

OPINION 8

GIRLS PLEASE,  
NOT BRIDES

WORLD 11

95 HELD DURING PROTESTS ACROSS  
FRANCE OVER SECURITY LAW

SPORT 14

INDIA BEAT AUS BY  
6 WICKETS IN 2ND T20

LUCKNOW, MONDAY DECEMBER 7, 2020; PAGES 14 ₹3



the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

A SPECIAL  
YEAR FOR  
NAWAZUDDIN  
12 VIVACITY

# Farmers urge all to support Bharat Bandh tomorrow

Shops, businesses will remain shut; ambulances, emergency work will be exempted; farmers appeal for peaceful bandh over farm laws

SHEKHAR SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

On the eleventh day of protest, farmers camping at Singhu border protesting the Centre's new agri laws on Sunday sought maximum participation from all quarters in the 'Bharat Bandh' called on December 8 and said over 250 farmers from Gujarat will be coming to the national Capital to join the stir.

Addressing a Press conference on Sunday, farmers said on December 8 there will be chakka jam from morning to 3 pm across the country.

Farmer leaders at the border also welcomed the support extended by a number of political parties and called upon all others to come forward and support the 'Bharat Bandh' on Tuesday.

"This agitation is not only of Punjab farmers but is of entire nation. We are going to strengthen our agitation and it has already spread across the nation. Since the Government was not able to deal with us properly, we gave a call for 'Bharat Bandh'. During Saturday's meeting, even the Ministers were upset with our call for 'Bharat bandh', farmer leader Baldev Singh Yadav said at the Press conference.

"We have announced 'Bharat Bandh' on December 8, which will start in the morning and continue till evening. During which, shops and busi-

nesses will remain shut. Ambulances and emergency work will be exempted from the Bandh. Also, 250 farmers from Gujarat will be coming to Delhi to join the protest," he added. Yadav also appealed to everyone to make sure that the 'Bharat Bandh' remains peaceful. "We won't let anyone turn it violent and would take strict action against them. We request everyone to be part of the bandh," he said.

Thousands of farmers protesting the Centre's new farm laws stayed put on the borders of Delhi with Haryana and Uttar Pradesh as they threatened to intensify their agitation and block more roads leading to the national capital if the Government did not accept their demands.

Meanwhile, the traffic situation in Delhi remained in chaos prompting the Delhi Traffic Police to inform com-

muters about alternative routes open for travelling to the neighbouring States of Uttar Pradesh and Haryana. The Delhi Traffic Police tweeted that those commuting to Delhi to come via the DND instead of Noida Link road. "Chilla border on Noida link road is closed for traffic from Noida to Delhi due to the farmers' protest near Gautam Budh Dwar," said the Delhi Traffic Police.

Continued on Page 4



Farmers shout slogans during their Delhi Chalk protest march against the new farm laws at Singhu border

## Opp parties to participate in nationwide chakka jam

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition parties on Sunday expressed solidarity with the protesting farmers and said they would support the call for a countrywide shutdown, or "Bharat Bandh" on Tuesday. Congress, the Left parties, Samajwadi party, RJD, AAP, TRS, DMK announced

that they would actively participate in the bandh to ensure it is successful.

Besides, worker and trade unions — Indian National Trade Union Congress, All India Trade Union Congress, Hind Mazdoor Sabha, Centre of Indian Trade Unions, All India United Trade Union Centre and Trade Union Coordination Centre — have also lent their support to the farmers' stir.

The newly-formed People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration in J&K too issued a statement in support of Tuesday's "Bharat bandh".

In their joint statement the Opposition leaders said "(we) extend our solidarity with the ongoing massive struggle by Indian farmers... and support their call for a 'Bharat bandh' on December 8, demanding the withdrawal of retrograde agri-laws and the Electricity Amendment Bill".

"These new agri-laws passed in the Parliament in a brazen (and) anti-democratic manner (by) preventing a structured discussion and voting, threaten India's food security, destroy Indian agriculture and our farmers, lay the basis for the abolishment of MSP and mortgage Indian agriculture and our markets to the caprices of multi-national agribusiness corporates," the state-

ment said.

Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, the DMK's MK Stalin, NCP leader Sharad Pawar, Rashtriya Janata Dal leader Tejashwi Yadav and Akhilesh Yadav of the Samajwadi Party have all signed this statement. National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah (for J&K's PAGD) and a number of Left parties — the Communist Party of India, the CPI(M), the CPI(ML), the All India Forward Bloc and the Revolutionary Socialist Party — also expressed support for the farmers.

Congress said the party would give "its whole-hearted support" to the Bharat Bandh. "All our district headquarters and Pradesh headquarters will participate in this bandh. They will hold demonstrations and ensure that the bandh is successful," said AICC spokesman Pawan Khera.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said Aam Aadmi Party workers across the country will support the countrywide strike, as he appealed to all the citizens to support the farmers. Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Naidu, too, lent his support to the Bharat Bandh, saying the farmers were protesting legally.

Continued on Page 4

Boxer Vijender backs farmers, threatens to return award

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Boxing super star Vijender Singh on Sunday threatened to return his award in support of the agitating farmers as BJP sought to point out Vijender's Congress association. The boxer, who addressed the farmers, demanded that the Government take back three farm laws lest he return his "Khel Ratna" award, the country's highest sporting honour.

Several sportspersons from Punjab and Haryana have backed the farmers agitation and "returned" their awards showing solidarity with the agitation. Among them are Padma Shri and Arjuna awardee wrestler Kartar Singh, Arjuna awardee basketball player Sajjan Singh Cheema and Arjuna awardee hockey player Rajbir Kaur. They have said they will proceed to Delhi on December 8 and will place their awards outside the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Addressing the farmers near Singhu border, the 35-year-old Vijender said if the Government does not take back the "black laws", he would request them to take back the 'Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna' award conferred on him earlier.

Continued on Page 4

## Pfizer seeks emergency use nod for its Covid vaccine from India

**Shots have shown 90% efficacy; vaccine supply only through Govt contracts**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Pfizer Inc has become the first company to seek emergency use approval of its Covid-19 vaccine candidate in India after getting clearance in the UK and Bahrain.

The company said pricing

of the vaccine will depend on the amount ordered and advance commitments with countries.

"Our vaccine approach is based on the principles of ensuring broad access and supplies to Governments. This is reflected in all aspects of our agreements with various Governments, with the pricing strategy being an outcome of volume, advanced commitment, equity and affordability principles," the Pfizer told a news agency

The shots have shown 90 per cent efficacy in trials. Pfizer has sought emergency use authorisation for its Covid-19 vaccine from the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI).

"Pfizer will supply this vaccine only through Government contracts based on agreements with respective Government authorities and following regulatory authorisation or approval," the company said.

Continued on Page 4

## Unitech founder Ramesh, sons face CBI case for ₹198 cr bank fraud

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has registered a case against the founder of real estate firm Unitech Limited, Ramesh Chandra and his sons — Sanjay and Ajay Chandra — for allegedly defrauding the public sector lender Canara Bank of ₹198 crore. Unitech Ltd has also been named as an accused entity in the case.

After registering the case on December 1 under Indian Penal Code Sections relating to criminal conspiracy, criminal breach of trust and cheating besides provisions of Prevention of Corruption Act, the CBI on Saturday conducted searches at the premises of the accused persons, sources said.

In a complaint filed on November 18 before the CBI, the bank had said Unitech — which had been a customer since 1971 and availed various credit facilities — had defaulted on multiple payments.

The complaint stated that a Supreme Court-ordered forensic audit of Unitech's accounts revealed ₹14,270 crore had been collected from 29,800 homebuyers.

However, ₹5,036.05 crore of this amount had not been utilised for the construction of 74 residential projects.

Continued on Page 4

Covid-19 IN INDIA
<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>CASES: 96,73,658</b>
<b>DEATHS: 1,40,544</b>
<b>RECOVERED: 91,35,003</b>
<b>ACTIVE: 3,95,750</b>



STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	18,52,266	47,734	17,23,370
Karnataka	8,93,006	11,856	8,55,750
Andhra Pradesh	8,71,972	7,033	8,59,029
Tamil Nadu	7,90,240	11,793	7,67,659
Kerala	6,36,393	2,419	5,72,911
Delhi	5,92,250	9,643	5,57,914
Uttar Pradesh	5,54,944	7,924	5,24,860
West Bengal	4,99,697	8,677	4,70,223
Odisha	3,21,196	1,824	3,15,840
Rajasthan	2,80,585	2,429	2,55,729
Telangana	2,73,341	1,472	2,63,744
Chhattisgarh	2,46,809	2,989	2,23,772
Haryana	2,43,896	2,588	2,28,411
Bihar	2,39,126	1,295	2,32,438
Gujarat	2,18,788	4,081	2,00,112
Madhya Pradesh	2,14,505	3,337	1,97,777

## PM to kick off construction of Agra Metro's 1st phase today

**Lucknow (PNS):** Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the construction of the first phase of the AMRP through a virtual programme in the presence of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. On Monday (December 7). UP Governor Anandiben Patel and Union Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs (independent charge) Hardeep Singh Puri will also be present on the occasion.

The total cost of the Agra Metro rail project is Rs 8,379.62 crore and in the first phase, the Sikandra-Taj East Gate corridor will be constructed.

Details on Page 2

## Rain, hike in MSP & demand raise pulse, oil prices by 30%

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

After facing uncertainty due to Covid-19 pandemic, skyrocketing prices of edible oils and pulses have hit the masses hard. The average retail prices of pulses and edible oils have gone up by around 30 per cent in the past few days.

For instance, arhar (tur) dal, which was being sold for around ₹70-80 per kg till last month, now costs around ₹125-130 per kg. Moong dal which cost around ₹80-90 per kg is now being sold at around ₹130 per kg.

Similarly, mustard oil is being sold at Rs 155-165 a kg. The price of mustard oil was Rs 120-135 a kg till last month.

The retail prices of pulses and edible oils were recorded highest in northeastern States.

According to the Consumer Affairs Ministry, the retail prices of arhar, moong, masoor, gram, groundnut, mustard, vanaspati, soyabean, sunflower and palm have increased up to 20-30 per cent while the spike in the case of palm, soyabean and sunflower oils by up to 20-30 per cent as compared to past few months.

The increased prices of pulses and edible oils have been attributed to short supply, destruction of crops due to heavy rainfall, hike in minimum support price and increase in public demand

after opening of restaurants, hotels and road side dhabas. The reduction in palm oil production in Malaysia in the past six months has been one of the reasons behind increase in prices of other edible oils. The high prices of pulses and edible oils have impacted the sale of small shopkeepers across India.

As per the Ministry's data, the retail prices of mustard oil have gone up from ₹142 per litre in September to ₹156 in November. The groundnut oil is being sold at ₹200 per litre; vanaspati at ₹164; sunflower at ₹150 and palm oil at ₹135. There is an increase of 20 to 40 per cent in the edible oil.

Continued on Page 4

### A comprehensive health plan that takes care of your extended family too

#### LIC's Jeevan Arogya

A Non-Linked, Non-Participating, Individual, Health Insurance Plan  
UIN: 512N266V03 Plan No. 904

Contact your LIC agent or nearest branch OR Visit: [www.licindia.in](http://www.licindia.in)

REGD. Regn. No. 512

Please read the detailed sales brochure carefully before conducting a sale or visit [www.licindia.in](http://www.licindia.in)

#### Smart Health Insurance Plan

- + Covers extended family: Self + Spouse + Kids + Parents/In-law
- + Hospital Cash Benefit
- + Major Surgical Benefit for 140 listed surgeries
- + Day Care Procedure Benefit for 140 more listed surgeries
- + Other Surgical Benefit for all other surgical procedures\*
- + Full Entitlement paid irrespective of actual expenses
- + 50% Advance MSB available under Quick Cash Facility\*
- + No Claim Benefit/Increasing health cover
- + Term/Accident Insurance riders for Principal Insured and Spouse

भारतीय जीवन बीमा निगम  
LIFE INSURANCE CORPORATION OF INDIA

Zindagi ke saath bhi, Zindagi ke baad bhi.

# CM Yogi asks UPMRC to complete Agra Metro first phase by Dec '22

## PM to kick-off construction today

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's commitment to providing smooth traffic to the people of Uttar Pradesh is gaining momentum as he has directed the Uttar Pradesh Metro Rail Corporation (UPMRC) to complete the first phase of the Agra Metro Rail Project (AMRP) by December 2022.

On Monday (December 7), Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the construction of the first phase of the AMRP through a virtual programme in the presence of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. UP Governor Anandiben Patel and Union Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs (independent charge ) Hardeep Singh Puri will also be present on the occasion.

According to officials, the total cost of the Agra Metro rail project is Rs 8,379.62 crore and in the first phase, the Sikandra-Taj East Gate corridor will be constructed. The chief minister is himself monitoring the project and the metro traffic on this corridor is expected to start in December 2022.

Two corridors of a total 29.4 km-length are proposed in the project.

In the first phase, the 6 km-long primary section of the 14 km Sikandra-Taj East Gate corridor will be constructed and it will have six metro stations. While the Taj East Gate, Basai and Fatehabad Road metro stations will be elevated, the Taj Mahal, Agra Fort and Jama Masjid halts will be underground stations.

The 15.4 km-long Agra Cantonment-Kalindi Vihar corridor will have 14 elevated metro stations at Agra Cantonment, Sadar Bazaar, Collectorate, Subhash Park, Agra College, Hariparvat crossing, Sanjay Place, MG Road, Sultanganj crossing, Kamlanagar, Rambagh,

## Tiwari flays Modi govt's arrogance on farm laws

**Lucknow (PNS):** The Uttar Pradesh Congress has accused the Narendra Modi government of being arrogant and adopting stubborn attitude in its negotiations with the representatives of farmers' organisations over the three farm laws.

Senior UP Congress leader and member of the Congress Working Committee Pramod Tiwari on Sunday demanded rollback of the three legislations. "The NDA government has admitted flaws in the legislations and has indicated as many as six amendments, so the next logical step should be the repeal of the three legislations. Fresh law should be drafted in consultation with the farmers and this task can be achieved within 15 minutes," Tiwari said.

He charged that the Modi government, owing to its stubborn attitude, could go to any extent for serving the interests of the industrial houses.

The Congress leader said that it was the established tradition of democratic polity that opposition and all the stakeholders were consulted before any bill was introduced in Parliament. "The three farm legislations affect 80 percent of the country's population but the Modi government never found it prudent to consult the opposition parties and farmers before enacting the legislation. It has become the standard practice of the Narendra Modi government to ignore the opposition," Tiwari said.

