections as the second quarter GDP numbers at -7.5 per cent worked to be better than its projected contraction.

reflects the resilience and robustness of the Indian economy. Meanwhile, Secretary General of industry body ASSOCHAM Deepak Sood said the focus of the bi-monthly review of the credit policy is expected to be ensuring adequate liquidity into the system, retaining the policy stance as accommodative.

"While the cut in repo rate may not be announced tomorrow, the accommodative stance should assure the industry and the market participants about the RBI's commitment to keep the lending rates benign to give a continuous support to growth, especially in the post-Covid period," he said.

Dhruv Agarwala, Group CEO, Housing.com, Makaan.com and Proptiger.com, said the RBI had taken several favourable measures this year for the real estate sector.

INDIAN ECONOMY WITNESSING V-SHAPED RECOVERY: FINMIN REPORT

New Delhi (PTI): The Indian economy is witnessing a V-shaped recovery as the Gross Domestic Product has recorded a quarter-on-quarter growth of 23 per cent in the July-September quarter of this fiscal, according to the Finance Ministry's latest Monthly Economic Review.

The decline in the GDP narrowed to 7.5 per cent in the second quarter of this financial year, over 23.9 per cent in April-June quarter. "The year-on-year GDP contraction of 7.5 per cent in Q2 of 2020-21 underlies a quarter-on-quarter surge in GDP growth of 23 per cent. This V-shaped recovery, evident at the half-way stage of 2020-21, reflects the resilience and robustness of the Indian economy. The fundamentals of the economy remain strong, Monthly Economic Review for November said.

though India had officially entered into a technical recession with second-quarter GDP print, "we believe that we are past the nadir in India's growth trajectory. The sharper than expected recovery in key economic indicators is suggestive of this view".

Rupee loss widens by 12 paise

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee weakened by another 12 paise to end at 73.93 against the US dollar on Thursday as investors remained cautious ahead of the RBI policy meet outcome.

Analysts said investor focus is on the Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee's three-day interest rate-setting meeting that started on Wednesday, with the decision due on Friday.

nessed a highly volatile trading session. It opened at 73.81 and saw an intra-day high of 73.68 and a low of 73.95.

It finally closed at 73.93 a dollar, registering a decline of 12 paise. This is the second straight session of decline for the rupee, during which it has lost 25 paise.

research analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.12 per cent to 91.00.

"The Indian rupee depreciated for the 2nd consecutive session against the US dollar, weighed down by continuous dollar purchases likely from the central bank probably to mop up portfolio inflows," said Sriram Iyer, senior research analyst at Reliance Securities.

Gold price rises ₹481 per 10 gram

New Delhi (PTI): Gold price rose by ₹481 to ₹48,887 per 10 gram in the national capital on Thursday in-line with bullish trends in global precious metal prices, according to HDFC Securities.

NIFTY 50 table with columns: SCRIP, OPEN, HIGH, LOW, LTP, CHANGE. Includes entries for MARUTI, NTPC, ONGC, HINDALCO, SBI, etc.

BSE 500 table with columns: Script, Open, High, Low, LTP. Includes entries for HDFCLIFE, RELIANCE, INFY, MARUTI, etc.

Table of market indices and top gainers/losers. Includes BSE Sensex (44,632.65), NSE Nifty (13,133.90), and lists of top gainers and losers for both indices.

NIFTY NEXT 50 table with columns: SCRIP, OPEN, HIGH, LOW, LTP, CHANGE. Includes entries for BANKBARODA, INFRATEL, SBI, etc.

Table of market indices and top gainers/losers. Includes BSE Sensex (44,632.65), NSE Nifty (13,133.90), and lists of top gainers and losers for both indices.

Trump expected to flex pardon powers

Washington: Advocates and lawyers anticipate a flurry of clemency action from President Donald Trump in the coming weeks that could test the limits of presidential pardon power.

Trump is said to be considering a slew of pardons and commutations before he leaves office, including potentially members of his family, former aides and even himself.

While it is not unusual for presidents to sign controversial pardons on their way out the door, Trump has made clear that he has no qualms about intervening in the cases of friends and allies whom he believes have been treated unfairly, including his former national security adviser, Michael Flynn.

The list of potential candidates is long and colorful: Trump's former campaign chairman, Paul Manafort, imprisoned for financial crimes as part of the Russia investigation; George Papadopoulos, who pleaded guilty to lying to

the FBI, just like Flynn; Joseph Maldonado-Passage, aka "Joe Exotic," who starred in the the Netflix series "Tiger King"; and former contractors convicted in a Baghdad firefight that killed more than a dozen civilians, including women and children.

Trump, long worried about potential legal exposure after he leaves office, has expressed worry to confidants in recent weeks that he, his family or his business might be targeted by President-elect Joe Biden's Justice Department, although Biden has made clear he won't be part of any such decisions.

Nonetheless, Trump has had informal conversations with allies about how he might be able to protect his family, though he has not taken any steps to do so.

His adult children haven't requested pardons nor do they feel they need them, according to people familiar with the discussions who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss private matters.

Trump has also discussed potentially shielding himself, The New York Times first reported.

In a video posted on Facebook on Wednesday, he made a glancing reference to his potential vulnerabilities.

"Now I hear that these same people that failed to get me in Washington have sent every piece of information to New York so that they can try to get me there," he said. AP

Harris picks Tina Flournoy to be her chief of staff

Sacramento: Vice President-elect Kamala Harris has named Tina Flournoy, a veteran Democratic strategist and aide to the Clintons, as her chief of staff, the transition team announced Thursday.

Flournoy's appointment as Harris' top staffer adds to a

team of advisers led by Black women. Harris, who is of Jamaican and Indian heritage, is the nation's first female vice president. Flournoy joins Ashley Etienne as Harris' communications director and Symone Sanders as her chief spokeswoman. AP

Next for Biden: Naming a health care team as pandemic rages

Washington: Up soon for President-elect Joe Biden: naming his top health care officials as the coronavirus pandemic rages. It's hard to imagine more consequential picks.

Already one prominent candidate to lead the Department of Health and Human Services has faded from the scene. New Mexico Democratic Gov. Michelle

Lujan Grisham was offered another Cabinet post — interior secretary — and turned it down, a person close to the Biden transition said Wednesday.

That person spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations. Lujan Grisham's office had no comment. Biden is expected to

announce his choice for HHS secretary next week. That individual has to have "the confidence of the president, the ability to operate collaboratively across the government, credibility within the health care world, and the capacity to work with the states," said former HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt, who served under Republican President George W. Bush. AP

Ex-Hong Kong lawmaker goes into exile, plans to travel to UK

Copenhagen: A Hong Kong pro-democracy activist and former lawmaker who is visiting Denmark said Thursday he is going into exile and will soon move to Britain.

"I hereby announce that I will go into exile and will withdraw my membership in the Democratic Party of Hong Kong to leave Hong Kong," Ted Hui said in a statement to The Associated Press. "There is no word to explain my pain and it's hard to hold back tears."

It was not clear when he would travel to Britain which, in response to a crackdown on opposition in Hong Kong, has extended residency rights for up to 3 million Hong Kongers eligible for British National

Overseas passports, allowing them to live and work there for five years.

"My personal determination is that my exile will not be a migration. My only home is Hong Kong which is why I will not apply for asylum in any country," Hui said.

"I will wait for the day that I can go home with the bells of freedom ringing in a free Hong Kong. Until my last breath I will fight to the end."

Revive Hong Kong, a revolution now! In July, another democracy activist, Nathan Law, left Hong Kong after testifying in a U.S. Congressional hearing about a tough new security law imposed by mainland China on the semi-

autonomous territory. At first, he declined to disclose his whereabouts for safety but later appeared in London.

"I will continue to fight on board and will make it my life mission to widen Hong Kong's international battle front with people like Nathan Law in the U.K.," Hui said.