Meanwhile, the All India Congress Committee (AICC) on Sunday approved the proposal to appoint working presidents of Uttar Pradesh Congress Scheduled Caste (SC) department. As per an official release, Ram Saijwon Nirmal has been appointed as working president of the SC department in Uttar Pradesh East, Tanuja Punia, the working president of the department in Uttar Pradesh central and Yogi Jatav in UP west.

## ‘Cong, oppn have done nothing for Dalits’

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Hitting out at the Congress and other opposition parties, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that they had always used Dalits (Scheduled Castes) and neglected this section as their vote bank but did nothing to improve their lot.

"There are so many welfare schemes of the Centre and the state government for these classes but they had been used as vote banks by the successive governments in the past while doing nothing in their favour," the chief minister said while paying homage to Baba Saheb Bhimrao Ambedkar on his 64th Mahaparinirvan Divas on Sunday.

It was only because of the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi that all the places and 'panch tirthas' associated with Baba Saheb Bhimrao Ambedkar were constructed, he said.

"It is surprising that Baba Saheb's associate, Jogendra Nath Mandal, who was Dalit leader of the same stature, did not get the respect he deserved and this book clearly explains everything and it is also an eye opener," said the chief minister, who also released a book on Dr. BR Ambedkar and Jogendra Nath Mandal.

"When Congress prevented Baba Saheb from going to

Foundry Nagar and Kalindi Vihar.

Besides benefiting the 26 lakh-odd locals of the Taj city, the Metro will also prove to be a better option for movement to over 60 lakh tourists who visit Agra every year.

All the stations of the AMRC have been planned in such a way that all the four major railway stations, bus depots, colleges, main markets and tourist destinations are well connected for the easy movement of the locals as well as the tourists. "The Agra Metro will provide an environment-friendly, comfortable and hassle-free means of public transport and it will also make it easy to travel to world famous tourist destinations like Taj Mahal and Agra Fort," said Uttar Pradesh Metro Rail Corporation

## Pays homage to Dr BR Ambedkar



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath paying floral tributes to Baba Saheb Bhimrao Ambedkar on his 64th Mahaparinirvan Divas in Lucknow on Sunday

national assembly after independence, it was Mandal who left his seat and even the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Nawab of Junagadh tried to lure Baba Saheb," he added.

(UPMRC) Managing Director Kumar Keshav.

"Its biggest advantage will be in tourism development and it is a major challenge for our team to construct a Metro corridor in the heart of the city and make the Metro available within the stipulated time frame," he added.

It may be mentioned here that the UPMRC has set a precedent by constructing the

"Even Jinnah offered the prime minister's post of Pakistan to Baba Saheb but he rejected it saying that India is my motherland and I cannot betray my motherland and by

being created in the state for films and entertainment is very encouraging and all of us will cooperate in that," he said.

"I have been working here for the last three years, receiving support from administration, public and government. I see all possibilities that it (government plan) will not only be successful but will go a long way," he said.

staying in India, I have to take the battle of justice for the Dalits and weaker section to the pinnacle," Yogi said.

"Today, Baba Saheb is the background of all the government schemes for Dalits, weaker sections and the poor and the respect they get is because of him," the chief minister said, adding that had the prime minister not mentioned this book in Parliament, people would have forgotten Mandal's name.

Discussing the land ownership scheme of the Central government, the chief minister said that earlier the weaker sections and Dalits could not get the ownership of the land.

"They could not even get bank loans and now, after the prime minister launched the scheme, the issue of land ownership has been resolved, making the process of getting loan easier," the chief minister said.

"The Constitution of India is based on the four values of Baba Saheb — fraternity, equality, justice and freedom. We also have to dedicate ourselves to spread the feeling of brotherhood and have to carry forward the spirit of an egalitarian society," Yogi Adityanath said.

Lucknow Metro rail well ahead of the schedule. The construction work of the Kanpur Metro is also being carried out at a fast pace. The foundation stone of the Agra Metro Rail project was laid by the prime minister through a virtual programme in May 2019.

While the Lucknow metro is already running, the construction work on Kanpur metro is in the progress.

# UP emerging as a hub of medical education

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh is finally emerging as a hub of medical education and a significant increase in MBBS seats in government and private sector medical colleges in the northern state is a proof of this.

Uttar Pradesh now ranks third after Karnataka and Maharashtra in the number of MBBS seats on offer.

According to the UP Medical Education department's data, till three years ago, there were 5,100 MBBS seats in the entire state, which have now increased to 7,150 seats as compared with 8,845 in Karnataka and 7,270 in Maharashtra.

The government's decision to establish AIIMS at Gorakhpur and Rae Bareilly is also proving to be a milestone in terms of medical education and health facilities in UP.

UP's journey to become another important hub of medical education in the country through increased numbers of medical seats started after Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath decided to open new medical colleges.

In 2016, there were only 12 medical colleges in Uttar Pradesh. But between 2017 and 2019,

foundation stones of 28 new medical colleges were laid and seven of them have already started their academic sessions.

Teaching and training will be started in eight other new medical colleges by next year while construction of 13 new medical institutes will start soon.

A government spokesman said that preparations were on to open many more medical colleges in the private sector as well.

Once the new medical colleges begin functioning, the number of medical seats will go increase between 9,000 and 10,000, he added.

The Uttar Pradesh government is also focusing on the role of paramedical staff in effectively running the medical education and health care systems. It has made planned efforts to train nursing and paramedical professionals in the state.

About three years ago, there were about 500 institutes training nursing staff in the state, offering 21,000 seats. Now, their number has increased to around 750, and the number of seats has gone up to 36,500.

UP now boasts of 3,056 medical institutes, including those training paramedical staff.

## BJP major winner in Council polls



PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Bharatiya Janata Party has emerged the major winner in the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council biennial polls from graduates and teachers constituencies by bagging six of the 11 seats.

The results of the six seats of the teachers constituencies were declared on Friday after it took 48 hours to count the votes. The counting for five seats of graduates constituencies took over four days.

The results were announced by the Election Commission on Sunday afternoon.

BJP won three seats each in graduates and teachers constituencies respectively while the principal opposition won two seats in graduates constituencies and one in teachers.

Though the BJP won the majority of the seats, the surprise was the defeat of its candidates to Samajwadi Party in both teachers and graduates constituencies in the Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency repre-

sented by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

In Varanasi, BJP supported an independent on the teachers seat but contested the graduates seat on party symbol.

The winners of the graduates seats were BJP candidates Avnish Kumar Singh from Lucknow, Dr Manvendra Pratap Singh from Agra and Dinesh Kumar Goel from Meerut. SP candidate Ashutosh Sinha from Varanasi and Dr Maan Singh Yadav from Allahabad-Jhansi graduate seat.

The SP wrested both the graduates seats from the BJP. In the teachers constituencies, BJP won three seats and while an independent won with its support.

BJP contested the council polls for teachers constituencies for the first time on its party symbol. The party dented the vote bank of the Om Prakash Sharma group and ended its decade's long clout among the teachers.

The BJP won the teachers seats of Meerut, Lucknow and Bareilly-Moradabad while BJP-

supported independent candidate emerged victorious in Gorakhpur-Faizabad.

The Agra seat went to the independent while the important Varanasi seat was wrested by SP candidate.

BJP's Shreechand Sharma wrested the Meerut teachers seat after four decades from Om Prakash Sharma, leader of the Sharma Group.

The Lucknow teachers seat was bagged by BJP candidate Umesh Dwivedi who defeated independent candidate Mahendra Nath Rai.

BJP-supported independent Dhruv Kumar Tripathi retained the Gorakhpur-Faizabad teachers seat, while BJP candidate Hari Singh Dhillon won the Bareilly-Moradabad teachers seat.

SP candidate Lal Bihari Yadav wrested the Varanasi teachers seat by defeating the sitting independent MLC.

The Agra teachers seat was wrested by independent candidate Akash Agarwal from the SP. The BJP candidate came in third place.

## Prakash Jha lauds Yogi's efforts to set up film city in UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Noted Bollywood director, producer and actor Prakash Jha met Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath here on Sunday and appreciated the efforts of his government to set up a film city in the state and also provide infrastructure for film shooting.

The chief minister said that the government was

extending all possible help to the film fraternity. "The law and order situation in the state has improved and the government is committed to providing security to the persons who are willing to work in the state," the chief minister said.

Jha, while praising the UP chief minister, said that his government's plans were forward-looking and were very encour-

aging for the entertainment industry.

Jha informed the chief minister that he had recently shot a web series in Ayodhya in which over 1,000 junior artistes and over 50 senior artistes had worked.

Later, Jha said that it was a privilege to meet the UP chief minister.

"His views are farsighted and the atmosphere that is

## ‘Revoke Dr Kafeel Khan’s suspension’

**Lucknow (PNS):** The Indian Academy of Paediatrics (IAP), the largest body of paediatricians in India, has written a letter in support of Dr Kafeel Khan and has requested the authorities concerned to revoke his suspension at earliest.

In a letter written on December 6, IAP President Dr Bakul Jayant Parekh and Secretary Dr GV Basavaraja said that Dr Kafeel Khan does not have any legal issues or any misconduct with the IAP.

The letter further said, "... his suspension has not been revoked by the Government of Uttar Pradesh although nine different enquiries have been completed and he is cleared of any wrongdoing.

The others who were suspended with him were already reinstated."

It further said: "Please revoke his suspension if not found guilty."

The death of children due to oxygen shortage in August 2017 had become a major issue for the Yogi Adityanath government, which had been sworn in barely five months before the tragedy.

The state government suspended Dr Khan, blaming him squarely for the tragedy. Later he was arrested.

Earlier on March 4, the government had reinstated three doctors who were suspended following the infamous oxygen scarcity case in the BRD Medical College hospital in Gorakhpur leading to the death of over 60 children,

23 of them in one night in August 2017, but Dr Kafeel was sent to jail.

On March 4, 2019, UP Governor Anandiben Patel had signed the government recommendation reinstating all the doctors who were suspended, including former principal of BRD Medical College, Dr Rajiv Mishra, Dr Satish Kumar (anaesthetist) and Dr Purnima Shukla, wife of Dr Rajiv Shukla.

Dr Purnima has retired and all her retirement benefits have been cleared after the Governor accepted the recommendations.

Dr Khan was absolved of the charges of medical negligence and corruption when children died due to oxygen shortage.

## Govt takes steps to protect cows from winter chill

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Yogi Adityanath government has taken an important decision to protect cows of the state from intense cold and inclement weather in winters as cows living in cow shelters will be given jaggery to eat and winter coats made of jute and sacks to keep them warm in the chilly nights.

The Animal Husbandry department has already made elaborate arrangements for this.

Apart from this, hay will be laid on the ground in the cow sheds so that the cows can be protected from cold in the harsh winter.

According to Animal Husbandry department's Joint Director Vidya Bhushan Singh, there are 5,173 gaushalas (cow shelters) in the state in which more than 5. 26 lakh cows are kept.

He said that with the onset of winter, the work of laying hay in the cow sheds had started.

He said the laying of straw in almost all the cow sheds had been completed.

Apart from this, coats made of jute sacks are being arranged for the cows. This will protect from the winter chill.

At the same time, the gaushalas are being covered with thick polyethylene sheets or tarpaulins to protect cows from cold and gusty winds.

"Jute bags will be used to make coats which will be put on cows to keep them warm in winter. The jute bags will be provided by the district supply department. In some districts, gram panchayats will make coats for cows under the MGNREGA budget and the cattle sheds will be covered with polythene and other materials," the official said.

According to the Animal Husbandry department, in order to protect cows from the freezing cold, a bonfire will also be lit in the cow sheds. Apart from this, cows will be given jaggery along with normal food.

### CITYBRIEFS

#### UPASICON-2020

Various lectures and keynote addresses were delivered by eminent experts in the field of surgery at 'UPASICON-2020', organised by KGMU. Vice-Chancellor Dr Bipin Puri delivered a keynote lecture on 'Surgery in Covid era: Unfolding concerns and debates'. He enlightened the audience about safety and precaution in surgery in Covid times. Vice-president, ASI, Dr Abhay Dalvi delivered a keynote lecture on 'Surgical education - then and now' while Dr TC Goel delivered NC Misra Oration on 'A lifelong experience of writing books: Especially in Hindi'.

The presidential oration on 'Safe surgeon and safe surgery: Three-faceted integrated approach' was delivered by Dr Harvinder S Pahwa. The conference was attended by more than 800 delegates online.

#### GOLD MEDAL

Varnika Srivastava, a pre-primary student of City Montessori School, Aliganj Campus II, has bagged gold medal in national-level Indian Monument Quiz. The competition was held under 'Tourism Fest-2020', a national-level online competition organised by an educational organisation, 'Purple Wings'. Varnika answered monument-based questions with clarity, showcasing her knowledge, argumentative skills and confidence, and walked away with the gold medal.



OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL, G.S.V.M. MEDICAL COLLEGE, KANPUR-208002

Tender Notice No- 280/E-Tender/Equip/2020

Dated : 27/11/2020

AMENDED E-TENDER NOTICE

The e-tenders invited from high quality manufacturing firms (Indian/Foreign) or their Indian distributors, of repute, for supply and installation of the various items for Associated Hospital of this medical college. The tender can be downloaded from UP govt. e-procurement portal <http://tender.up.nic.in> during the Date- 09-12-2020 to 23-12-2020 till 05:00 PM. Technical Bid will be open Date - 24-12-2020 All the terms & conditions and technical specifications of equipment/jobs, mentioned in the tender documents, will be considered as the integral part of this notice. The Principal as aforesaid has sole discretion of accepting/rejecting any tender and reserves his right to post-pone or refuse the purchase of any item notified in this tender.

S.No.	Name of Equipment	Qty	Tender Fee	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)
1	Audio Visual System with CCTV Camera	as Per Technical Specification	1000/- + GST 18%	Rs-60,000-00

UP- 157547 Date 5.12.2020 विज्ञान वेबसाइट [www.upgov.nic.in](http://www.upgov.nic.in) पर उपलब्ध है।

प्रधानाचार्य,  
मेडिकल कलेज, कानपुर।

कार्यालय अधिशासी अभियन्ता						
प्रांतीय खण्ड, लोक निर्माण विभाग, श्रावस्ती						
पत्रांक : 2459 ई-टेंडर/2020			ई-प्रोक्वायरमेंट नोटिस		दिनांक 03/12/2020	
1. अधिशासी अभियन्ता, प्रांतीय खण्ड, लोकनिर्माण, श्रावस्ती द्वारा महाश्रीम राजपाल, उत्तर प्रदेश की ओर से उद्घाटन लोक निर्माण विभाग में ए. बी. सी व डी श्रेणी के पंजीकृत निविदा दाताओं से ई-टेंडरिंग के माध्यम से जनपद श्रावस्ती के निम्न वर्णन के अनुसार कार्य निर्माण हेतु कार्य की निविदा प्रस्ताव दर्ज के आधार पर आमंत्रित की जाती है।						
क्र. सं.	जनपद	कार्य का नाम	निविदा की राशि (रु. लाख में)	बिडरिक्वोरिटी (रु. लाख में)	निविदा प्रत्य की मूल राशि (रु. लाख में)	कार्य पूर्ण करने की अवधि
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	श्रावस्ती	कुमानपुरवा सम्पर्क मार्ग के किमी-1 (800) में विद्युतनगमन का कार्य।	9.10	0.91	945.00	03 माह
2	श्रावस्ती	पीडीसी मार्ग के किमी-279 से निविदाकधरा सम्पर्क मार्ग के किमी-1 से 4(800) में विद्युत नगमन का कार्य।	33.70	3.37	945.00	03 माह
3	श्रावस्ती	विजयपुर सिस्वा सम्पर्क मार्ग के किमी-1, 2 एवं 3(700) में विद्युत नगमन का कार्य।	21.60	2.16	945.00	03 माह
4	श्रावस्ती	महोरी भीरवा सम्पर्क मार्ग के किमी-1 एवं 2 में विद्युत नगमन का कार्य।	15.80	1.58	945.00	03 माह
5	श्रावस्ती	मुल्हू मार्ग के किमी-1800 से सुन्दरपुर सम्पर्क मार्ग के किमी-1 एवं 2(400) में विद्युत नगमन का कार्य।	13.90	1.39	945.00	03 माह
6	श्रावस्ती	दण्डपुरवा सम्पर्क मार्ग के किमी-1(600) में विद्युत नगमन का कार्य।	6.10	0.61	945.00	03 माह
2. ई-प्रोक्वायरमेंट के माध्यम से निविदाई प्रकाशित होने की तिथि -दिनांक 11-12-2020 से पूर्व।						
3. निविदाकधरा की उपलब्धता एवं निविदाकधरा करने का माध्यम						
(क) निविदाकधराकधरा-आवृत्ति दिनांक 11-12-2020 से 22-12-2020 तक उपलब्ध रहेगी, जो आन-लाइन <a href="http://tender.up.nic.in">http://tender.up.nic.in</a> पर हो सकेगी निविदाकधरा।						
(ख) निविदा करने हेतु निविदादाता को उपरोक्त वेब-साइट पर पंजीकरण करना अनिवार्य है। निविदाई आन-लाइन करने हेतु निविदादाता के पास किसी डिजिटल सिग्नेचर सॉफ्टवेयर अथवा डिजिटल सिग्नेचर सॉफ्टवेयर होना अनिवार्य है।						
(ग) ई-प्रोक्वायरमेंट के माध्यम से निविदाई करने की अंतिम तिथि 22-12-2020 घोषित 12:00 बजे तक एवं टेक्निकल क्वालिफिकेशन पाई-1 दिनांक 23-12-2020 अथवा 12:30 बजे से कार्यालय अधिशासी अभियन्ता, प्रांतीय खण्ड, लोकनिर्माण, श्रावस्ती में कोल जायेगा।						
विस्तृत विवरण <a href="http://tender.up.nic.in">http://tender.up.nic.in</a> सेवा जा सकता है।						
(घ) साप्ताहिक संख्या 14/2020/879/विद्युत-7-2020-178(एम)/08 दिनांक 25-08-2020 में दिने गये दिना-निर्देश के अनुसार निविदा सम्बन्धी समस्त कार्यवाही प्रश्री के माध्यम से की जायेगी।						
						(अधिलेखित प्रत्य (सिंह) अधिशासी अभियन्ता
उद्घाटन 157552 दिनांक 5.12.2020 विज्ञान वेबसाइट <a href="http://www.upgov.nic.in">www.upgov.nic.in</a> पर उपलब्ध है।						प्रांतीय खण्ड, लोकनिर्माण, श्रावस्ती

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent court and forums in Lucknow only. Readers are advised and requested to verify and seek appropriate advice to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any kind of advertisement before responding to any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the Pioneer Group's will not be held responsible for any kind of claim made by the advertisers of the products & services and shall not be made responsible for any kind of loss, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisements.

# CM Yogi warns against laxity in contact tracing, surveillance



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during unlock review meeting at his official residence on Sunday

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Stressing the need to maintain constant control over the spread of novel coronavirus infection, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that there should be no laxity in contact tracing and surveillance systems as they were vital in preventing the spread of COVID-19.

The chief minister, who was presiding over an unlock review meeting at his official residence here on Sunday, directed officials to maintain special vigilance in Lucknow, Varanasi, Kanpur Nagar and Ayodhya districts.

Asking senior doctors to take rounds in Covid hospitals, the chief minister directed them to strengthen the high flow nasal cannula (HFNC) system in the hospitals.

He said all steps should be implemented effectively to prevent spread of COVID-19 and to make people aware of the disease, information should be given to them for its prevention and regarding Covid protocol through public address systems. He said people should be motivated to follow social distancing and should also be constantly informed about wearing masks and sanitisation.

The chief minister said that arrangements in Covid hospitals should be maintained properly and it should be ensured that expert doctors took regular rounds of Covid wards. “There should be adequate availability of medicines, medical equipment and oxygen in hospitals and it should also be ensured that the system of Covid testing remains constant. He said an adequate number of RT-PCR and rapid antigen tests should be conducted daily and the Integrated Command and Control Centres should be operated actively. Due to the efforts of the state government, the COVID-19 recovery rate in UP is 94.6 percent.

# Focus on better healthcare for serious patients

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Lucknow has a total of 630 serious Covid patients and the Health department is focusing on even better patient care as winters intensify. According to a senior official at the CMO office, KGMU has been asked to add 100 additional ventilator beds and SGPGL another 150 ventilator beds.

“One reason is the onset of winters and the other is the threat of second coronavirus wave looming large. One cannot say for sure about the outbreak of second wave but one has to be prepared for it since the wedding season is not over yet and will continue till December 12. People thought that the US and Italy had flattened the curve, but both the countries are seeing the second wave now. Delhi is also having a large number of cases and deaths. In such a situation, we cannot afford to be complacent,” the official said.

He said deaths increase in winters also because of cardiac arrest and lung congestion and ventilator support is required for such cases too.

He said they held a meeting with the representatives of the medical colleges to ensure quality patient care and increase in the number of ICU and HDU beds. “The discussions centred around how to effectively use Level-3 beds so that the maximum output can be achieved. There are a total of 430 Level-3 beds and 1,000 Level-2 beds in the district,” he added.

The official said they have asked NGOs to carry out awareness drives regarding masking up and practising social distancing in market areas. He added that the focused containment activities which they are carried out has shown only one case in the areas with maximum patients.

“Out of the 2,000 antigen tests in five focused areas, only one person tested positive, which means that the circulation of the virus is decreasing in these areas,” he pointed out.

Meanwhile, RML Institute of Medical Sciences has launched a helpline for patients admitted in its Covid hospital and their attendants. Spokesperson Dr Shrikesh Singh said that the helpline numbers (8176007250 and 0522-288177) have been issued especially for serious patients. The phone numbers can be used by patients for talking to their relatives and also by serious patients for talking to hospital authorities.

Meanwhile, District Magistrate Abhishek held a meeting with religious leaders, traders and owners of marriage halls to hold talks on how to curb the spread of the coronavirus in the district.

He urged them to ensure that people wear masks and practise social distancing in marriage halls, dharamshalas and market places. He also urged them to see to it that people are sensitised about the importance of Covid-19 precautions through loud speakers and public announcement systems.

# 283 test positive, 314 recover

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

As many as 283 persons tested positive for coronavirus in Lucknow on Sunday while 314 recovered, taking the number of recoveries to 68,998. City’s death toll stands at 1,029 while there are 3,367 active cases.

The fresh cases included 29 from Indiranagar, 28 from Gomtinagar, 518 from Rae Bareilly

road, 19 from Chowk 16 each from Ashiyana, Vikasnagar, 11 from Madiya, and 10 each from, Cantt, Sarojininagar & Hazratganj.

Across the state, 1,950 persons tested positive, including 75 in Kanpur, 223 in Ghaziabad, 138 in Gautam Buddh Nagar, 108 in Varanasi and 171 in Meerut, taking the UP tally to 5,54,944.

There were 24 deaths in the

state, including five in Lucknow, three in Varanasi, two each in Ayodhya & Kanpur, and one each in Bareilly, Jhansi, Barabanki, Mathura, Jalaun, Kushinagar, Rae Bareilly, Jalaun, Mainpuri, Kaushambhi & Bhadohi, taking the toll to 7,924. Besides, 1,993 persons recovered, taking the number of recoveries across the state to 5,24,860 while there are 22,160 active cases.

निस्वार्थ भाव से राष्ट्र की सुरक्षा में तत्पर...  
भारतीय सेना को सलाम

# सशस्त्र सेना झण्डा दिवस

07 दिसम्बर, 2020

राज्यपाल  
उत्तर प्रदेश

**संदेश**

मुझे यह जानकर अत्यन्त प्रसन्नता हुई कि ‘सशस्त्र झण्डा दिवस’ 07 दिसम्बर, 2020 के शुभ अवसर पर उत्तर प्रदेश सैनिक कल्याण एवं पुनर्वासि द्वारा एक स्मारिका का प्रकाशन किया जा रहा है।

भारत की सशस्त्र सेनाओं ने युद्ध और शान्ति दोनों समय बहादुरी के साथ देश की सेवा की है और अपने साहस एवं कर्तव्यपरायणता की एक खूबसूरत परम्परा का निर्माण किया है। अपने जीवन की परवाह किये बिना उन्होंने सदैव अपने कर्तव्यों का पालन किया है। इस अवसर पर मैं उन सभी पराक्रमी सैनिकों के प्रति सम्मान प्रकट करती हूँ, जिन्होंने कर्तव्य का निर्वहन करते हुए अपना जीवन बलिदान कर राष्ट्र को गौरवान्वित किया।

झण्डा दिवस के अवसर पर प्रदेश की जनता द्वारा किया गया अंशदान सशस्त्र सेना के सेवारत एवं सेवानिवृत्त, शहीद सैनिकों के प्रति अपनी कृतज्ञता व्यक्त करने का अवसर प्रदान करता है। मैं सशस्त्र सेना झण्डा दिवस पर समस्त प्रदेशवासियों से अनुरोध करती हूँ कि सभी नागरिक सैनिकों के प्रति आदर, सम्मान एवं अपनत्व प्रदर्शित करते हुए झण्डा निधि में उदारतापूर्वक सहयोग करें तथा सैनिक बन्धुओं, वीर नारियों तथा उनके आश्रितों के लिये चलाई जा रही कल्याणकारी योजनाओं में अपना योगदान दें।

मैं इस अवसर पर एक बार पुनः सशस्त्र सेनाओं के प्रति आदर एवं स्नेह प्रकट करते हुए इस दिवस के सफल आयोजन की मंगलकामना करती हूँ।

*Anandiben Patel*  
(आनंदीबेन पटेल)

मुख्यमंत्री  
उत्तर प्रदेश

**संदेश**

मुझे यह जानकर प्रसन्नता की अनुभूति हो रही है कि सैनिक कल्याण विभाग द्वारा दिनांक 07 दिसम्बर, 2020 को ‘सशस्त्र सेना झण्डा दिवस’ मनाया जा रहा है। इस शुभ अवसर पर मैं सभी सशस्त्र सेवारत, भूतपूर्व सैनिकों, शहीद सैनिकों की वीर नारियों और उनके आश्रितों को अपनी हार्दिक शुभकामनाएं देता हूँ।

‘सशस्त्र सेना झण्डा दिवस’ राष्ट्रीय महत्व का एक ऐसा अवसर है, जब समस्त भारतवासी देश के वीर सैनिकों के प्रति कृतज्ञता एवं श्रद्धांजलि व्यक्त करते हैं। देश की सीमाओं की रक्षा करने के लिए दुर्गम एवं सुदूर क्षेत्रों में तेनात हमारे सैनिक, जिस परम वीरता और शौर्य से अपने कर्तव्य का निर्वहन कर रहे हैं, उसके लिए प्रत्येक भारतवासी को उन पर गर्व है।

भारतीय सेना अपनी वीरता, शौर्य और साहस के साथ-साथ अपनी उच्च सैन्य परम्पराओं के लिए भी विश्व विख्यात है। हमारे सैनिकों ने देश की सीमाओं की रक्षा करने के साथ ही, विश्व शान्ति के महत्वपूर्ण मिशनों में भी उच्च कोटि की दक्षता एवं क्षमता का परिचय देकर भारत के गौरव को बढ़ाया है। शौर्य, पराक्रम एवं बहादुरी का परिचय देने के लिए उत्तर प्रदेश के शूर वीरों को 01 विक्टोरिया क्रॉस, 04 परमवीर चक्र, 04 अशोक चक्र

**संदेश**

मुझे यह जानकर हार्दिक प्रसन्नता है कि उत्तर प्रदेश सैनिक कल्याण विभाग द्वारा ‘सशस्त्र सेना झण्डा दिवस’ दिनांक 07 दिसम्बर, 2020 को मनाया जा रहा है। इस अवसर पर मैं राज्य सरकार और प्रदेश की जनता की ओर से उन सभी अमर शहीदों एवं उनके परिवारों के प्रति आभार व्यक्त करता हूँ, जिन्होंने देश की रक्षा के लिए अपने प्राण न्योछावर कर दिये तथा वीरता का उच्चतम मापदण्ड स्थापित करते हुए अलंकरण प्राप्त कर देश और प्रदेश को गौरवान्वित किया है। देश की सीमाओं की रक्षा के साथ-साथ देवी आपदाओं से निपटने में भी हमारी सशस्त्र सेनाओं की भूमिका अनुकरणीय है।

मैं ‘सशस्त्र सेना झण्डा दिवस’ के अवसर पर प्रदेशवासियों का आवाह्न करता हूँ कि हम सभी अपने सैनिकों के प्रति आदर, सम्मान एवं अपनत्व की भावना प्रदर्शित करते हुए उदारतापूर्वक आर्थिक सहयोग करके उनके कल्याणार्थ अपनी सक्रिय भूमिका निभायें।