Hui was arrested in Hong Kong in May over an incident in the Legislative Council in which he dropped a rotten plant and attempted to kick it at the body's president. He was able to get his passport back from the government and a visa after receiving an invitation from Danish lawmakers to travel to Denmark, where he arrived Tuesday. AP

Azerbaijan discloses Nagorno-Karabakh conflict troop toll

AP ■ BAKU (AZERBAIJAN)

Azerbaijani authorities disclosed for the first time on Thursday details of the country's military casualties in the recent fighting with Armenian forces over the separatist region of Nagorno-Karabakh, which was halted last month by a Russian-brokered truce.

Azerbaijan's Defence Ministry said that 2,783 troops were killed during the 44 days of intense clashes, and 103 of them are yet to be identified. More than 100 servicemen are considered to be unaccounted for, the ministry said, and 1,245 are currently undergoing treatment in medical facilities.

President Ilham Aliyev said

earlier this week that 94 Azerbaijani civilians were also killed and 400 more have been wounded. On Thursday, he signed a decree ordering a moment of silence at 12:00 p.m. (0800 GMT) on Friday to honor the victims of the fighting. Nagorno-Karabakh lies within Azerbaijan but has been under the control of ethnic Armenian forces backed by Armenia since a separatist war there ended in 1994. That war left Nagorno-Karabakh itself and substantial surrounding territory in Armenian hands. Heavy fighting erupted in late September, marking the biggest escalation of a long-simmering conflict between the two ex-Soviet nations. AP



A firefighter passes a burning tree while battling the Bond Fire in the Silverado community of Orange County, California on Thursday. AP

China hits out at US after report of new visa restrictions

Beijing: China on Thursday accused critics in the US government of "an escalation of political suppression" against Beijing following a report of new visa restrictions on members of China's ruling Communist Party and their immediate family members.

Foreign ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said China would "make representations" to the U.S. Following the report Thursday that such people would be limited to one-month, single-entry visas.

Hua called Washington's approach "totally inconsistent with the US's own interests," and said it would damage America's global image. AP

Pak court sentences Saeed's spokesman to 15 years in jail in terror financing case

Lahore: Mumbai terror attack mastermind and Jamat-ud-Dawa (JuD) chief Hafiz Saeed's spokesperson Yahya Mujahid has been sentenced to another 15 years in jail by a Pakistani anti-terrorism court in a terror financing case.

Mujahid was last month handed down 32 years jail term by the anti-terrorism court (ATC) in two terror financing cases.

Besides Mujahid, the ATC Lahore on Wednesday also handed down 15 years imprisonment to JuD's senior leader Zafar Iqbal and six months jail term to Saeed's brother-in-law Hafiz Abdul Rehman Makki.

Earlier, the ATC Lahore had sentenced Iqbal for 26

years imprisonment in three such cases.

Judge Ijaz Ahmad Buttar announced the verdict under different provisions of the Anti-Terrorism Act 1997.

The three convicts were present in the court when the judge announced the verdict.

The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) of Punjab police had registered as many as 41 FIRs against JuD leaders, including Saeed in different cities. The trial courts have so far decided 25 cases.

The ATC has sentenced Saeed for a collective imprisonment of 21 years on terror financing charges under sections 11-N of Anti-Terrorism Act 1997 in four cases so far. PTI

Scientists: Greenland ice sheet faces irreversible melting

London: The massive Greenland ice sheet could be facing a point of no return, beyond which it may no longer fully regrow, permanently changing sea levels around the world, warns a new study.

Using computer simulations, the study, published in the journal *The Cryosphere*, analysed how climate change could lead to irreversible sea

level rise as temperatures continue to rise and the Greenland ice sheet continues to decline.

While there were scenarios in which the ice sheet melting could be reversed, the scientists, including those from the University of Reading in the UK, said these relied on actions to counteract global warming before it's too late.

According to the

researchers, the ice sheet is seven times the area of the UK, and stores a large amount of the Earth's frozen water.

In the research, the scientists simulated the effects of Greenland ice sheet melting under a range of possible temperature rises, ranging from minimal warming to worst-case scenarios.

At current rates of melting,

they said the ice sheet contributes almost one millimetre to sea level per year, accounting for around a quarter of the total increase.

The researchers said despite seasonal periods of growth, Greenland has lost 3.5 trillion tons of ice since 2003.

Under all future climates like the present or warmer,

they found that the ice-sheet declined in size and contributed to some degree of sea-level rise.

Importantly, the scientists said there were scenarios in which the ice sheet melting could be reversed.

But these depended on actions to reverse global warming before it's too late, the scientists added. PTI

MARATHON TALKS...

However, they had never kept these in mind. They said the farm laws have been passed to benefit big business and corporate houses. Giving an example of sugarcane procurement, the farmers' organisations objected to contract farming and pointed out its drawbacks.

The 5-point set of demands came two hours after the ongoing meeting which started around 12.30 pm at Vigyan Bhawan in presence of the Centre's representatives: Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar and Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Minister Piyush Goyal.

The Bharatiya Kisan Union, the Bharatiya Kisan Sanyukta Morcha and the Krantikari Kisan Union are among the more than 34 farm union representatives who put the demand before the Centre to call a special session of Parliament and frame a law on MSP. The farm unions were also reportedly adamant on demanding the Government repealing its three farm laws enacted in September during the Monsoon Session of Parliament. They have also put some other demands on behalf of thousands of farmers owing allegiance to these organisations, huddled under the open sky in the cold winter, refusing to budge until their demands are met. The meeting, which is expected to play a major role in farmers' future course of action on whether they would continue the protest or withdraw it, is crucial as many of the farmers' demands would lead to new challenges for the government whose focus is to end the farmers' agitation going on since November 26. Thousands of protesters have blocked five Delhi borders connecting Chandigarh, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh crippling the chain of supply to the national Capital.

The meeting is also being attended by Union Minister of State for Commerce Som Prakash and Agriculture Secretary Sanjay Agarwal. The fourth round of meetings with the farmer leaders started at Vigyan Bhawan after the earlier talks remained inconclusive on December 1.

In the last meeting, the farmers' representatives had unanimously turned down the Centre's proposal of a special committee to thrash out the differences and resolve concerns over the farm laws.

FARMERS SQUAT...

However, people can travel to Haryana through Dhansa, Daurala, Kapashera, Rajokri, NH-8, Bijwasan/Baighera, Palam Vihar and Dundahera border points, the traffic police have said. The police also kept the Haryana-Delhi border at Singhu and Tikri closed for traffic for the eighth day on the trot.

"Singhu border is still closed from both sides. Lampur, Auchandi & other small borders also closed. Please take alternate routes. Traffic has been diverted from Mukarba Chowk & GTK Road," the traffic police tweeted.

"Traffic is very heavy. Please avoid Outer Ring Road from Signature Bridge to Rohini & vice versa, GTK road, NH 44 & Singhu, Auchandi & Lampur borders," it said. As traffic spilled over to alternate routes, it led to long jams there as well.

On Wednesday, the farmers had demanded that a special Parliament session be convened to repeal the three agriculture reform laws which were enacted in September. The farmers' unions also called for a nationwide protest on Saturday to oppose what they claimed was "corporatisation" of farming.

Meanwhile, most of the protesters at Burari left on Thursday to join others at Singhu and Tikri borders. "We are going at Tikri border as our main protest is

going on borders not here," said Rajendra, a farmer from Hisar in Haryana. At Singhu border, at Jatha also joined the protest. The Jatha with eight horses and several men came from Punjab on Thursday to join the protesters. A group of Muslim men from Punjab also reached at Singhu border and served food to protesters. "Most of the people from our group were already here in the protest but we came today from Punjab. We are serving the farmers sweet rice. We will stay here for as long as the farmers are here," said Mohammad Furkaan (22), who has come from Punjab.

VACCINATION TO...

Guleria also said that in the beginning, Covid-19 vaccine will not be available in sufficient doses to give to everyone. "We need a priority list to see that we vaccinate those who've high chances of dying due to Covid. Elderly, people with comorbidities and front line workers should be vaccinated first," he added. Recently, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan had ruled out vaccinating entire population stating that a few vulnerable people will be identified who will be inoculated. The AIIMS Director also said that once the booster dose is given, vaccine will give good amount of anti-body production and will start giving protection. "This will last for many months giving protection for a significant time when numbers will be less. We need to see type of immunity vaccine gives," he added.

GOVT INCREASES...

Puri tweeted saying, "Domestic operations recommenced with 30K passengers on 25 May & have now touched a high of 2.52 lakhs on 30 Nov 2020. Ministry of Civil Aviation is now allowing domestic carriers to increase their operations from existing 70% to 80% of pre-COVID approved capacity." On

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

June 26, this was increased to 45 per cent and on September 2, it was further increased to 60 per cent. On November 11, it was increased to 70 per cent.

BID TO CHANGE...

He said these drones inducted some days back into the Navy can remain in air for more than 30 hours and are already help in mounting surveillance on large areas of the strategically important Indian Ocean region. He also said these drones have to some extent also aided the Navy overcome capability gap.

In the backdrop of the face-offs at the LAC and growing Chinese maritime prowess in the Indian Ocean region, the Navy chief said the service has a standard operating procedure (SOP) in place in case there is any infringement there by the Chinese research or other maritime ceases operating there. He also said the warships were actively deployed in deep seas patrolling critical areas and various choke points at the sea lanes. However, there were no infringements by the Chinese in the region so far, Singh said.

"As of now, three Chinese warships are in the Indian Ocean region. The Chinese have been maintaining three ships since 2008 for anti-piracy patrols," he added. Stressing the fact that the Navy is in the forefront of indigenisation, Singh said at least 26 ships inducted into the Navy in the last six years were manufactured in India. He also said 41 of the 43 warships and submarines will be built in India including the Indigenous Aircraft Carrier.

NEW DELHI...

He was asked about media reports that China will build a 'super dam' on the lower reaches of the Yarlung Tsangpo river in Tibet. "We have taken note of

some media reports in this regard. The Government carefully monitors all developments on the Brahmaputra river," Srivastava said.

Noting that issues relating to trans-border rivers are discussed with China under the ambit of an institutionalised expert level mechanism as well as through diplomatic channels, the MEA spokesperson said, "We intend to remain engaged with China on the issue of trans-border rivers to safeguard our interests."

The MEA spokesperson also said that "as a lower riparian State with considerable established user rights to the waters of the trans-border rivers, the Government has consistently conveyed its views and concerns to the Chinese authorities and has urged them to ensure that the interests of downstream States are not harmed by any activities in upstream areas."

In Beijing, the Chinese foreign ministry said there is no need to have "any anxiety" over the project and that China will continue to have "good communication" with lower riparian States -- India and Bangladesh.

On China's plans to build the dam over the river near the Line of Actual Control (LAC) near Arunachal Pradesh where the Brahmaputra enters India, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying told a media briefing that the "hydropower development in the lower reaches of Yarlung Zangbo river is China's legitimate right. When it comes to use and development of cross border rivers, China always acts responsibly."

"We have a policy featuring development and conservation and all projects will go through science-based planning and assessment giving full consideration to impact downstream

and accommodating the interests of upstream and downstream regions," Hua said.

"The development of lower reaches of Yarlung Zangbo is in the early stages of planning and assessment. There is no need to read too much into that," she said, and added that "going forward China, India, Bangladesh and other concerned countries will continue to have good communication. There is no need for any anxiety on this matter."

JJP THREATENS...

JJP leaders claimed that Chautala will resign from his post if farmers were not given "justice" by the Centre. JJP has asked the Centre to resolve the demands of the farmers related to MSP as soon as possible, they said.

"The JJP has asked the Central Government to consider the demands of the farmers. It is important to get an assurance from the Government on MSP. We are hopeful that the Centre will talk to the farmers and resolve the issue soon so that the deadlock can be broken," said a JJP spokesperson. National president of the JJP and former MP Ajay Singh Chautala had also asked the Centre to bring a law on MSP. Earlier, the ongoing farmers agitation on the outskirts of Delhi has led another NDA ally Rashtriya Loktantrik Party leader and Nagaur MP Hanuman Beniwal asked the Centre and Union Home Minister Amit Shah to immediately withdraw the farm laws lest he would quit the alliance. The Congress in Rajasthan is seeking to bring Beniwal to its fold in the State, sources said.

PEEVED PARKASH...

The return of the honours by the two political veterans is being seen as symbolic of their

attempts to completely disassociate themselves from the party they were in alliance with. Notably, SAD had, in September, snapped ties with the BJP over the farm Bills.

That was not all! Olympian Pargat Singh, currently the Congress legislator, has also announced to return his honours - Padma Shri and Arjuna awards. The list does not end here. Punjab's sportspersons and Olympians have also written to President Ram Nath Kovind to return all the awards and honours "bestowed by the Government of India" on them. As the farmers' ongoing agitation against the Central farm legislations, with its epicenter in Punjab, turning into a mass movement with people from all walks of lives, notables or common, joining in, the decision by the "honoured", especially Badal, to return the awards is expected to put a huge pressure on the Central Government.

RAJINIKANTH TO...

"Politics will not be the same again in Tamil Nadu. We are going to see advisers like Manian leading the State to a renaissance and bring Tamil Nadu back to the national mainstream," Srenivaas told The Pioneer.

S Gurumurthy, editor, Tughlaq and the State's lead political commentator, is of the view that Rajinikanth has the potential to make a transformation in the State because of his broad national outlook. "We will soon see Dravida politics being pushed out from the State. There is going to be a refreshing change," said Gurumurthy.

The entry of Rajinikanth will see electoral alliances in Tamil Nadu undergoing major changes with more realignments, permutations and combinations. The coming day will see the DMK dumping the Congress and accepting the PMK as an

alliance partner. I do not rule out the possibility of Rajinikanth, the BJP and Tamil Mania Congress coming together in time for the polls. Exciting things are on the anvil," said Srenivaas.

According to Gurumurthy, the serious political vacuum experienced in Tamil Nadu by the departure of Jayalalithaa and Karunanidhi would be addressed to a great extent by Rajinikanth, the Maharashtrian-born former bus conductor, who has emerged as a rallying point for people in all walks of life.

CRIMINAL NETWORKS...

The Interpol has asked police organisations to ensure "the safety of the supply chain" and said "identifying illicit websites selling fake products will be essential."

"Criminal networks will also be targeting unsuspecting members of the public via fake websites and false cures, which could pose a significant risk to their health, even their lives," Interpol Secretary General Jurgen Stock said in a statement.

"It is essential that law enforcement is as prepared as possible for what will be an onslaught of all types of criminal activity linked to the Covid-19 vaccine, which is why Interpol has issued this global warning," the official said.

The Interpol cybercrime unit has analysed that of 3,000 websites associated with online pharmacies suspected of selling illicit medicines and medical devices, around 1,700 contained cyber threats, especially phishing and spamming malware making such operators even more potent of causing financial and health harms, it said.

As a number of Covid-19 vaccines come closer to approval and global distribution, ensuring the safety of the supply chain and identifying illicit websites selling fake products will be essential, it warned.

Trend Slazer

Kajol shares words of wisdom

Actor **KAJOL** shared words of encouragement for women. She reiterated that women can do anything. "For what it's worth, it's never too late to be whoever you want to be," Kajol wrote on her Instagram along with the hashtag #womencandoanything.

She often shares words of wisdom and encouragement for fans and followers on social media from time to time. The actor also opens up her mind in her social media posts.

Her next film, *Tribhanga* is expected to release in January. The film is directed by actor Renuka Shahane, and also stars Tanvi Azmi and Mithila Palkar.