‘सशस्त्र सेना झण्डा दिवस’ के अवसर पर मैं सेवारत सैनिकों, भूतपूर्व सैनिकों, शहीद सैनिकों की वीर नारियों तथा उनके आश्रितों को अपनी शुभकामनाएं देता हूँ।

*Rajendra Kumar Tiwari*  
(राजेंद्र कुमार तिवारी)  
मुख्य सचिव, उत्तर प्रदेश

**संदेश**

सशस्त्र सेना झण्डा दिवस 07 दिसम्बर, 2020 के अवसर पर सशस्त्र सेनाओं और उनके आश्रितों को अपनी हार्दिक शुभकामनाएं देता हूँ। झण्डा दिवस, कृतज्ञ राष्ट्र गौरव के साथ हमारी सेनाओं के सर्वोच्च बलिदान और साहस को स्मरण करता है। हमारी सशस्त्र सेनाओं ने अनुकरणीय देशभक्ति का प्रदर्शन किया है तथा सीमा पर आतंकवाद के सामुख असाधारण बलिदान दिए हैं और सम्पूर्ण राष्ट्र का प्रेम और सम्मान अर्जित किया है। राष्ट्र उनके साहस और पराक्रम के लिए सशस्त्र सैन्य कर्मियों के प्रति आभारी है। उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार की ओर से पूर्व सैनिकों, वीर नारियों और उनके आश्रितों के लिए कई कल्याणकारी योजनायें संचालित हैं और उनमें उत्तरोत्तर वृद्धि हेतु सरकार कटिबद्ध है।

सशस्त्र सेना झण्डा दिवस पर मेरा प्रदेशवासियों से अनुरोध है कि शहीद सैनिकों की वीर नारियों, निःशक्त रक्षा कर्मिकों और पूर्व कर्मियों के कल्याण और पुनर्वास के लिए उदारतापूर्वक योगदान दें। झण्डा दिवस हमें इस दायित्व को पूरा करने का अवसर प्रदान करता है। मैं सशस्त्र झण्डा दिवस की पूर्ण सफलता की कामना करता हूँ।

*Vijay Chavhan*  
(वी जे चव्हाण)  
प्रमुख सचिव, उत्तर प्रदेश

**संदेश**

प्रत्येक वर्ष की भांति इस वर्ष भी सशस्त्र सेना झण्डा दिवस 07 दिसम्बर 2020 को मनाया जा रहा है। इस दिन हमें सशस्त्र सेनाओं की कर्तव्यनिष्ठा और उनके पराक्रम के प्रति आभार प्रकट करने का अवसर प्राप्त होता है।

भारत की सशस्त्र सेना हमेशा अपनी कार्य-कुशलता की परचम लहराती रही है। हमारी सेना ने विभिन्न परिस्थितियों और कठिन बर्फीले रेगिस्तान आदि इलाकों में अपना कर्तव्य निभाते हुए सदैव देश का नाम रोशन किया है। मैं यह आश्वासन देता हूँ कि हम अपने कर्तव्य को पूर्ण करने के लिए सदैव तत्पर हैं और रहेगें।

मैं प्रदेशवासियों का ध्यान सैन्य विरासत तथा प्रदेश के वीर सैनिकों द्वारा मातृभूमि की रक्षा के लिए किए गये सर्वोच्च बलिदान की ओर आकर्षित करना चाहता हूँ। हमारी सशस्त्र सेनाओं ने युद्ध और शांति के समय अदम्य साहस एवं निःस्वार्थ सेवा के अपने लम्बे इतिहास में स्वयं को तथा मातृभूमि को गौरव प्रदान किया है। चाहे वह देश की सीमा हो, आंतरिक सुरक्षा, वैदेशी आपदा या पड़ोसी मित्र देश हो, हमारी सशस्त्र सेनाओं ने सदैव आगे बढ़कर अपने जीवन की परवाह किये बिना कर्तव्य-परायणता का अनुकरणीय उदाहरण पेश किया है।

सशस्त्र सेना झण्डा दिवस हमारी जनता को प्रत्येक वर्ष एक ऐसा अवसर प्रदान करता है जिससे वे उदारतापूर्वक अंशदान देकर सशस्त्र सेना से तादात्म्य स्थापित कर सकते हैं और उनके प्रति अपना सौहार्द भाव प्रकट कर सकते हैं।

सशस्त्र सेना झण्डा दिवस के अवसर पर मैं पूर्व सैनिकों और उनके परिवारों के कल्याण एवं पुनर्वास के लिये उदारतापूर्वक अंशदान के लिए सभी का आवाहन करता हूँ। मैं ‘सशस्त्र सेना झण्डा दिवस’ की कामना करता हूँ।

*Arjun Kumar Singh*  
(अर्जुन कुमार सिंह)  
लेफ्टिनेंट जनरल, जनरल आफिसर कमान्डिंग-इन-चीफ, मध्य कमान, लखनऊ

**संदेश**

मुझे यह जानकर ख़ुशी है कि उत्तर प्रदेश सैनिक कल्याण एवं पुनर्वासि निदेशालय द्वारा प्रत्येक वर्ष की भांति इस वर्ष भी सशस्त्र सेना झण्डा दिवस 07 दिसम्बर 2020 को मनाया जा रहा है।

युद्ध एवं शान्तिकाल में अत्यधिक प्रतिकूल परिस्थितियों का सामना करते हुए हमारे देश के सैनिकों ने आवश्यकता की हर घड़ी में राष्ट्र सेवा हेतु अपना जीवन समर्पित किया है। हमारे जांबाज वीर सैनिकों ने चौबीसों घण्टे जिस समर्पण भाव व कर्तव्यनिष्ठा के साथ राष्ट्र की एकता, अखण्डता व इसकी अखंडता की रक्षा में अपने उत्तरदायित्वों का निर्वहन किया है उसकी मैं ही नहीं, पूरा देश प्रशंसा करता है। हमारे सैनिक देश की आज़ादी और अखंडता की रक्षा के लिए अपना जीवन एवं जीवन समर्पित करने को सदैव तत्पर रहते हैं। हमारे सैनिक हमेशा ही निष्ठा, कर्तव्यपरायणता, निःस्वार्थ सेवा, त्याग, पराक्रम और बलिदान का उच्चतम आदर्श प्रस्तुत करते हैं, जो हमारे देश वासियों के लिए एक प्रेरणा का स्रोत है।

उत्तर प्रदेश सैनिक कल्याण विभाग पूर्व सैनिकों और वीर नारियों के कल्याण एवं पुनर्वास में महत्वपूर्ण योगदान कर रहा है। इस अवसर पर मैं प्रदेशवासियों का ध्यान अपने देश की समृद्ध सैन्य विरासत तथा सैनिकों द्वारा युद्ध एवं शान्ति काल में देश की सेवा में किये गये त्याग, बलिदान एवं पराक्रम की ओर आकर्षित करता हूँ।

सशस्त्र सेना झण्डा दिवस पर हम लोगों द्वारा किया गया अंशदान सशस्त्र सेना में सेवारत एवं सेवानिवृत्त सैनिकों तथा शहीद सैनिकों के परिवारों के प्रति आदर तथा कृतज्ञता का एक छोटा सा प्रतीक है। मैं सभी प्रदेश वासियों से आवाहन करता हूँ कि वे विशेष उत्साह एवं प्रेरणा से इस झण्डा दिवस पर अपने सैनिकों के प्रति आदर एवं एकात्मकता प्रदर्शित करते हुए अधिक से अधिक योगदान दें ताकि संग्रहित धनराशि से इन परिवारों के लिए कल्याणकारी योजनायें चलाई जा सकें। मैं ‘सशस्त्र सेना झण्डा दिवस’ की सफलता की मंगल कामना करता हूँ। जय हिन्द!

*Rajesh Kumar*  
(राजेश कुमार)  
एयर मार्शल, तैपर आफिसर कमान्डिंग-इन-चीफ, मध्य वायु कमान

**संदेश**

सशस्त्र सेना झण्डा दिवस 07 दिसम्बर 2020 के शुभ अवसर पर मैं सभी सेवारत, पूर्व सैनिकों एवं शहीद सैनिकों की वीर नारियों तथा उनके आश्रितों को हार्दिक शुभकामनाएं व्यक्त करता हूँ। देश की रक्षा तथा सेवा के लिए सैनिकों का बलिदान एक अमोघ प्रक्रिया है। भारत के जांबाज वीर संपूत आवश्यकता पड़ने पर प्राणोत्सर्ग करने में कभी भी पीछे नहीं रहते हैं। भारतीय सेना का इतिहास आदिकाल से स्वर्णिम रहा है। भारतीय सैनिकों ने अत्यन्त प्रतिकूल परिस्थितियों में भी कई युद्धों में विजय पताका फहराई है। भारतीय सेना को विश्व की सर्वोत्कृष्ट सेना के रूप में यह स्थान भारत माता के अजेय एवं मनोबल के धनी रणबाहुिरों के उत्कृष्ट बलिदान से प्राप्त हुआ है। इसके लिए पूरा राष्ट्र गौरवान्वित है।

यह अत्यन्त गौरव और सम्मान की बात है कि भारतीय सेनाओं में उत्तर प्रदेश का सर्वाधिक योगदान रहता है जिसके लिए हम सभी उत्तर प्रदेश वासियों को गर्व है। प्रदेश के चार रण बाहुिरों को देश के सर्वोच्च वीरता पदक ‘परमवीर चक्र’ से सम्मानित किया जा चुका है। इसके अतिरिक्त कई वीर सैनिकों को युद्ध और शान्तिकाल में अन्य वीरता पदकों से सम्मानित किया गया है। सशस्त्र सेनाओं में प्रदेश के सैनिकों की सहभागिता की दृष्टि से पूर्व सैनिकों एवं सैनिक परिवारों की संख्या भी सर्वाधिक है। जिनके कल्याण एवं पुनर्वास के लिये उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार व सैनिक कल्याण विभाग सतत प्रयत्नशील है। पिछले एक वर्ष में सघन प्रयास के द्वारा उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार ने सैनिकों के कल्याण एवं पुनर्वास के लिए कई योजनाएं क्रियान्वित की हैं। इन योजनाओं के क्रियान्वयन की प्रगति तथा सैनिकों के कल्याण के लिये नये प्राविधानों, नवीन तकनीकी से संबंधित सूचनाओं को इस विशाल प्रदेश के दुर्गम स्थानों में निवास करने वाले सैनिकों अथवा सैनिक परिवारों तक पहुँचाने तथा लाभार्थियों को योजना अथवा अनुदान प्रदान करने के महत्वपूर्ण कार्यों में सैनिक कल्याण विभाग, सैनिक पुनर्वास निधि एवं पूर्व सैनिक कल्याण निगम महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभा रहे हैं।

सशस्त्र सेनाओं द्वारा देश की सम्पन्नता एवं प्रादेशिक अखण्डता को बनाए रखने में किये गये अनुकरणीय साहस और समर्पण को श्रद्धांजलि अर्पित करने के लिये सशस्त्र सेना झण्डा दिवस एक सुअवसर है। यह हमें उनके प्रति एकजुटता व्यक्त करने तथा कोष में उदारतापूर्वक अंशदान देकर सहायता करने का अवसर प्रदान करता है। मैं सशस्त्र सेना झण्डा दिवस पर प्रदेशवासियों से अनुरोध करता हूँ कि सभी नागरिक सैनिकों के प्रति आदर, सम्मान एवं अपनत्व की भावना प्रदर्शित करते हुए झण्डा दिवस पर उदारतापूर्वक अंशदान देकर सैनिक बन्धुओं के कल्याण में अपना सक्रिय योगदान करें।

*Niraj Kumar*  
(निरज कुमार राठी)  
निदेशक निदेशालय सैनिक कल्याण एवं पुनर्वास, उ०प्र०

दो गज़ की दूरी, मास्क है जरूरी

चिकित्सकीय हेल्पलाइन: 1800-180-5145

# Mystery shrouds death of S-I's live-in partner

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A woman, who was said to be in a live-in relationship with a sub-inspector previously posted in the cyber cell at Lucknow, died of gunshot injuries which she received under mysterious circumstances at her flat in Omega Apartment in Chinhat. She was identified as Mamta Singh of Jaunpur. Sub-inspector Rahul Singh Rathor and their domestic help were present in the house when the incident took place. Police failed to extract any substantial information from Rathor about the mysterious death of Mamta.

Mamta had shot to lime-light a few months ago when Rathor's wife had created a scene at Hazratganj Kotwali, opposing his live-in relationship with the woman.

ADCP Qasim Abdi said the police were informed about the death of Mamta, who was a divorcee, around 10:30 am. He said Mamta was taken to Chandan Hospital where she

was declared brought dead. Abdi further said Rathor was present in the house when the police reached the scene.

As per reports, Mamta had been living in the flat on the eighth floor of the apartment for the last one year even as Rathor is presently posted in Lalitpur. According to police, Mamta was unwell since last night and so she was taking rest in another room. On Sunday morning, Rathor's maid Pratibha reached the flat and prepared tea for the couple. She gave the cup to Rathor who went to Mamta's room.

However, Rathor found the doors bolted from inside and Mamta not responding to his calls. In the meantime, Rathor's domestic help Amrit also reached the scene.

Rathor peeped inside through the ventilator and found Mamta lying in pool of blood on the bed.

Mamta suffered gunshot wounds on the left side of the head while the weapon was missing when the police team

searched the room. However, in the evening, the police recovered the pistol and a suicide note. In the suicide note, Mamta had scribbled that she was fed up and did not want to live any longer. She further wrote that she was ending her life and no one was responsible for that.

Interestingly, Rathor did not come in the awe of the police teams that interrogating him and did not disclose anything to the cops, claiming he was not in a right frame of mind. The police refused to reveal some important details related to the incident, saying it could hamper the investigation. The police took Rathor and his servants into custody and were interrogating them. Sources said the police deliberately disclosed the make of the pistol. "It may be a service revolver or a country-made pistol. The information related to the weapon is of great value but it has not come in public domain," one source said.

## Two killed in separate road mishaps

**Lucknow (PNS):** A teenager and a 47-year-old man were killed in two separate road mishaps in Madaion and Banthra on Sunday morning. In Madaion, the deceased was identified as Vijay Gupta (19) of Raipur village. He was moving towards IIM crossing from Dubagga on a bike. When he reached a petrol pump near IIM crossing around 11 am, a speeding dumper hit the motorcycle from behind. Vijay suffered grievous injuries and he was rushed to KGMU Trauma Centre by passersby but declared brought dead. The errant driver fled the scene abandoning the dumper which was impounded by the police.