Work under your skin

Given the early onset of winter, it is important to slightly adjust your skincare regimen. Here are a few ways and beauty hacks to do that

Winter is everyone's favourite season to shower yourself with love and some hot chocolate. It's a great time to pamper yourself but you should not forget the cold-weather woes — dry, flaky skin, chapped lips and unnecessary redness. As you step out every day, your face is exposed to the chilling wind and dust. This can make your skin look dull. Hence, the change in weather calls for some changes on the skincare regimen too. Here are some ways to take care of your skin during winters.

plays a very important role in skin health. This also helps in delaying the ageing process. Balanced diet can keep ageing at bay for sure. External factor like the weather has an impact on our skin condition. On places where weather is too cold and chilly, our skin tends to get dry, itchy and flaky. And heating on fireworks at-home, skin may already have taken a toll. But do not worry, right skin care routine will ensure that glow on your skin.

AVOID ALCOHOL-HEAVY PRODUCTS

Apply right products on your skin, use heavy cream instead of a moisturising as it has rich ingredients like hyaluronic acid which helps in retaining natural moisture and hydration. Use antioxidant-rich products for skin and as well as diet. It is advisable to use alcohol-free products as they are good for any season. Our skin, be it is summer, monsoon, autumn or winter, gets affected by free radicals which eventually leads the skin to premature ageing, fine lines. To keep fine lines and premature ageing at bay one can continue to use the year sunscreen. Another excellent product to keep fine lines and premature ageing at bay is Retinal A. Whether indoor or outdoor, vitamin C rich products which will help in boosting collagen.

at least two times a day to keep away those dry flaky layer on your skin. Check your skin type and decide on scrubbing. Those who have very sensitive skin may use something very gentle like oatmeal as an exfoliator. There are gentle peels available in the market like a glycolic or lactic peel. One can do a patch test behind their ear, if no irritation or redness occurs, you are good to go and use it to remove dead cells. One can also use a muslin cloth as a gentle exfoliator for face. People use it to keep the unwanted facial hair at bay and also any kind of congestion on the face. Retinal A is a great source of exfoliation. One must patch test before using any new product behind the ears. Always use a good heavy cream post usage of a chemical peel or retinal A. Do ensure to use sunblock. Do not step out onto direct sunlight.

the shower a less hot and short. Use alcohol-free and creamy shower wash instead of those harsh soap which has tons of alcohol and takes away the natural moisture. Apply body cream post shower to retain the hydration.

NIGHT SKINCARE

The most important step of the skincare regimen is night care. It is the time when our skin does all the repairing job. Hence opt for products which are more of curing and repairing in nature as per your skin type. I suggest double cleansing your face to remove dirt, oil and makeup. Start with a face oil followed by a gentle moisturiser. Then use eye cream for eye contour. I mix drops of vitamin C oil with anti-ageing night repair cream for both, face and neck. Then use foot and hand cream. Also use sleeping mask for lips to keep it from drying due to the weather. Avoid any kind of mud or clay products during dry skin. It may further make your skin dryer. Keep your skin and diet healthy.

(The writer Rukshmani Thakkar is Technical Head-Skin, Enrich.)

INVEST IN A HUMIDIFIER

You must ensure that you prepare yourself multi-dimensionally for the change as per the season. It can be preparing your home, switching to the right products, or a balance diet. Winter means drier air. Hence, it is important to have the right electronic gadget at home which will help in maximising the level of water in the air. Therefore, investing in humidifier would be a perfect idea for the season. This way the moisture level in the room remains intact and helps skins epidermal layer to retain hydration and natural moisture. Also, ensure a safe distance from the heater.

LOOK FOR GENTLE INGREDIENTS

Look for calming and natural ingredients such as aloe vera, vitamins etc. Just as sunblock plays an essential role all round the year, similarly, exfoliator plays an important part in keeping skin soft and supple. Use any gentle exfoliator on your skin

SHORTEN YOUR SHOWER TIMING

With winters, shower temperature becomes hot. But keep shower timing short. A hot shower can ultimately impact to premature ageing of our skin and may also dehydrate one's skin. Keep

The reason I took up the role in Durgamati was that its a really nice script. It's very Indian and



I am sure it will appeal to our audience and their sensibilities. I loved the twists and turns in the story and how unpredictable it is. It has got all the elements that you need for a good film. I have a very strong feeling that people are going to love it.

—Arshad Warsi

Actor **PRABHAS** and KGF director **PRASHANTH NEEL** are set to collaborate on an action film titled *Salaar*.



Sharing his look from the film, Prabhas wrote, "Today I take a leap into the world of #Salaar. Shoot commences from January 2021. An Indian film by Hombale Films, Vijay Kiragandur and Prashanth Neel."

Prabhas's other projects include the romantic drama *Radhe Shyam* with Pooja Hedge and Om Raut's period drama *Adipurush*. He recently also announced an untitled project that will co-star Amitabh Bachchan and Deepika Padukone.

Miley's marriage had conflicts

Pop star **MILEY CYRUS** says her marriage with actor **LIAM HEMSWORTH** had too much conflict, adding that she is looking for a life partner who can be her anchor.

The singer split from the actor in August 2019, less than a year after they exchanged vows. Now, she has revealed that she hates being in a relationship where there are too many arguments.

"There was too much conflict... When I come home, I want to be anchored by someone. I don't get off on drama or fighting," she said.

Despite the couple going their separate ways, Cyrus says she has no hard feelings for Liam. "I really do and did love him very much and still do, always will," she said.



Power to the people

Can the Nissan Magnite rewrite the Japanese brand's fortunes in the country?



KUSHAN MITRA



Nissan Magnite Turbo CVT Petrol
Price as tested: ₹9.35 lakh
 (ex-showroom XV Premium)
Engine: 999cc three-cylinder turbocharged petrol 100PS

'The car was a joyride. Yes, there is a price warrior feel to the interiors. The engine and gearbox are brilliant and if you keep the Korean cars in this segment aside, it is very good. With its aggressive pricing, introductory or not, the Magnite might even attract small hatchback buyers'

First things first, let me make one thing straight, 'introductory prices' as well as extremely low prices of the base version of new cars are nothing more than a ploy to get prospective car buyers into a showroom. Both of these things have a catch, for example, introductory prices usually apply for a certain number of units or have a limited time-frame. And as for the very low prices of base specification models, you get almost no features. Yes, you will get four wheels and the engine, but reading the specifications for base models you often realise just how featureless those cars are.

This isn't true with all manufacturers but this is a major reason that base models rarely contribute more than 10 per cent of overall unit sales of most cars. It is also a fact that during media drives, we auto reviewers always get the fully-loaded variants, which in the case of some cars cost a substantial bit more, sometimes even 60-70 per cent more than the entry-level model. But it is also true that Indian car buyers like having features such as automatic transmissions, smartphone connectivity and automatic air conditioning, so much so that nowadays, across all car brands, fully loaded models contribute almost a third of all units sold.

This brings us to the Nissan Magnite, now you would have read about the fantastic entry-price of this car at ₹4.99 lakh. However, I didn't drive this

bargain basement priced car, I drove the top-end XV Premium with the 1.0 litre turbocharged engine coupled to a Continuously Variable Transmission (CVT) gearbox. This variant had all the bells and whistles and cost a much more substantial ₹9.35 lakh ex-showroom. Personally speaking, I drove this variant because this is the one that I would consider. That said, I do believe that it will be the variant one level below the top-end, the XV that might be the best-seller. That loses things like the fabric inlays, a bit of chrome garnish and the reversing camera, but on the whole is pretty well-specced, although I really appreciate reversing cameras. Also, several electronic driving aids like the Vehicle Dynamic Control (VDC) and Traction Control System (TCS) are only available on the variant with the Turbo engine.