In Banthra, the deceased was identified as Vinod Yadav of Asoha in Unnao district. He worked with a factory in Nadarganj and was going to his workplace on a bicycle. When he reached a shop in Banthra around 6:15 am, a speeding truck laden with LPG cylinders hit him from behind. Vinod suffered grievous injuries and died on the spot.

# Another Bengal Min raises rebellious tone

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

There is ruffle in ruling Trinamool Congress with another high-profile Minister Rajiv Banerjee beginning to sing in a disharmonious note.

Reacting to Banerjee's rebellious comment veteran Trinamool Congress politician and minister Subroto Mukherjee on Sunday asked his colleagues to express their grievances inside the party and not go to the media immediately. Much like powerful leader Suwendu Adhikari who last week quit as a Minister, Banerjee on Saturday attacked an anonymous layer of the party accusing it of promoting sycophancy.

"It is strange that the side-kicks who engage in corruption get the plum responsibilities in the party whereas the sincere, dedicated workers are relegated to the back," Banerjee said adding "only the sycophants enjoy prominence and get a higher marks in the party... those like me who cannot do that... get low score.... But I cannot call good as bad and a bad as good," Banerjee the State Forest Minister and a good orator further said that

those sitting in the air-conditioned enclosures enjoy being big leaders and those who toil it hard on the ground are ignored.

On whether he was following in the footsteps of his rebel party colleague Suwendu Adhikari the minister said "aage aage dekho hota hei kya (watch out the unfolding drama).

On whether he would like to name some people in the party he said "I'm still a minister and a party member. In future, if I have to say anything in the party, I shall definitely do so. But I don't think I should discuss that now with the media persons."

"Catching the small fishes will not help if corruption has to be rooted out from the party. The big fish also have to be nabbed," he had said.

Banerjee's neighbor, Cabinet colleague and veteran leader Subroto Mukherjee however advised the discontented leaders to discuss their issues in the party and not make things public. Last hear he had criticized the party leadership for singling out lesser leaders on corruption charges but sparing the fountain heads.

"It is better to discuss your

grudges and complaints within the party instead of going to the media," Mukherjee said.

Reacting to Banerjee's statement, Bengal Urban Development Minister Firhad Hakim said: "Rajib is a good man. He is our minister and he is like my brother. He is doing a good job... I don't think he will be so foolish to be carried away by the machinations of mischievous people."

The immediate trigger for Hakim's statement was not Banerjee's words but some mysterious posters appearing in Kolkata in support of him.

Much like the ones that have been appearing across the state in favour of Adhikari the posters in Kolkata backed the Forest Minister and read "Satatar Prateek (symbol of honesty). The same symbols were used to identify Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in the early part of her rule.

Apart from the posters BJP leadership too welcomed him to join the party saying the saffron outfit needed honest people like him. "He is an honest person and is always welcome in our party," State BJP president Dilip Ghosh said provoking Hakim to say that Banerjee

was not a green horn to fall prey to such machinations.

Much like him another senior BJP leader Mukul Roy said that "Rajiv Banerjee is a good and honest person," saying "whatever he said had substance." The TMC would "lose power in 2021 Assembly elections," Roy said adding "the rot has started... now they will lose power and after 2021 they will be reduced to a microscopic party."

Meanwhile the Trinamool Congress targeted the Hyderabad based All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen AIMIM for trying to cut into its minority vote bank. Minister Firhad Hakim attacked Deccan outfit saying a "Hyderabadi party is being sent by our opponents to cut minority votes. But the trick will be caught by the smart voters of Bengal." Stopping short of naming All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen AIMIM, and its leader Asaduddin Owaisi whom he apparently referred to as Bhajiyaan, Hakim said "A Bhajiyaan is being sent Bengal to eat into our votes but I must warn the voters that voting for that party would amount to cutting your own legs."

# Role of homeguards vital, says CM

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath praised the homeguards and congratulated them on the 58th foundation day ceremony at the Homeguards headquarters on Sunday. The CM received a salute by a parade led by Dheerendra Nath Singh, district commandant, Homeguards, Azamgarh.

Yogi said homeguards played an important role in maintaining peace, traffic regulation, jail security, conduct of elections and exams besides ensuring safety of prominent government buildings & offices. He pointed out that 5,719 homeguards ferried several thousands of students, workers, and labourers stranded to their home districts by 5,832 buses during lockdown. The CM announced a monetary help of Rs 5 lakh each to the families of homeguards who died or those who got permanently disabled while performing their duties. Earlier, the families of those homeguards were given monetary help either by insurance companies or through welfare funds, but the same was not adequate.



Yogi handed over cheques to the wives of homeguards who sacrificed their lives on duty. They included Pradeep Kumar Yadav of Sonbhadra, Markandey Yadav of Jaunpur, Amar Bahadur of Ayodhya, Ramkesh Yadav of Sonbhadra, Lokesh Giri of Sambhal, Jagjeewan Ram of Ballia, Dushyant Singh of Moradabad, Srikant Verma of Azamgarh and Sunder Singh of Gautam

Buddhnagar.

The CM gave a commendation disc and citation certificate to homeguard Jayram Katiyar of Kanpur who suffered injuries during a raid for arrest of mafia Vikas Dubey and to homeguard Manju of Ghaziabad who saved lives of ten employees when the driver of a vehicle ferrying enforcement team of Ghaziabad Development Authority suf-

fered a heart attack and the vehicle went out of control.

Yogi later inaugurated the newly-constructed Chetan Chauhan Divisional Training Centre, Homeguards, Moradabad, divisional and district homeguards office in Agra and district homeguards offices in Jaunpur, Hamirpur, Fatehpur and Fatehgarh. He also inaugurated a homeguards souvenir on the occasion.

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Jailed Saradha chit fund scam kingpin Sudipta Sen has written lettersto Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee informing how a number of politicians and influential persons had accepted "financial advantages" from him.

The letter dated December 1, had yet not been posted by

the jail authorities, sources said adding it was to be channelled through the ADG Prison's office.

The letter dated December 1, by Sen who is in judicial custody for the past seven years alleges how "many influential persons have taken huge financial advantage from me," and how no action has yet been taken against them. The list of the 'beneficiaries' include the names of leaders from "CPI(M), BJP, Congress and the

## Many leaders took money from me: Saradha kingpin

Trinamool Congress," he alleged requesting CBI and police action.

He also alleged that despite bringing the matter to the notice of the CBI the agency had not taken adequate action. "It is painful for me to see that those who are talking of high morals have actually cheated-poor people... I request the CBI and the state police to investigate the matter properly," he wrote. On the other hand

former CPI (M) MP and State Legislature Party Leader Sujana Chakraborty said, "This is ridiculous as leaders of the Congress and the CPI (M) are fighting for the cause of the people affected in the scam... in fact it is Congress leader Abdul Mannan who filed the petition in Supreme Court seeking CBI investigation and our MP and senior advocate Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya who fought the cases successfully."

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

FARMERS URGE...

"The Ghazipur border on NH 24 is closed for traffic from Ghaziabad to Delhi due to farmers' protests. People are advised to avoid NH 24 for coming to Delhi and use Apsara/Bhopra/DND for coming to Delhi," it tweeted.

Tikri and Jharoda borders are closed for traffic movement but Badusarai border is open only for light motor vehicles like cars and two wheelers, it said.

"Singhu, Auchandi, Lampur, Piao Maniyari, Mangesh borders are closed. NH 44 is closed on both sides," the police said. It advised commuters to take alternate routes via Safiabad, Saboli, NH8, Bhopra, Apsara borders, and Peripheral expressway.

People travelling to Haryana can take Dhansa, Daurala, Kapashera, Rajokri NH 8, Bijwasan, Bajghera, Palam Vihar and Dundahera borders," tweeted Delhi Traffic Police

Swaraj India party president Yogendra Yadav said, "We have always stood firm on our stand. We have always demanded that the Government take back all the three farm laws. We have not changed our stand. We are firm on it."

"M a n y organisations from Maharashtra and other States are also supporting the Bharat Bandh. Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan will witness closure of all mandis but weddings would be exempted from the bandh. Many political parties have extended their support to us and we urge everyone to participate in the bandh," he said.

PFIZER SEEKS...

Addressing concerns about distribution, the company also said it will utilise GPS-enabled sensors in every thermal shipper that will allow Pfizer to track the location and temperature of doses across their preset routes.

The main concern for developing countries like India has been the vaccine's ultra cold storage requirements. Pfizer's mRNA technology needs storage at -75 degrees Celsius (plus-minus 15 degrees) and this calls for storage and distribution infrastructure.

The company, however, said it has "experience of working with customers in all markets to help ensure success". It also highlighted that "detailed logistical plans and tools to support effective vaccine transport, storage and temperature monitoring" has been developed.

The development is significant since Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during an all-party meet on Friday, cited

experts to say that India could have the first coronavirus vaccine in weeks and that eight vaccines will be manufactured in India.

Pfizer, in its application submitted on December 4, has sought permission to import the vaccine for sale and distribution in India. It also sought the waiver of clinical trials on Indian population as per the special provisions under the New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules, 2019, to get instant approval for emergency use, according to yet another report.

AIIMS Director Dr Randeep Guleria had earlier said that India was in talks with Pfizer-BioNTech regarding its Covid-19 vaccine candidate. He said no such communication had been initiated with Moderna for its experimental Covid-19 vaccine.

The UK has already approved Pfizer and BioNTech coronavirus candidate on December 2 after the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) found the shot safe. The country has already ordered 40 million doses of the Pfizer vaccine to vaccinate its 20 million population. After the UK, Bahrain has also approved the vaccine for 'emergency use'. Bahrain's drug regulatory body said the approval was granted after a thorough analysis and review of all available data.

BOXER VIJENDER...

Vijender was awarded the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna in 2009 after becoming the first Indian boxer to win an Olympic medal.

BJP, however, sought to see Vijender as a congressman who had contested on the party ticket.

Responding to the Boxer's backing to the farmers, BJP's National General Secretary (organisation) B L Santosh tweeted that Vijender had joined the Congress party and contested the 2019 Lok Sabha Elections from Delhi.

Vijender had lost to BJP's Ramesh Bidhuri from the South Delhi seat last year.

"Whole of media projecting it as Boxer Vijender Singh in support of farmer agitation. Also mention he contested LS elections on Congress ticket. Convenient deletion of details," Santhosh tweeted.

The talks between the Government and the protesting farmers have not yet yielded a breakthrough as the latter have called for a 'Bharat Bandh' on December 8 in support of their demands which includes withdrawal of three new farm bills which, among other things, allow contract farming with private traders outside the MSP system.

# City's air quality in 'very poor' category

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The air quality index (AQI) on Sunday was 366 which was categorised as very poor. Head of the Environment Division of IITR GC Kisku said the weather conditions have a role to play in Lucknow's polluted air and the most hazardous particles remain PM 2.5 and PM 10. He said people who have cardiac problems should not step out for morning walks in such conditions.

However, he pointed out that these parameters of PM 2.5 and PM 10 are the ones which are known but there are several other hazardous compounds which people end up inhaling.



"It's the cumulative effect which impacts, though the exact mechanism of particulate matter toxicity is yet to be under-

stood clearly. The degree of effectiveness depends on the physico-chemical properties of the particulate matters which

depend largely on the level of associated metal oxides, constituents of inorganic, organic chemicals pollutants as well as other bio-aerosols. Overall, the effects of toxicity depend on the cumulative or synergistic effects of physicochemical properties of particulate matters, meteorological condition and other environmental circumstances including receptor conditions," he said.

Talking about PM 2.5 and PM 10, he said these tiny particles increase the rate of blood flow and vascular permeability to white blood cells, elevating clotting activity, constriction of the airways and fever induction.

## Tributes paid to Ambedkar

**Lucknow (PNS):** On the occasion of Parinirvana Diwas, floral tributes were paid to Babasaheb Dr BR Ambedkar on Sunday. Mayor Sanyukta Bhatia offered floral tributes to the statue of Ambedkar, as did Lucknow University Vice-Chancellor AK Rai. He was accompanied by Dinesh Kumar, Rakesh Chandra, students and staff of the university.

All the teachers, staffers and students of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University offered tributes to Ambedkar on Sunday. Vice-Chancellor Acharya Sanjay Singh remembered Ambedkar on his 64th Parinirvana Diwas and paid floral tributes to him. BBAU registrar S Victor Babu, dean of academic affairs RP Rana, IQAC director DP Singh, BS. Bhadauria, Shilpi Verma, Manoj Dadwal, RS Verma and other teachers and staffers also remembered Ambedkar.

## Workshop on 'Covid-19 biomedical waste mgmt

**Lucknow (PNS):** A safe and sustainable management of biomedical waste is the social and legal responsibility of healthcare facilities and effective biomedical waste management is mandatory for healthy humans and cleaner environment. A workshop on 'Covid-19 biomedical waste management: Principle and practices' was organised by the department of Hospital Administration, SGPGIMS, which highlighted the salient features of biomedical waste management practices in concise manner for better understanding and implementation for healthcare workers at this crucial period of pandemic.

The main objective of the workshop was to sensitise and update the stakeholders (state and district medical health officers, ULBs, HCFs, practitioners, academic institutions, healthcare providers, professionals, students, industry and NGOs) on biomedical waste management rules, compli-

ance requirements with specific focus on CPCB guidelines to handle the Covid waste.

The inaugural session of the workshop was addressed by head of SGPGI's Hospital Administration Dr R Harshvardhan. The workshop was attended by 100 delegates virtually and 30 healthcare staffers of SGPGIMS got in-house training. The scientific session of the workshop had eminent speakers from SGPGIMS, Niti Ayog and CPCB.

Speakers stressed that India already has established biomedical waste management rules right from 2016 and amendments thereof, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) of India has recently released specific guidelines to ensure safe disposal of biomedical waste generated during treatment, diagnosis or quarantine of patients with coronavirus infection.

## Lucknow to Muzaffarpur bus service from tomorrow

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (UPSRTC) will start bus services from Lucknow to Muzaffarpur in Bihar from December 8. Regional manager PK Bose said they are looking for destinations not covered by railway routes.

This service was also started under an MoU which was signed by UPSRTC with three states recently. "There will be one bus going to Muzaffarpur and the fare will be around Rs 600. The distance (565 kms) will be covered in 12 hours and the bus will take a halt at the station at night and return the next morning," he said.

He pointed out that very few trains go to Muzaffarpur from Lucknow. "We had recently started a bus service to Gaya and found a lot of takers," he said.

# Muslim-dominated markets remain closed in Varanasi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The city of Lord Shiva remained peaceful on the occasion of 28th anniversary of demolition of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya here on Sunday. Though it was a weekly closure day also, most of the Muslim-dominated markets including Nai Sarak, Dalmandi and others remained closed. In view to maintain peace, the security arrangements have been intensified at Varanasi Junction (Cantt.) and other railway stations, airport and bus depots apart from keeping close watch in all the sensitive areas. Besides, the security forces also kept close vigil on the activities of people at some leading temples and ghats.

Though most of the pro-



A Muslim-dominated market remains closed on anniversary of December 6 incident in Varanasi on Sunday

Hindu forces have avoided organising any programmes on the day for the last many

years, a section of Shiv Sena workers continued to celebrate the day as 'Victory Day' under

the leadership of Ajay Choubey and organised havan-pujan programme at Mahabir Mandir at Orderly Bazar.

After the decision of the Supreme Court in connection with the solution to the long-pending dispute over Ram Janambhoomi as the construction work at temple site in Ayodhya has already been started, majority of groups close to ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) remained silent on the occasion. However, the Muslims like the previous years since the demolition of Babri Masjid in 1992, observed the day as Black Day and in most of the Muslim-dominated areas, the markets remained closed in memory of December 6 incident.

# Cong workers protest against farm laws

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

In support of agitating farmers of Punjab near the Delhi borders, the activities of district unit of Congress Seva Dal raised their protest in style, hanging themselves in symbolic manner near the statue of Sardar Patel at Maldahia here on Sunday. They also criticised the Central Government for three farm laws. Leading the protest, former district president of this frontal unit of Congress Harish Mishra said that by giving false promises to the farmers to double their income, the party led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi took the votes but after coming to the power, the government has betrayed the farmers by impos-



Congress Seva Dal workers protesting against farm laws in Varanasi on Sunday

ing three new black laws in the agricultural sector. Through its act, the ruling party had stabbed in the back of the farmers, he added.

He also flayed the Central Government for its rigid attitude towards the demands of the farmers and alleged that the intention of Modi Government

proved that it is not in favour of farmers but it is trying to support the big corporate houses.

'Since the BJP government has come to power it has cheated the farmers continuously,' he said, extending his full support to the agitating farmers.

The Seva Dal workers also demanded that the three new farm laws should be repealed and extended their full support to proposed 'Bharat Bandh' on December 8.

Among others who were also present were Kunwar Yadav, Bablu Shukla, Nikki Yadav, Dr Ashish Upadhyay, Vijay Upadhyay, Om Shukla, Dhiraj Sonkar, Ashish Kesari, Naveen Choubey and Devi Yadav.

# Floral tributes paid to Ambedkar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Akhil Bharatiya Anusuchit Jati/Janjati Karmachari Kalyan Association (ABAJKKA), Varanasi observed the 64th Parinirvan Diwas of Bharat Ratna Dr BR Ambedkar 'Sankalp Diwas' at Shastri Ghat here on Sunday.

Paying their floral tributes to Dr Ambedkar, the national patron of association RK Prasad said that the sacrifice of Baba Saheb will not go in vain and they all will work with their all might to fulfill the dream what he had seen. By providing the right to vote, he had made all humans equal and gave the world the biggest democracy through Indian Constitution and the entire country will always remain indebted.

There is a need to eradi-

cate the caste-based system and it will be possible only when we all will follow Buddhism, the path shown by Baba Saheb, expressed the key speaker Bhaiya Lal Kannoujia. Baba Saheb had provided rights of education, property, employment, divorce and politics to the women of the country by introducing Hindu Code Bill and these rights are gifted by the Constitution, expressed Rajiv Kumar and Neelam. The national general secretary of association Musafir said he had got justice to downtrodden and deprived class by making provision of reservation in promotion in government jobs because he believed that the reservation is representation. Vijay Kumar Rao and Gopal jointly conducted a condolence meeting and Dr Preamsagar presided over it. Among those present

on the occasion were Praveen Kumar, Usha Shastri, Omkar Nath Shastri, Rajesh Kumar and Malati.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) also organised a programme at a colony in Pared Kothi to pay tribute to Dr Ambedkar. The party leaders and workers remembered the contribution of the chairman of the drafting committee of the Constitution and said he was also a social reformer who brought the deprived section into mainstream of society. The regional president of the party Mahesh Chandra Srivastava and others were present.

The nation can never forget the contribution of Dr Ambedkar in the contribution to draft the Constitution of India, the speakers expressed in a programme organised Pt Kamlapati Tripathi

Foundation at Englishialine here to pay tribute to him. They said, Dr Ambedkar played an important role in giving a high-quality Constitution to the country by following which India became the greatest democratic country. As a reformer he gave a slogan to get-up, be united and educated and also motivated the people in crores to come into mainstream of society, they expressed adding, the personality and works of this great personality will always pioneer us.

The senior leader of Congress Party Baijnath Singh conducted the programme and Vijay Shankar Pandey presided over. Many were present including Prof Anil Kumar Upadhyay, Vijay Shankar Mehta, Shailendra Singh, Pramod Srivastava and Bhupendra Pratap Singh.

# 69 more test positive in Varanasi

**VARANASI (PNS):** As many as 69 new COVID-19 patients have been detected in the district, increasing the total number of cases to 19,672 on Sunday. The day also saw two more deaths, increasing the toll to 320. During the day, the follow-up negative reports included 107 and out of them 105 have been recovered from home isolation and two from the hospitals, increasing the number to 15,715 and 2,875 respectively. The total number of patients who have been recovered so far is 18,590, leav-

ing 762 active cases. The recovery rate is 94.49 per cent, while the mortality rate is 1.62 per cent.

Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr VB Singh has informed that in the first report of the day, 41 positive patients were found out of 2,456 reports received. Till then, the total test reports received were 4,43,827 and the results of 2,171 are awaited. Out of them, 4,24,183 were negative, while 19,644 positive. The total number of samples collected was 4,64,726. Earlier, three males aged 89, 74

and 70 from Lanka, Kakarmata and Kandhwa respectively succumbed to Covid-19 at Sir Sundarlal Hospital, Banaras Hindu University (SSH BHU). With the addition of five new red zones, the total number of hotspots has increased to 2,534 including 221 red zones. Six green zones have been converted into red zones again. There are 2,313 green zones with 13 new ones.

Meanwhile, on the instructions of the District Magistrate (DM) Kaushal Raj Sharma, mass/ group antigen tests were

conducted at Varanasi Junction (Cantt.) and Manduadih railway stations but all the 69 and 56 tests were found negative there respectively.

Besides, one out of 225 tests has been found positive at Shree Shiv Prasad Gupta (SSPG) Hospital, Kabirchaura and two out of 75 at Swami Vivekanand Hospital, Bhelupur but all the 180 tests at Government Women's Hospital, 46 at CHC Shivpur, 170 at LBS Hospital, Ramnagar and 95 at SSH BHU have been found negative.

# Varanasi among Top-5 in e-PHC facilities

**VARANASI (PNS):** Responding well to Digital India inspired health services, Varanasi is among the Top-5 districts in providing free e-PHC facilities to the patients of remote areas. The districts of this belt of Purvanchal (eastern UP) got the top and bottom places also. Chandauli of Varanasi division is on the top, while Sonbhadra is at the bottom among the 10 districts in the state where e-PHC facilities were launched last year as an experiment basis. These districts are Varanasi, Chandauli, Bahraich, Fatehpur, Shravasti, Balrampur,

Siddharthnagar, Chitrakoot, Gorakhpur and Sonbhadra.

So far, 50,795 patients have been treated in these districts through e-PHCs. Sarnath PHC has been made e-PHC in Varanasi where so far 6,242 patients have been treated, while Kamlapur e-PHC in Chandauli is on the top with treating maximum number of 8,348 patients. Satbahni e-PHC of Sonbhadra is at 10th and last place with 2,836 patients. Director of PHC Dr VK Singh said that seeing the good results of this pilot project, there is a plan to develop 100 such primary health centres which are

in the state of closure due to various reasons. In this phase, we will associate Community Health Officers (CHOs) with the scheme so that we can also prevent non-communicable diseases at the PHC level. ACMO and Nodal Officer Dr AK Maurya informed that e-PHCs have been developed on the PPP model.

Meanwhile, the Health department has decided to organise 'Child Health Nutrition Month' soon to give Vitamin-A supplements to children from nine months to five years and in this direction, a district level meeting was held

at CMO office here recently. Nodal Officer and ACMO Dr VS Rai has informed that the Employees of Health and ICDS departments are being trained so that they can give Vitamin-A supplements in prescribed amounts to children in rural and urban areas during the Health Hygiene and Nutrition Day (VHSND and UHSND) sessions. 'Emphasis will be given on making aware of salt intake of iodine. During the campaign, children from seven months to five years will also be fed iron syrup. Unsupervised and seriously ill children should not be fed iron syrup.

# Maurya lays foundation-stone of bridge over Tons river

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya formally laid the foundation stone of the proposed two-lane bridge over the Tons River here on Sunday. Now the way from the city towards Naribari, Kheri, Lediaryi, Koram, Drumganj, Barokhar, Meja, Mirzapur and Madhya Pradesh is going to be easy soon. The UP State Bridge Corporation has started construction of the proposed two-lane bridge over the Tons River from Saturday itself. This important project cost a total of ₹ 63 crore.

The Deputy Chief Minister, Keshav Prasad Maurya, arrived in Prayagraj on Sunday. He laid the foundation stone of the two-lane bridge after performing bhoomi puja. This bridge will be built in Naribari of the district. A foundation-stone programme was organised near the Kaundhi Gaughat bridge in Naribari. The bridge connecting Bara and Korao and Meja will be 718 metres long. It will cost ₹ 63 crore to build this bridge.

The helipad was also built to land the helicopter of Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya. The Deputy CM's helicopter landed on the helipad on Sunday afternoon. There, Phulpur MP Kesari Devi Patel, MLA Harshvardhan Bajpai and other BJP leaders welcomed Deputy CM Keshav. After this, Keshav Prasad Maurya duly performed bhoomi puja of the two-lane bridge to be built on the river Tons. Then he laid the foundation stone of the bridge. After this



he reached the meeting place. Artists presented cultural programmes at the synagogue. The Deputy Chief Minister also inaugurated several roads.

After the construction of the two-lane bridge, the people of Rewa and Satna will also be able to travel a short distance to Korao and Meja. Local people have been demanding to build a bridge here for a long time. At the same time, Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya also inaugurated several roads on this occasion. These roads are built by the Public Works Department. These roads are in Meja, Korao and Bara areas.

The project will be com-

pleted under NABARD scheme. Its bridge will be 718.88 metres in length. A 500-metre approach road will also be connected to it. The bridge will have 14 pillars. The proposal to make it was sent to the government two years ago. However, it has recently received cabinet approval.

With the construction of the bridge, the road from Kheri, Lediaryi, Korao, Drumganj, Badokhar, Devghat, Manda, Rewa, Maihar, Satna, other districts of Madhya Pradesh towards Prayagraj, towards Mirzapur and Varanasi will be easy. This bridge will start from the Naribari area of Bara tehsil and descend to the

Kheri area of Koran block.

Bridge Corporation Deputy Project Manager Amit Verma said that there is an old bridge on the River Tons right now, but due to its dilapidated condition, traffic has been completely stopped. People coming from MP or Mirzapur, Varanasi, instead of going straight, have to come to Naini first. This has increased their distance.

Project Manager RK Singh said that the construction of the bridge on Tons river has started from Saturday. On the other hand, Deputy CM Keshav Prasad Maurya laid the foundation stone of the two-lane bridge on Sunday.

# 59 new Covid cases in Prayagraj

## Coronavirus spreads its tentacles again

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

As many as 59 more people including Superintendent of CBSE Board, Income Tax Officer, and lecturer of Mahila Gram Inter College among others tested COVID-19 within the last 24 hours on Saturday night. At the same time, 55 people have been free from corona infection. Dr Rishi Sahai, the Nodal Officer of Corona confirmed this.

Dr Sahai said that with the findings of 59 new patients on Saturday, the total number of corona patients in the district increased to 26,929. While 25,812 people have become infection-free. On Saturday, 18 people were discharged from private hospital, including SRN, Beli Hospitals, while home isolation of 37 people has been completed.

The number of active cases has increased to 769. Among active cases, 98 people are

**ALLAHABAD (PNS):** Coronavirus infection has started spreading its tentacles once again. Prayagraj is also not untouched by this. However, all efforts are being made by the administration and Health department to stop this pandemic. After this, the coronavirus infection is proving difficult to control. In the second wave of Corona, the number of patients in the city increased. Due to the negligence of the people, the corona has started dominating again. Last week, the number of corona patients was less than 50, but after one time the cases have started increasing, which means that corona has started dominating again. Experts from the Health department had already alerted. At the same time, the number of corona patients had reached about 500 a few days ago, but from

October 1, there was some relief and the number of corona patients started falling below 100. Corona was under control for a fortnight in November, but now the number of patients is increasing once again. Nodal and District Surveillance Officer of Covid-19, Dr Rishi Sahai said that there has been an increase in cases of coronavirus infection. In such a situation, all of us need to be careful. A little carelessness can make our life breathless. He advised the people not to exit without a mask. Follow physical distance rules in crowded places. Get out of the house only if necessary. If you have come in contact with an infected person, then get the corona test conducted, if there is any kind of cough, fever, check the corona immediately, he pointed out

admitted to SRN, Beli and a private hospital.

In addition, 671 infected are currently in home isolation. A total of 5,792 people have been tested for Corona on Saturday.

Out of this, 3,162 people have been tested with antigen kits, 2411 by RT-PCR, 93 in private labs and 126 people with Trunat. Those infected include the Superintendent of CBSE Board, Income Tax

Officer, lecturer of Mahila Gram Inter College, Khelgaon Public School teacher, Inspector of RPE, CO of Police Lines, High Court advocate, a journalist and section officer of High Court among others.

# Farm laws made keeping in mind interests of farmers: Ojha

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The peasant movement is in full swing. This movement is either being given weightage by some voluntary organisation, at some places the opposition is adding fuel to it. This is not happening in the interest of farmers. Political parties and voluntary organisations are taking this step by looking at their personal benefits. Only confusion is being spread about the law which is not in the interest of farmers. This was said by Dr LS Ojha, State Convenor of BJP's Medical Cell.

Advocating agricultural laws, he said that the new laws have been made keeping in mind the interests of farmers. There has also been a complete brainstorm on this subject in the House. At that time, the opposition did not give any constructive support regarding this colonisation. Now there is an attempt to create a ruckus across the country with this. No one is going to benefit from this kind of negative politics. Everyone should desist from it.