Now let me explore the negatives and positives of this car, and there are many to talk about. Let me start with the exterior, the Magnite certainly has presence, even though it gets the Datsun open radiator grille instead of the traditional Nissan 'V' grille. The headlights

and dropdown LED daytime running lights along with the high ground clearance do give the car a road presence that honestly is more imposing than some of its major rivals like the Maruti Brezza and Tata Nexon. One thing I really liked the most was the fact that roof rails on the Magnite are actually functional, you can fit cross members and suitcases on top as well. While it has an average boot for its class, this additional storage area will make life a lot easier during fully-packed long holiday drives.

My issues are more to do with the interiors, where you do get a feeling that the Magnite is built to a cost when you touch the plastics and the steering wheel feel felt a bit off in my opinion. While the overall interior look is very modern with the hexagonal airconditioning vents, the feel could be better. That said, the eight-inch floating touchscreen on the top models, particularly the seven-inch digital display in the instrument cluster with its very large and nice font size and changing displays is definitely a major plus. On the top models, you have a wireless charger and ambient lighting at night, which does give a better feel to the car.

But let us get to the driving, and Nissan's turbopetrol engine. I drove the four-cylinder variant of this engine on the Kicks, but this 999cc three-cylinder unit produces an impressive 100PS of power and it is very smooth indeed. The CVT gearbox delivers that power seamlessly. On the highway and in the city you never feel wanting for power. At cruising speeds on the highway, I got an impressive 16 kilometres per litre (kmpl), and on the crowded streets of Gurugram, the car gave an impressive 13+ kmpl. This has a lovely engine and the gearbox, the Magnite, unlike its bigger and older sibling, the Kicks, also handles very well indeed. Issues? Well, the Magnite has some noise, vibration and harshness problems. Of course, you can listen to music to drown it out, but there was a bit of rattle and hum about the car. Nothing disconcerting though.

The car was a joyride. Yes, there is a price warrior feel to the interiors although not to the exteriors. The engine and gearbox are brilliant and if you keep the Korean cars in this segment aside, it is very good. With its aggressive pricing, introductory or not, the Magnite might even attract small hatchback buyers, folks looking at the Santro or WagonR, let alone small SUV buyers. Nissan's sales and service has been inconsistent till today, and that, and not the car will be the brand's biggest challenge.

Vir captures lockdown stories



Artists are unstoppable and they always have the onus of entertaining, regardless of what they might be going through. Comedian-actor Vir Das took the responsibility of spreading cheer and ended up creating the first-of-its-kind homegrown comedy special *Outside In* from 30 virtual shows that he did during the lockdown. Though the show itself started off as a one off gig in April but as the demand continued, he converted into a continual series that kept his fans laughing together despite the world undergoing heightened anxiety and pressures created due to the lockdown.

After having started the year with a special called *Vir Das: For India*, this time around Vir gave his audience a taste of how a virus ended up uniting the entire globe at the same time. The show originally premiered on his website for charity but will now make it on Netflix on December 16, thus making sure we end the year on a sweet note.

Capturing the mundaneness of being stuck at home, the special has some unique and heartwarming stories about the everything that the lockdown put us through. From a young man who can't find his favourite ice cream flavour to lovers separated in different cities weeks ahead of their engagement to a man hoping to dine with his girls soon to a nurse who is on COVID duty everyday, the show captures lives of diverse people who are all waiting for the same thing — the world to go back to normal.

In a statement, Vir said, "There couldn't have been a better way to end the year and I say this beyond my personal reasons. The special was a showreel of everything that we've gone through this year and how as human beings we went through the same emotions at the same time. It was my most fulfilling piece of work because even for an hour I could make people smile when they needed it the most. And we raised money for charity while doing it. This special is dedicated to each of us who survived a horrific year and hopefully we carry forward the lessons to 2021."



A SPICE OF WINTER

With the season of sweaters, shawls and hot chocolate kicking in, chef PRABHAKAR NAGARAJ suggests some herbs and spices to maintain a warm and healthy immune system

We can notice a certain change to the winter vibe this year as the season of sweaters, shawls and multiple cups of hot chocolate begins. It has become imperative to consume healthy food and maintain a balanced diet. There is a rising awareness about strengthening the immune system in these challenging times.

Due to social distancing norms and restrictions, people are spending more time indoors and the cold weather has had a direct impact on our bodies. A compromised immune system results in frequent cold and cough, which is why maintaining the right diet is essential.

The foundation of general health and well-being is a diverse diet and consuming healthy food. Fruits and vegetables are just the beginning and have a huge impact on our immune system. So it is important to sufficiently include them in your diet. Taking advantage of the seasonal fruits and vegetables available is an absolute necessity. Let us look at the easily available things at the local supermarkets that can be consumed to keep your immunity in check during winter. Across cafeterias, we have salad bars and focus on serving a variety of menu items containing ingredients that are good indicators of immunity and have distinctive taste.

INGREDIENTS FROM THE KITCHEN

We must also include certain ingredients in our home kitchens for regular usage. In addition, we also can take advantage of the things that are easily available like green tea. It acts as a great antioxidant and includes high immunity-boosting elements. Sweet potatoes are also available in plenty during



'A FEW HIGH IMMUNITY-BOOSTING VEGETABLES THAT ARE COMMONLY CONSUMED DURING WINTERS ARE BROCCOLI, GINGER, SPINACH AND ARUGULA. THEY ARE THE BEST NATURAL REMEDIES TO PROTECT THE IMMUNE SYSTEM'

these months. Peanuts are packed with plenty of energy-boosting ingredients. Multiple things can be made from peanuts by either boiling them or preparing a chutney.

Apart from this, carrots and mushrooms are the go-to ingredients in winters due to their various benefits. Mushrooms can be consumed just by sautéing or preparing a gravy as made by a lot of Indian kitchens. Immunity-boosting elements like parsley protects us from chronic diseases and are rich in vitamins. Ginger tea made with cinnamon and cloves always keeps us fresh and nourished.

SOME TIME-TRAVELLED AND TESTED FORMULAS

The making of traditional *Kaadah*, a potion that is considered as the best solution to build a healthy immune system involves the usage of secret ingredients — herbs and spices. Some of the herbs that grow well during winter are mint, peppermint, basil, lemongrass and sage.

As we near Christmas, we have turkey stuffed with sage. Basically, when consumed raw by grilling or sautéing, it provides the important elements to strengthen the immune system.

FRUITS

A lot of fruits and vegetables that are native and healthy are available in these cold months as this is the most appropriate temperature for them to grow — papaya, pampelmousses or pomelo or grapefruit (a citrus fruit), melons, grapes, gooseberries, guavas, kiwi and pomegranate, to name a few. These fruits contain plenty of vitamins to

fight a flu.

For instance, eating one gooseberry is equivalent to the total amount of Vitamin C needed by a human body for a day, according to scientific reports.

VEGETABLES

A few vegetables that are commonly consumed and available in plenty with high immunity-boosting power during winters are broccoli, ginger, spinach and arugula, which is a peppery, distinctive-tasting green and is immensely beneficial. They are the best natural remedies to protect the immune system.

All these things are usually grown in the open during winter. They are cultivated under modified temperature-controlled zones like a greenhouse throughout the year. But during this time, they are grown in the open and result in giving better immunity boosting power they grab the natural essence through air and sunlight. Hence, using them in the correct manner and cooking them without killing those essential nutrients is crucial.

THE BEST MEDICINE

Well, healthy food is the best and natural medicine for all our ailments because we are basically what we eat. One tip: water infused with these immune-boosting spices should be kept at accessible places for people to consume regularly. One must get into the habit of a balanced diet that provides all the nutrition required to keep your health in check.

(The author is the Managing Partner, Elixir India.)

Eat healthy, stay healthy

Beverages like green tea, muscadine grapes and dark chocolate may fight against COVID-19 virus, say researchers



In a unique study, researchers have claimed that chemical compounds in foods or beverages like green tea, muscadine grapes and dark chocolate can bind to and block the function of a particular enzyme, or protease, in the SARS-CoV-2, the virus responsible for COVID-19.

"Proteases are important to the health and viability of cells and viruses. If proteases are inhibited, cells cannot perform many important functions for example, replication," said study author De-Yu Xie from the North Carolina State University in the US.

"One of our lab's focusses is to find nutraceuticals in food or medicinal plants that inhibit either how a virus attaches to human cells or the propagation of a virus in human cells," Xie added.

In the study, published in the journal *Frontiers in Plant Science*, the research team performed both computer simulations and lab studies showing how the so-called "main protease" (Mpro) in the SARS-CoV-2 virus reacted when confronted with a number of different plant chemical compounds already known for their potent anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties.

"Mpro in SARS-CoV-2 is required for the virus to replicate and assemble itself. If we can inhibit or deactivate this protease, the virus will die," Xie said.

Computer simulations showed that the studied chemical compounds from green tea, two varieties of muscadine grapes, cacao powder and dark chocolate were able to bind to different portions of Mpro.

'Muscadine grapes contain some inhibitory chemicals in their skin and seeds. Plants use these compounds to protect themselves, so it is not surprising that their leaves and skin contain these beneficial compounds'

"Mpro has a portion that is like a 'pocket' that was 'filled' by the chemical compounds. When this pocket was filled, the protease lost its important function," Xie explained.

Lab experiments also showed similar results. The chemical compounds in green tea and muscadine grapes were very successful at inhibiting Mpro's function; chemical compounds in cacao powder and dark chocolate reduced Mpro activity by about half.

"Green tea has five tested chemical compounds that bind to different sites in the pocket on Mpro, essentially overwhelming it to inhibit its function," Xie said.

"Muscadine grapes contain these inhibitory chemicals in their skin and seeds. Plants use these compounds to protect themselves, so it is not surprising that plant leaves and skin contain these beneficial compounds," the author noted.

—IANS

R E C I P E S

CHICKEN-65 BIRYANI

WHAT YOU NEED

- Onion (thinly-sliced): 2
- Tomato (chopped): 2
- Ginger-garlic-greenchilli paste: 3 tbsp
- Water: 1 cup
- Salt to taste
- Cumin powder: 1 tsp
- Garam masala: 1 tsp
- Turmeric powder: ½ tsp
- Chopped coriander & mint leaves: ½ cup
- Vegetable oil: 4 tbsp
- Basmathi rice: 3 cups
- Cardamom, cloves: 5-7
- Cinnamon
- Lemon juice: 2 tbsp
- Chicken: 1 kg
- Ghee: 1 tbsp

- Oil: 4 tbsp
- Cashew nuts
- Raisin

METHOD

- Divide chicken pieces into two portions and set aside. Keep the first portion for the masala and other for layering.
- Heat ghee in a pan. Fry the cashew nuts and raisins until golden brown.
- Remove from pan and set aside. Fry onions.

For chicken-65 masala:

- Heat four tablespoons of oil in a pan and add the sliced onion and saute until the onions become slightly golden.
- Add in the ginger-garlic-green chilli paste.
- Add in the chopped tomatoes and



saute until they are mushy.

- Add and cook cumin, turmeric and coriander powder, kashmiri chilli powder, garam masala and saute for two to three minutes on low heat.
- Add a cup of water, salt and mix well.
- Add half of the prepared chicken-65 pieces (first portion), chopped coriander and mint leaves, mix well.
- Cover and cook until the gravy is thick. Remove from heat and set aside.

For rice:

- Wash and soak the rice for 30 minutes. Drain the water completely. Set aside.
- In a cooking pot, heat one tablespoon of ghee. Add all the spices listed and fry for few seconds.
- Pour enough water, lemon juice and

salt into the pot and bring to boil. When it starts boiling, add the soaked rice and continue cooking.

- When the rice is ¾ done, layer half of the rice over the Chicken-65 masala layer.
- Layer the remaining Chicken-65 pieces (second portion) on top and spread half of the remaining toppings (fried onions, cashew nuts, raisins, chopped coriander leaves) on top of the chicken-65 layer.
- Once the steam comes out from the dough seal, after 20-25 minutes, switch off the flame and keep the biryani pot unopened for 10 minutes. Open the dum, mix the rice and chicken pieces from the bottom of the pan using a long spoon.
- Serve and enjoy.

Courtesy: Anna's secret recipe / DOSAMA.



WALNUT FIDDICH FASHIONED

WHAT YOU NEED

- Walnut-infused Glenfiddich (12 yo): 60 ml
- Homemade cranberry syrup: 15 ml
- Cinnamon bitters: 2-3 dashes
- Cinnamon sticks
- Lemon and orange peels

METHOD

- Add whisky, cranberry syrup and

bitters over ice in a mixing jar.

- Stir for 15 to 20 seconds.
- Smoke a cinnamon stick in an inverted rock glass.
- Add a block ice and the drink to the smoked rock glass.
- Garnish with burnt lemon and orange peel oil.

Courtesy: Angad Singh Gandhi, Glenfiddich Indian brand ambassador.

BROCCOLI & CORN CUTLET

WHAT YOU NEED

- Potato: 2
- Broccoli: 250 gm
- Sweet corn: 100 gm
- Garlic (minced): 2 tbsp
- Onion (finely-chopped): 1
- Olive oil: 2 tbsp
- Thyme: 10 gm
- Bread crumbs: 500 gm
- Flour: 250 gm
- Salt & pepper to taste
- Oil for frying

METHOD

- Boil the potatoes until cooked properly and mash it using fork and allow it to cool.
- In a pan, add two tablespoons of oil. Once hot, add minced garlic and sweat.
- Add onions and cook until translucent. Add minced broccoli and sweet corn.
- Cook the mixture for about two



minutes, add thyme and seasoning.

- Allow the mixture to cool.
- Once the mixture has cooled down, mix it with mashed potatoes, check seasoning and add more if required.
- Shape the mixture into cutlets and store in the chiller for half an hour.
- Make slurry using flour and water with a pinch of salt and pepper.
- Dip the cutlets into slurry and coat them well using bread crumbs all around.
- Fry the cutlets into medium hot oil until the surface of the cutlets turns crispy.
- Remove excess oil if any through paper towel.
- Serve hot.

Courtesy: Chef Charles Jayakumar.



THE HUNTSMAN

WHAT YOU NEED

- Tarnished Truth (9 yo) Bourbon: 2 oz
- Grapefruit juice: ¾ oz
- Honey simple syrup: ¾ oz
- French Tarragon

METHOD

- Combine bourbon, grapefruit juice and simple syrup in a shaker.
- Add ice and shake.
- Double strain with Hawthorne strainer into chilled coupe glass.
- Garnish with French Tarragon.

Courtesy: Stephanie Kenney.

PTI ■ CANBERRA

RAPID FIRE ROUND KICKS OFF

India, Oz work out T20 combos in 1st game today

Short of resources in ODIs, India will have enough options to choose from to pose a stiffer challenge to Australia when the two sides clash in a three-match T20 series beginning at Manuka Oval on Friday.

The 1-2 ODI series loss reaffirmed that India have a lot of work to do in the 50-over format but they possess a much more balanced squad in the shortest format.

Before the pandemic suspended sporting activities around the world, India had blanked hosts New Zealand in a five-match series and they will be taking a lot of confidence out of that result into the contest against Australia.

The presence of Washington Sundar, Deepak Chahar and T Natarajan, who did well on his ODI debut on Wednesday, lends much-needed balance to the bowling department.

Sundar will be high on confidence after a solid IPL where Royal Challengers Bangalore and India skipper Virat Kohli used him effectively in the powerplay and middle overs.

With Hardik Pandya not bowling regularly, India had only one specialist all-rounder in Ravindra Jadeja in the one-dayers.