The newly appointed vice-president of BJP's Kashi province, Awadhesh Gupta, said that it is the responsibility of the party workers to give

the correct information to the general public. We all should campaign and inform people about government policies and programmes. We also read and know all aspects of agricultural law. After that, contact the people and give correct information to them. The opposition should give a detailed answer to what they are spreading confusion about, he added.

**NIRANKARI SANT SAMAGAM HELD:** Human values should be prioritised and given due importance over materialistic pursuits; this was the clarion call given by Satguru Mata Sudiksha Maharaj, in her message to mankind on the commencement of the 73rd Annual Nirankari Sant Samagam on Sunday.

This Samagam had to adorn a virtual format due to the prevalent scenario of COVID-19. Where it is being viewed by the entire Nirankari fraternity and God loving people in the country and abroad with unabated enthusiasm, there in Prayagraj also the devotees enjoyed virtual Samagam while sitting in the houses.

It is noteworthy that Nirankari Sant Samagam has been held in the direct presence of devotees for the last 72

years, in which lakhs of devotees were present and enjoy the Sant Samagam, but this time this is going to be the first time in the history of Nirankari Mission.

The annual Nirankari Samagam has been organised in virtual form. This virtual Samagam is being webcast on the Mission's website and telecast on Sanskar TV channel. Referring to the spread of COVID-19, Satguru Mata Ji mentioned how it has impacted each and every individual by disturbing one's routine schedules and the many lessons it has had in store for us. Materialistic attributes viz: wealth in the form of money, beautiful homes, expensive cars to travel in and so on were rendered unutilised as per the conditions prevailing during the lockdown. Thereby, assigning due credence to the saying of saints and sages that all wealth is an illusion and guided us to focus on human values.

They always showed us the path of imbibing human values of love, humility, compassion and mercy while giving due importance to materialistic gains by treating them as means to dwell only. They taught us to live with detached attachment.

Satguru Mata Ji further

explained that during the lockdown everyone had to be indoors and wherever love prevailed; ties grew stronger. Where love for one another increased, the feeling to serve mankind also grew stronger and everyone arose to help all those affected either in their individual capacity or through institutions.

Rising above manmade barriers they endeavoured to provide relief to all, driven by the feeling of universal brotherhood; thus following the path of humanity is the only true religion.

Nirankari Mission was amongst other institutions who came forth with all the possible resources and measures to provide relief to the needy.

Millions of people enjoyed the virtual Nirankari Samagam Satguru Mata Ji quoted that let's love; not because we have to but, because it's the only way forward.

The more we head towards truth; the more stable we shall become. While treating resources with detached attachment as mere necessities and live a life full of love, compassion, humility, tolerance, large heartedness and respect for all as this is the only path to tread on.

# Shekhar for developing Cawnpore rly stn building as a tourist spot

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Divisional Commissioner Raj Shekhar underlined the need for developing the Cawnpore railway station building as a tourist spot.

After visiting the 135-year-old Cawnpore railway station on Sunday, Shekhar said its grandeur and historical significance could be exhibited in the form of a railway museum.

He said the old tracks and yet sturdy building, especially its unique dome and architecture, made it more attractive and interesting.

The divisional commissioner said very soon the issue would be taken up with the Railways Headquarters in New Delhi.

He said heritage conservation was important for identifying, recording, analysing and protecting heritage and cultural resources.

Shekhar said conservation of heritage buildings was an important tool in city development as it played an important role in defining the landmarks within the heritage area besides generating economic returns and supporting the tourism industry.

He said the Cawnpore railway station building was constructed in the year 1885 and the conservation of this heritage building was very important because it provided a sense of identity and continuity in the fast changing world for future generations.

Shekhar said heritage buildings basically represented the past history and culture



Kanpur Divisional Commissioner, Raj Shekhar, visiting the old Cawnpore railway Station which is a heritage building. Pioneer

of a nation and were specimen of the architectural heritage of an area. He said these buildings possessed historical values as they were connected with important events — religious, social and political — that occurred in the past.

He said heritage buildings were subjected to processes of degradation with time, which led to a situation in which they were unable to fulfil the purpose for which they were constructed.

The divisional commissioner said Kanpur Nagar had several heritage buildings and they could place the city once

again on the tourist map and become a global centre of attraction.

He said these heritage buildings needed an important tool to protect them and conservation guidelines of heritage buildings were one of the proposed resolutions for protecting heritage buildings. He mooted conservation guidelines for developing and utilising these rare structures which have lost their glamour on account of utter neglect.

It may be mentioned here that this building once served as the main railway station till 1932 and later it was converted

into a training institute for railway officials.

Shekhar pointed out that the Cawnpore railway station building was declared a heritage building by the Railway Ministry in the year 2002. He felt that the place had all the potential to become the most attractive tourist place in Kanpur Nagar.

He interacted with Railway officials and discussed with the Smart City officials ways to make the Cawnpore railway station building a centre of tourist attraction while retaining its existing utility.

## Gadkari: Strong and visionary leaders show way forward in times of crisis

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Nitin Gadkari, said strong and visionary leaders showed the way forward in times of crisis.

Delivering a motivating speech on the 'Role of Leadership in Turbulent Times' at the 2nd Dr Rajaram Jaipuria Memorial Lecture held virtually on Sunday, Gadkari emphasised upon the increased relevance of decisive leadership in a world disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The lecture was organised virtually by Jaipuria Group of Educational Institutions. The event began with a soulful rendition of the invocation song by Padma Shri Malini Awasthi followed by a welcome address by Seth Anandram Jaipuria Educational Society (SAJES).Chairman Shishir Jaipuria.

Welcoming Gadkari, he said the nation was indeed blessed to have leaders like him and his dynamic vision and decisive leadership were leading the country towards Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Gadkari, who was the chief guest, pointed out that leadership played a key role not just in politics but also in other fields of life, such as education, business, social work and even religion.

He said good leaders took lessons from history and as was often said "Old is Gold", one should give the maxim its due.

He said the inspiration and motivation that leaders derive came from history, education and reading the biographies of the great leaders who had come before.

Gadkari said if one had vision, one could donate eyes, but one could not donate vision. He said the vision came from books, history, educational institutions, family, work places. He said positivity and self-confidence were the crux of decisive leadership and true leaders inspired team work and collective team spirit, which was very important. H said that his learning came from '3 Cs' — cooperation, coordination and communication.

During the event, a green certificate was handed out to Gadkari by Yash Jaipuria.

The vote of thanks was proposed by Saket Jaipuria, vice-chairman of Seth Anandram Jaipuria Group of Educational Institutions.

## 64 more test positive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Nagar reported 64 more coronavirus positive cases on Sunday evening. Chief Medical Officer Dr Anil K Mishra said that 64 more people had tested positive for coronavirus infection between Saturday evening and Sunday evening taking the tally of confirmed cases to 31,082 cases. He said that 21 cases were discharged from hospital. He said two COVID-19 deaths in the city were reported till Sunday evening keeping the death toll to 793. The CMO said at present 930 active cases were undergoing treatment. Dr Mishra said 3268 samples were sent for testing in the city.

## Girl duped by con man

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A girl was duped of lakhs of Rupees by a youth who, by posing as an aspiring groom, visited her place with his accomplices in Harbansh Mohal police station area.

On the complaint of the victim girl, police registered a case against the trickster and arrested him after three months of the incident.

Raids were now on to nab his accomplices.

## NER GM inspects Rail Museum

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

General Manager of North Eastern Railway (NER) Vinay Kumar Tripathi inspected the Rail Museum on Saturday, 2020. On the occasion the Principal Chief Mechanical Engineer (PCME) AK Pandey, Chief Workshop Engineer BS Dohare, Chief Workshop



Manager AC Besra, secretary to GM DK Khare, Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) Pankaj Kumar Singh, Deputy General Manager/ General Omkar Nath Singh and senior railway officers and Rail Museum employees were present. General Manager Vinay Kumar Tripathi observed the photo gallery there and gave instructions for proper maintenance of photographs displayed there.

He expressed his happiness on seeing various historical equipment kept in the Rail Museum and suggested to display them in a better way. Tripathi observed bricks of Bengal and North Western Railway of 1890 of historical importance kept in the Rail Museum besides coach model of metre gauge, Lord Lawrence engine, metre gauge crane, water

column for filling water in steam locomotives etc. He gave directions to make the notice board more attractive. During the inspection, he took a ride in the toy train and encouraged the railway personnel engaged in its maintenance. General Manager expressed happiness over the better maintenance of the Rail Museum and honoured the railway personnel related to its maintenance by rewarding them.

## Sealdah-Ballia spl to run from Dec 12

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The railway administration for the convenience of passengers will run the 03105 Sealdah-Ballia additional special train from Sealdah from December 12 and 03106 Ballia-Sealdah additional train from Ballia from December 13 until further order. All coaches in these trains will be of reserved category and passengers traveling in them will have to follow the Covid-19 prevention guidelines, CPRO PK Singh said.The 03105 Sealdah-Ballia special train from December 12 will daily depart from Sealdah at 13.40 hrs, from Naihati at 14.15 hrs, from Bandel at 14.58 hrs, from Burdwan at 14.54 hrs, from Durgapur at 16.51 hrs, from Asansol Main at 17.25 hrs, from Chittaranjan at 17.50 hrs, from Madhupur at 18.31 hrs, Jasidih to 19.01 hrs, Jhajha at 20.30 hrs, Gidhaur at 20.41 hrs, Jamui at 20.55 hrs, Kiul at 21.22 hrs, Barauni at 23.10 hrs,

Barauni at 23.10 hrs, Vidyapatidham at 23.39 hrs, Mohiuddinnagar at 23.51 hrs, the second day from Shahpur Patori at 00.05 hrs, Mehnar Road at 00.15 hrs, Desri at 00.27 hrs, Hajipur at 01.05 hrs, Sonpur at 01.17 hrs, Sitalpur at 01.38 hrs, Dighwara at 02.17 hrs, Chhapra at 04.20 hrs, Suraimanpur at 04.06 hrs, Sahatwar at 05.01 hrs and arrive at Ballia at 05.55 hrs.During the return journey the 03106 Ballia-Sealdah special train will from December 13 depart from Ballia at 08.50 hrs daily, from Sahatwar at 09.14 hrs, from Suraimanpur at 09.35 hrs, from Chhapra at 10.35 hrs, from Dighwara at 10.28 hrs, from Sitalpur at 11.36 hrs, from Sonpur at 12.00 hrs, from Hajipur at 12.15 hrs, from Desari at 12.38 hrs, from Mehnar Road at 12.49 hrs, from Shahpur Patori at 13.03 hrs, Mohiuddinnagar at 13.23 hrs, from Vidyapatidham at 13.34 hrs, from Barauni at 15.05 hrs, from Kiul at 16.50 hrs, from Jamui at 17.15 hrs, from Gidhaur at 17.29 hrs, from

Jhajha at 18.45 hrs, from Jasidih at 19.22 hrs, from Madhupur at 19.49 hrs, from Chittaranjan at 20.38 hrs, from Asansol Main at 22.25 hrs, from Durgapur at 23.12 hrs, the second day from Vardhman at 00.36 hrs, Bandel at 01.43 hrs, from Naihati at 02.09 hrs and reach Sealdah at 03.20 hrs. A total of 19 coaches, including two of SLR/D, six of general second class, nine of sleeper class, one each of AC third and AC second each will be attached in it.

**STOPPAGE:** For the convenience of passengers the railway administration has decided to provide stoppage to 02530/02529 Lucknow-Pataliputra-Lucknow special train at Ekma station with immediate effect till December 31, CPRO PK Singh said. As a result the 02530 Lucknow-Pataliputra special train will arrive at Ekma at 12.30 hrs and depart at 12.32 hrs. Similarly, 02529 Pataliputra-Lucknow special will reach Ekma at 18.30 hrs and depart at 18.32 hrs.

## Route march taken out

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

As per the direction of the Headquarters the police took out a route march in areas under each police station of the district on Saturday. In Mirzapur city the route march was taken out from Vasilganj which was led by SP Ajay Kumar Singh himself. The march passed through the main markets, including Girdhar Ka Chauraha, Beltar, Dankeenganj etc. During the march the SP interacted with shopkeepers and said that nobody had to be scared. He told the common people to feel free to approach the police without any hesitation and abide by the law. He made it clear that the march was taken out to instil confidence among people. He



directed the police force to remain aware with the ground realities and collect the ground level feedback which could help in maintaining law and order. During the march the SP was accompanied by ASP city, CO city, City Kotwal and heavy police force, including PAC.

**DOWRY DEATH CASE:** ADJ (First), Fast Track Court, on Saturday awarded 10 years' imprisonment to an accused in

a dowry death case. As per the police, in year 2013 a case was registered at Halia police station against Amrit Pal, son of Jhuru Pal, a resident of Aunra village under Halia police station, for murdering his wife for dowry. The then CO Amit Kishor investigated the case and submitted the chargesheet. During the trial government counsel Sachchidanand Tiwari pleaded against the accused and argued for rigorous punishment. On the basis of substantial evidence the court sentenced him to undergo 10 years' imprisonment for the crime under Section 304-A of IPC, two years' imprisonment with ₹3,000 fine under Section 498 A of IPC and two years' imprisonment along with ₹3,000 fine under Dowry Prohibition Act.

## Gkp-LTT spl timing revised

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The railway administration has revised the timings of special trains being run for the convenience of the passengers as per the new timetable. As a result the following special trains are being run as per the revised time. Therefore, the passengers are requested to know about the revised schedule of trains during the reservation or before travelling in order to avoid inconvenience. All coaches in these trains will be of reserved category and passengers travelling in them will have to follow the Covid-19 guidelines, CPRO PK Singh said.