However, in the T20s, Kohli

Aus vs India (1st T20)
Live from 1:40pm IST
SONY TEN 3 & SIX NETWORK

will also have the services of Sundar in both the departments and there is a possibility that Hardik can roll his arm over for a brief spell like he did from the second ODI onwards.

Yorker specialist Natarajan, who was a late addition to the ODI squad, could also make his T20 debut on Friday having shown enough promise in his maiden international appearance.

Unlike the SCG, the Manuka Oval surface had enough for both the spinners and pacers. It will be interesting to see who opens up the bowling alongside Jasprit Bumrah with the toss-up being between Mohammad Shami and Deepak Chahar.

Yuzvendra Chahal, who had a forgettable outing in the ODIs, will also be looking to bounce back.

In batting, K L Rahul, who batted at five in ODIs, is expected to go back to his preferred opening slot alongside Shikhar Dhawan.



Indian players appreciate Ravindra Jadeja's effort to dismiss Chris Green during third ODI on Wednesday. ICC/Twitter

The in-form wicketkeeper batsman had also opened in the previous series against New Zealand and would be expected to bat the bulk of the 20 overs like he did so well in the IPL.

Skipper Kohli looked in good touch in ODIs and will be aiming to build on that while number four Shreyas Iyer will be targeting big scores from great starts like he did in the preceding three-match series.

As Kohli mentioned, the win in the inconsequential third ODI was just the kind of result they needed ahead of the T20 series, else the tour would have gotten harder.

Australia, after naming the same squad for ODIs as well as T20s, would be backing themselves to beat India after a clinical display over the last one week despite injury concerns.

Star batsman David Warner is unavailable due to a groin injury and it remains to be seen if Marnus Labuschagne comes alongside skipper Aaron Finch on Friday like they both did a night ago.

Marcus Stoinis would have been another good opening option with Finch but he too is a doubtful starter due to a side injury he suffered during the ODIs.

Mitchell Starc, who was rested on Wednesday, is expected to return to bolster the attack even as the side misses the services of Pat Cummins, who has been rested as part of his workload management.



Aus will use four games to land first punch: Burns

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Wary of the "huge threat" the Indian pacers pose to them, Australia Test opener Joe Burns on Thursday said they will use the four games to land the first punch and put the visitors on the back foot before the four-match series begins on December 17.

The Australians have already made a statement of sort with their dominant ODI series win as their batsmen came down heavily on the fancied Indian bowlers. Before India and Australia begin the Test battle, the visitors are scheduled to play two three-day tour games against Australia A.

India A, which features Test specialists, will take on Australia A in the first three-day game, starting December 6. The second tour match, scheduled to begin from December 11, will be played with pink ball.

"The focus is always about trying to win games and starting this week with Australia A, it's about getting our preparations sorted for the Test series but also putting India on the back foot, landing the first punch and making sure they don't take any momentum into what's going to be a fantastic series," Burns said at a virtual news conference.

Burns said India have a skillful bowling attack, spearheaded by Jasprit Bumrah, and they have to "start well" against them.

"It's the role of the openers. It's not always the runs you make. Sometimes it's the balls you can face and the pressure you can absorb that goes a long way to getting results."

"Their bowling attack has stayed together for a long time now, so we've all seen their bowlers, but they're very skillful and they're going to pose a huge threat. They're a team that you can't take lightly, they're a world class outfit and their bowling attack plays a big part in that."

"We'll prepare really well for this game and do as much preparation as we can (for Adelaide Test) and make sure we are really prepared for a really tough battle. If we can start well it's going to go a long way to winning the series."

Burns said spending time in the middle during the A games will help them get a measure of the visiting batsmen and bowlers.

"So by the time we get to that first Test we'll be as best prepared as possible," he said.

The 31-year-old, who has appeared in just 21 Tests since making his debut against India in December 2014, has been struggling of late. His top-score was 29 from five innings in Sheffield Shield.

Williamson puts Kiwis on top

AFP ■ HAMILTON

The West Indies delight at winning the toss on a lush green wicket turned to frustration as New Zealand were rarely troubled in posting 243/2 on day one of the first Test in Hamilton on Thursday.

Kane Williamson, despite being troubled with cramp late in the day, produced a masterful innings to be unbeaten on 97 at stumps with Ross Taylor on 31.

Williamson featured in a 154-run stand with Tom Latham for the second wicket before Latham was bowled for 86.

After the start of play was delayed two hours by rain, the West Indies were delighted to win the toss with an emerald wicket that potentially offered untold demons for their pace attack.

But after Shannon Gabriel bowled Will Young early for five, the tourists found



they did not getting the assistance they expected from the wicket.

Williamson, who will resume on Friday requiring just three runs to register his 22nd Test century, worked patiently with Latham

for more than 50 overs, waiting for bad balls to hit as the pair were rarely tempted to play shots at anything else.

Gabriel, Kumar Roach and Holder could not keep a consistent line and saw rare chances spoiled by fielding errors.

The 2.01 metre (6ft 7in) Holder used his height to extract some bounce but the no-risk approach of Latham and Williamson served only to tire the big Barbadian.

Wicketkeeper Shane Dowrich had an uncomfortable day by failing to get a glove to a chance from Young and then he did not appeal when it appeared he had caught Latham on 43 off Holder, who also kept quiet.

On 80, Latham was well out of his crease when he aborted an attempted cheeky single, but Shamarh Brooks' shy at the stumps went well wide.

Green in awe of India's 'quality' spin

PTI ■ CANBERRA

Young Australian all-rounder Cameron Green is in awe of the Indian team's "quality" spin attack and feels no amount of research work can prepare one for the on-field experience.

The prodigiously talented Green made his international debut in the third ODI against India. Although Australia lost the fixture by 13 runs, the rookie gained crucial match experience in the middle.

"Their spinners, I haven't faced quality like that," Green was quoted as saying by *cricket.Com.Au*.

The 21-year-old came in at number five on Wednesday and hit a boundary and a six before a superb catch by Ravindra Jadeja ended his debut innings on 21.

"Jadeja is a beautiful bowler who

knows exactly what he's trying to do: Spin some away from you and dart one back in."

"You can do as much research and watch as much footage as you want to get an understanding how they bowl. But it's a different beast out in the middle. I will take a lot out of it," Green said, referring to Kuldeep Yadav and Co.



IPL could have 2 new teams as BCCI seeks AGM approval

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The BCCI will hold its Annual General Meeting on December 24 to discuss the induction of two new IPL franchises besides the appointment of India's ICC representative and three new national selectors.

Also on the agenda is the election of a new vice-president. As per norm, the BCCI has sent a 23-point agenda to all affiliated units 21 days prior to the holding of the AGM.

The most significant point is seeking approval for two new teams to make it a 10-team IPL.

It is understood that the Adani Group and Sanjeev Goenka's RPG (owners of the Rising Pune Supergiants) are interested in owning new teams with

one franchise surely from Ahmedabad.

Another important point will be BCCI's representative to the ICC and the Asian Cricket Council. It is expected that secretary Jay Shah will be the BCCI representative in the global committees.

Appointment of three new selectors, along with a chairman of selectors, is also on cards given that Cricket Committees and Standing Committees are part of the agenda.

The agenda also includes discussion on India's Future Tours Program for 2021, preparation with regards to organisation of next year's T20 World Cup (includes the ICC tax issue) and inclusion of cricket in the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

No Du Plessis for Eng ODIs

IANS ■ JOHANNESBURG

Senior South Africa batsman Faf du Plessis has been rested for the upcoming three-match ODI series against England, Cricket South Africa confirmed on Thursday.

Along with du Plessis, Kagiso Rabada, Pite van Biljon, Bjorn Fortuin and Reeza Hendricks have also been released from the squad.

Faf played all the three T20Is and scored 121 runs, with his highest score being 58 which came in the first T20I.

South Africa squad: Quinton de Kock (captain), Temba Bavuma, Junior Dala, Beuran Hendricks, Heinrich Klaasen, George Linde, Keshav Maharaj, Janneman Malan, David Miller, Lungi Ngidi, Anrich Nortje, Andile Phehlukwayo, Tabraiz Shamsi, Lutho Sipamla, Jon-Jon Smuts, Gletton Stuurman, Rassie van der Dussen, Kyle Verreynne.

Lee questions Australia's decision to rest Cummins



SYDNEY: Former fast-bowling star Brett Lee has questioned Australia's decision to rest pace spearhead Pat Cummins after just two games against India in the recently-concluded ODI series.

Cummins, who was part of Australia's England tour in August and also played for Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL, was rested for the final ODI and will also miss the upcoming T20 series as part of his workload management. "It probably wouldn't have been his call, he probably would

have wanted to play, the players generally want to play," Lee told *Foxsports.Com.Au*.

"I would have thought after a couple of games they shouldn't be tired. I always found that for my rhythm personally that the more games I played the better rhythm I had," Lee added.

Lee opined that a player can be rested if he is nursing an injury but a fit one should be playing as many as possible.

"If I had a week's break, whether it be a break in the tournament or whether I was rested, it's almost like you've got to go back and find that rhythm again," he said.

"There could be a guy who is carrying a hamstring injury or a little niggle, shoulder might be a bit sore, and the best way to get them into their best preparation is to have a few days off. "That's fine but if they're fully fit they should be playing." PTI

I saw death too closely: Grosjean



AFP ■ SAKHIR

Romain Grosjean 'saw death' after he left the hospital on Wednesday following his dramatic escape from a fiery high-speed crash in last weekend's Bahrain Formula One Grand Prix.

Haas driver Grosjean somehow wrenched himself free from his blazing car with just burns to his hands and a

called 'halo' device.

He described the crash, which he said "was not the most violent" of his F1 career and the subsequent fire from which he managed to flee with minor injuries.

"I undid my seat belt right away and I tried to get out of the car, but I realised my helmet was hitting something," Grosjean said, his voice trembling.

"I sat back down, told myself that I was stuck and that I'll wait."

"But on my left, it was all orange and I realised that it was burning. I told myself: 'No time to wait, I'm going to try to get out on the right', but I couldn't. I couldn't get out on the left either."

"I thought: 'It can't end like this, not now.' I tried to get out again, but I couldn't, so I sat down and I saw death, not close up, but from too close... It's a feeling that I wish on no-one."

AFP ■ MANCHESTER

PSG boost hopes with United win

Neymar's brace helps last year's finalists beat 10-man Man Utd at Old Trafford; Giroud scores four for Chelsea

Neymar's brace helped Paris Saint-Germain to a vital 3-1 win over Manchester United on Wednesday that took the French club to within touching distance of the Champions League last 16, while Olivier Giroud scored all four goals in Chelsea's 4-0 thumping of Sevilla.

Elsewhere, Borussia Dortmund secured their qualification for the next round.

PSG could have been on the brink of elimination from Group H with a defeat at Old Trafford but Neymar put last season's runners-up ahead in the sixth minute and the world's most expensive player sealed their victory in stoppage time.

In between, Marcus Rashford's shot went in off Danilo Pereira to bring United level in the first half, and Edinson Cavani hit the bar against his former club.

Marquinhos prodded the French champions back in front midway through the second half and the game appeared up for Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side when Fred was sent off for a second yellow, having been fortunate to escape a red card early on.

Neymar's late clincher could prove crucial as it gives PSG the head-to-head advantage (in a two-way tie) following United's



2-1 win in Paris in October.

There is a three-way tie on nine points at the top of the group with RB Leipzig right in contention after Norwegian striker Alexander Sorloth scored in injury time to give them a 4-3 victory at Istanbul Basaksehir.

Irfan Can Kahveci's superb hat-trick looked to have rescued a draw for Basaksehir as they came back from 3-1 down to draw level. Yussuf Poulsen, Nordi Mukiele and Dani Olmo also scored for Leipzig.



UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

But the German side scored a stunning later goal to throw Group H wide open.

It all means PSG now need only draw at home to Basaksehir next week to qualify.

"We have almost qualified, which means we have not qualified yet. That is the reality. Being almost pregnant does not mean you are pregnant," said PSG coach Thomas Tuchel.

United also only require a point when they visit Leipzig, but will be out if they lose, while the Germans would in that case

go through. Dortmund secured their progress after a 1-1 draw at home to Lazio in Group F, despite losing Erling Braut Haaland to a leg injury.

Raphael Guerreiro put the Germans in front but Ciro Immobile's penalty against his old side brought Lazio level.

Lazio will join Dortmund in the next round if they avoid defeat against Club Brugge next week.

The Belgians are two points back and still in contention after beating Zenit Saint-Petersburg 3-0, with teenage Belgian international Charles De Ketelaere putting them ahead, Hans Vanaken adding a penalty and Noa Lang also scoring.

SOLO PERFORMANCE

The performance of the evening came from Giroud, as the France striker scored all four goals in Chelsea's 4-0 win away to Sevilla.

On just his second start this season, Giroud produced two lovely finishes before heading in to make it 3-0 and then winning and converting a late penalty. The 34-year-old is the old-

est player to score a hat-trick in the competition since Hungarian great Ferenc Puskas in 1965 for Real Madrid against Feyenoord.

Both teams were already through but the win allowed Chelsea to secure top spot in Group E.

"Amazing solo performance from Olivier. Delighted with him, delighted with the team," Chelsea manager Frank Lampard, the last Chelsea player to score four goals in a game in 2010, told *BT Sport*.

In the same group, Marcus Berg's goal gave Krasnodar a 1-0 win over Rennes, meaning the Russians will play in the Europa League in the new year.

RONALDO REACHES 750

History was made in Turin as France's Stephanie Frappart became the first woman to referee a men's Champions League game when Juventus beat Dynamo Kiev 3-0.

The game was also notable for Cristiano Ronaldo scoring his 750th career goal, his record-extending 132nd in the Champions League. Federico Chiesa and Alvaro

Morata also scored for Juve, who had already qualified from Group G before the game, along with Barcelona.

The Catalans kept up their perfect record and stayed on course to win the group by beating Ferencvaros 3-0 in Budapest without the rested Lionel Messi. Antoine Griezmann and Martin Braithwaite netted before Ousmane Dembele converted a penalty.

STEFANIE MAKES HISTORY TURIN: Stephanie Frappart became the first woman to referee a men's Champions League game during Juventus 3-0 win over Dynamo Kiev.

The 36-year-old Frappart has already made history as the first woman to referee in Ligue 1, and took charge of the 2019 Uefa Super Cup final between Liverpool and Chelsea. She also made her Europa League debut in October. "Another barrier has been broken down, we know that she is very good, which is the most important and fundamental thing," Juventus chief football officer Fabio Paratici said.



Neymar wants Messi reunion

AFP ■ MANCHESTER

Neymar dropped a bombshell on Wednesday as he followed up scoring twice for Paris Saint-Germain in their 3-1 Champions League win over Manchester United by revealing his desire to reunite with Lionel Messi next season.

The Brazilian enjoyed four successful seasons alongside the six-time Ballon d'Or winner at Barcelona before making a world record 222 million euro move to the French capital in 2017.

"It's what I most want, to enjoy being with him on the field again," Neymar, whose contract at PSG runs until 2022, told ESPN. "I want to play with him for

sure, next year we have to do it." Neymar was heavily linked with a return to Barcelona in 2019, but the Catalan giants were unable to fund an acceptable offer for PSG.

Barca have had to agree salary cuts worth 122 million euros in players' salaries this season to help offset the financial hole left by the coronavirus pandemic and are highly unlikely to be in a position to bring Neymar back next year.

Instead, it is Messi who could be on the move as the Argentine is out of contract at the end of the season and publicly expressed his desire to leave in August.

"He can play in my position, there is no problem," Neymar joked. "Take me out."