**GKP-LTT SPL:** According to the revised timetable, the 01056 Gorakhpur-Lokmanya Tilak Terminus special train from December 1 will depart from Gorakhpur at 06.40 hrs on every Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday, from Deoria Sadar at 07.38 hrs, from Belthara Road at 08.28 hrs, from Mau Jn at 09.15 hrs, from Muhammadabad at 09.33 hrs, from Azamgarh at 10.02 hrs, from Saraimir at 10.44 hrs, from Khorasan Road at 11.07 hrs, from Shahganj at 12.10 hrs, from Jaunpur at 13.03 hrs, from Zafarabad at 13.19 hrs, from Mariahu at 13.47 hrs, from Janghai at 14.33 hrs, from Phulpur at 14.56 hrs, from Prayagraj Junction at 16.05 hrs at 16.40 hrs, Satna at 20.35 hrs, Jabalpur at 23.00 hrs, Itarsi at 02.45 hrs Bhusaval at 07.40 hrs, Nashik Road at 11.05 hrs, Kalyan at 14.45 hrs, Thane at 15.10 hrs and reach Lokmanya Tilak Terminus at 16.05 hrs. During the return journey 01055 Lokmanya Tilak Terminus-Gorakhpur Special will from December 2 leave Lokmanya Tilak Terminus every Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday at 05.45 hrs, Siwan at 06.45 hrs, Bhatni at 08.00 hrs, Belthara Road at 08.28 hrs, Muhammadabad at 09.41 hrs, Azamgarh at 10.10 hrs, Saraimir at 10.53 hrs, Khorasan Road at 11.12 hrs, Shahganj at 12.10 hrs, Jaunpur at 13.03 hrs, Zafarabad at 13.18 hrs, Mariahu at 13.45 hrs, Janghai at 14.28 hrs, Phoolpur at 14.56 hrs, Prayagraj Junction at 16.40 hrs, Satna at 20.35 hrs, Jabalpur at 23.00 hrs, on second day Itarsi at 02.45 hrs, Bhusaval at 07.40 hrs, Nashik Road at 11.05 hrs, Kalyan at 14.45 hrs, Thane at 15.10 hrs and reach LTT at 16:05 hrs. During the return journey 01059 LTT-Chhapra special will from December 1 leave LTT every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday at 10.55 hrs, Thane at 11.15 hrs, Kalyan at 11.40 hrs, Nashik Road at 14.30 hrs, Bhusaval at 17.40 hrs, Itarsi at 22.10 hrs, on second day Jabalpur at 01.20 hrs, Satna at 04.10 hrs, Prayagraj Junction at 08.35 hrs, Phulpur at 10.43 hrs, Janghai Jn at 11.40 hrs, Mariahu at 12.40 hrs, Zafarabad at 13.17 hrs, Jaunpur at 13.33 hrs, Shahganj at 14.55 hrs, Khorasan Road at 15.18 hrs, Saraimir at 15.31 hrs, Azamgarh at 16.05 hrs, Muhammadabad at 16.28 hrs, Mau Jn at 17.06 hrs, Belthara

Road at 17.39 hrs, Bhatni at 19.02 hrs, Mairwa at 19.40 hrs, Siwan at 20.10 hrs and reach Chhapra at 21.05 hrs. The rake composition in this train will remain as notified earlier.

**CHHAPRA-LTT SPL:** According to the revised schedule, 01060 Chhapra-Lokmanya Tilak Terminus special from December 3 will leave Chhapra every Monday, Thursday and Saturday at 05.45 hrs, Siwan at 06.45 hrs, Bhatni at 08.00 hrs, Belthara Road at 08.28 hrs, Muhammadabad at 09.41 hrs, Azamgarh at 10.10 hrs, Saraimir at 10.53 hrs, Khorasan Road at 11.12 hrs, Shahganj at 12.10 hrs, Jaunpur at 13.03 hrs, Zafarabad at 13.18 hrs, Mariahu at 13.45 hrs, Janghai at 14.28 hrs, Phoolpur at 14:56 hrs, Prayagraj Junction at 16.40 hrs, Satna at 20.35 hrs, Jabalpur at 23.00 hrs, on second day Itarsi at 02.45 hrs, Bhusaval at 07.40 hrs, Nashik Road at 11.05 hrs, Kalyan at 14.45 hrs, Thane at 15.10 hrs and reach LTT at 16:05 hrs. During the return journey 01059 LTT-Chhapra special will from December 1 leave LTT every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday at 10.55 hrs, Thane at 11.15 hrs, Kalyan at 11.40 hrs, Nashik Road at 14.30 hrs, Bhusaval at 17.40 hrs, Itarsi at 22.10 hrs, on second day Jabalpur at 01.20 hrs, Satna at 04.10 hrs, Prayagraj Junction at 08.35 hrs, Phulpur at 10.43 hrs, Janghai Jn at 11.40 hrs, Mariahu at 12.40 hrs, Zafarabad at 13.17 hrs, Jaunpur at 13.33 hrs, Shahganj at 14.55 hrs, Khorasan Road at 15.18 hrs, Saraimir at 15.31 hrs, Azamgarh at 16.05 hrs, Muhammadabad at 16.28 hrs, Mau Jn at 17.06 hrs, Belthara

Road at 17.39 hrs, Bhatni at 19.02 hrs, Mairwa at 19.40 hrs, Siwan at 20.10 hrs and reach Chhapra at 21.05 hrs. The rake composition in this train will remain as notified earlier.

**JAYNAGAR-NEW DELHI SPL:** The railway administration is revising the timing of special trains being run for the convenience of the public as per the new timetable. Consequently, the 02561 Jaynagar-New Delhi daily special will run from December 7 and 02562 New Delhi-Jaynagar daily special from December 8 until further notice. The 02561 Jaynagar-New Delhi daily special will from December 7 leave Jaynagar at 17.20 hrs, Madhubani at 17.46 hrs, Sakri at 18.09 hrs, Darbhanga at 19.00 hrs, Samastipur at 20.55 hrs, Muzaffarpur at 21.50 hrs, Hajipur at 22.55 hrs, Sonpur at 23.07 hrs, on second day from Chhapra at 00.50 hrs, Suraimanpur at 01.26 hrs, Ballia at 02.08 hrs, Ghazipur City at 03.05 hrs, Aunrihar at 03.48 hrs, Varanasi at 04.55 hrs, Gyanpur Road at 05.46 hrs, Prayagraj at 07.25 hrs, Kanpur Central at 09.40 hrs, Aligarh at 13.10 hrs, Ghaziabad at 14.50 hrs and reach New Delhi at 15.40 hrs. During the return journey 02562 New Delhi-Jaynagar special will from December 8 leave New Delhi daily at 21.15 hrs, Aligarh at 23.00 hrs, the second day Kanpur Central at 02.40 hrs, Prayagraj at 05.35 hrs, Gyanpur Road at 07.00 hrs, Varanasi at 08.15 hrs, Aunrihar at 08.52 hrs, Ghazipur City at 10.05 hrs, Ballia at 11.10 hrs, Suraimanpur at 11.55 hrs, Chhapra at 12.55 hrs, Sonpur at 14.00 hrs, Hajipur at 14.15 hrs, Muzaffarpur at 15.30 hrs, Samastipur at 17.00 hrs, Darbhanga at 17:50 hrs, Sakri at 18.11 hrs, Madhubani at 18.28 hrs and reach Jaynagar at 19.23 hrs. The coach composition of the train will remain as notified earlier.

# Tributes paid to Dr Ambedkar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Hundreds of Congressmen paid tributes to the architect of Indian Constitution, Dr BR Ambedkar on his 64th death anniversary at the party office, Tilak Hall, on Sunday.

The Congressmen led by party's city president, Har Prakash Agnihotri offered floral tributes to the portrait of Dr Ambedkar and appealed to the people to emulate the great leader in the present times.

Agnihotri said Dr Ambedkar struggled throughout his life to restructure the Indian society on egalitarian and humanitarian principles. He said Dr Ambedkar's vision of nation-building was geared with social transformation and human progress and his contribution pervaded the entire gamut of social life.

Agnihotri said Dr Ambedkar was tirelessly devoted to the reconstruction of modern India and he not only contributed towards restructuring of the Indian social structure but also in the fields of agriculture, industrialisation and modernisation.

H said Dr Ambedkar believed that development of India was not possible without rapid industrialisation and suggested that government should start large-scale industries and



Congressmen paying homage to Dr Bheem Rao Ambedkar at Tilak Hall on Sunday. Pioneer

smaller industries should be kept in private sector and the insurance and transport companies should be nationalised.

Prominent among those who took part were SD Mishra, Iqbal Ahmed, Ashok Dhanvik, CM Mishra, Munna Khan and Pramod Gupta.

The Samajwadi Party

members also paid tributes to Dr Ambedkar at the party office in Navin Market on Sunday.

The SP leaders appealed to the youth to follow the path shown by Dr Ambedkar who drafted the Constitution of India and wanted a casteless society.

They said Dr Ambedkar wanted to remove untouchability from society.

Prominent among those present on the occasion included Ajay Yadav, Saif Chistia, Deepak Khote, Ranvir Singh, Asif Quadri, Ms Shakila Bano and Sandeep Shukla.

## Healthy soils foundation of food system: Dr Aamir

**KANPUR (PNS):** Dr Aamir from the chemical engineering department of the Indian Institute of Technology's Kanpur campus ( IIT-K) said the onus rested on scientists to encourage people around the world to engage in proactively improving soil health and fight soil biodiversity loss.

Addressing a virtual session on World Soil Day on the theme 'Keep soil alive, protect soil biodiversity', Dr Aamir said healthy soils were the foundation of the food system and were the basis for agriculture and the medium in which nearly all food-producing plants grew.

He said healthy soils produced healthy crops that in turn nourished people and animals. He said healthy soil was directly linked to food quality and quantity.

He said soils supplied the essential nutrients, water, oxygen and root support that food-producing plants needed to grow and flourish. He said they also serve as a buffer to protect delicate plant roots from drastic fluctuations in

temperature. He added that a healthy soil also contributed to mitigating climate change by maintaining or increasing its carbon content.

Dr Aamir explained that the soil organic matter, which was the product of on-site biological decomposition, affected the chemical and physical properties of the soil and its overall health. He said its composition and breakdown rate affected the soil structure and porosity. He said nutrient exchanges between organic matter, water and soil were essential to soil fertility and needed to be maintained for sustainable production purposes. He added that when the soil was exploited for crop production without restoring the organic matter and nutrient contents, the nutrient cycles were broken, soil fertility declined and the balance in the agro-ecosystem was destroyed.

Dr Aamir, who has several awards under his belt, said food availability relied on soils, nutritious and good quality food and animal fodder which could only be produced if soils

were healthy living soils.

He said over the last 50 years, advances in agricultural technology and increased demand due to a growing population and had put soils under increasing pressure.

He said in many countries, intensive crop production had depleted the soil, jeopardising the soil's productive capacity and ability to meet the needs of future generations.

He said with a global population that was projected to exceed nine billion by 2050, compounded by competition for land and water resources and the impact of climate changes, current and future food security hinged on the ability to increase yields and food quality using the soils that were already under production today.

He said holistic production management systems that promoted and enhanced agro-ecosystem health that were socially, ecologically and economically sustainable were necessary in order to protect soils while maintaining high productive capacities.

Dr Aamir said farmers played a central role in this aspect and numerous and diverse farming approaches promoted the sustainable management of soils with the goal of improving productivity, for instance agroecology, conservation agriculture, organic farming, zero tillage farming and agroforestry.

He said ultimately, a better understanding of the linkages between soil life and ecosystem functioned and the impact of human interventions will enable the reduction of negative impacts and allow to capture the benefits of soil biological activity more effectively for a more sustainable and productive agriculture.

Discussing nutrient cycling he referred to the many pathways through which nutrients were added to, removed from, and changed within the soil. He said they were found in two basic forms in the soil organic and inorganic and said while organic form of nutrients contained carbon in the structure of the molecule, inorganic forms did not.

# Covid-19 global surveillance system developed



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A first-of its kind Covid-19 global surveillance system has been developed. It can dynamically track not just where the virus is now, but where it is going, how fast it will arrive and whether that speed is accelerating. Named as GASSP (Global Sars-Co2 Surveillance Project), it is being rolled out in 195 countries.

“Now we can easily identify outbreaks at their beginning,” said Lori Post, the lead investigator and director of the Buehler Center for Health Policy and Economics at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. “You want to know where the pandemic is accelerating, how fast it is moving and how that compares to prior weeks.”

Post worked along with James Oehmke of Northwestern, and Charles Moss of the University of Florida to develop the novel surveillance system, based on path-breaking research led by Oehmke.

“We can inform leaders where the outbreak is occur-

ring before it shows up in overcrowded hospitals and morgues,” Post said. “Current systems are static and ours is dynamic.”

Users will have metrics of the whole world at their fingertips. The global surveillance app analyzes the virus in the same way the field of economics measures the expansion and contraction of the economy.

“These methods are tried and tested, but this is the first time they are being applied to disease surveillance,” Post said. “We had the model and metrics validated for medical surveillance and published. We know they work.”

Existing surveillance can't identify pandemic shifts or signal a coming outbreak.

Existing surveillance, which hasn't changed much in 50 years, measures the caseload in terms of new and cumulative deaths and infections. They don't identify significant shifts in the pandemic or sound the alarm when there is alarming acceleration of disease transmission signaling an outbreak.

## 47K paramilitary personnel recover from Covid infection

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Out of the over 49,000 Covid-19 cases in the Central paramilitary forces over 47,000 have been cured and only a little over 1,900 (below four per cent) are currently active cases.

As per consolidated data available till Thursday, a total of 49,152 paramilitary personnel contracted the viral disease and 47,057 men recovered from the illness. A total of 1,911 infected personnel constitute active cases in the ranks and the consolidated death toll in the Forces is 184.

The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) has reported 14,189 cases and 13,845 patients have recuperated from the illness. The Force has at present 270 active cases and it lost 74 lives to the deadly disease.

The Border Security Force (BSF) contracted 13,939 Covid-19 infection but 13,400 patients have defeated the disease and only 495 active



cases in its ranks. It reported 44 deaths due to the disease.

The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) reported 10,182 cases of Covid-19 infection of which 9,410 have recovered and 732 men continue to be active cases. It lost 40 lives to the infection.

Likewise, the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) recorded 5,320 cases of Covid-19 infection of which 5,116 patients have been cured and only 191 active cases are there in its ranks presently.

The Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) had reported 4,564 cases of Covid-19 infec-

tion and 4,349 patients have recuperated from the disease. There are 203 active cases in its ranks and it suffered 12 casualties.

The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) reported 631 cases of Covid-19 disease and as many as 620 personnel have been cured. It has 10 active cases now and it lost one life to the viral disease.

The National Security Guards (NSG) reported 327 Covid-19 cases of which 317 patients have been cured and there are 10 active cases without any casualty.

## Corona has driven courts to adapt to technology: Ex-SC judge Sikri

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought enormous hardship to people but it has also driven courts to adapt to technology to a far greater extent, former Supreme Court judge Justice (retired) A K Sikri has said.

Justice (Retd) Sikri, however, said the judiciary has the challenge to make legal technology available to the courts in the remotest parts of the country.

“We are a vast country. We have not just the Supreme Court or high courts in metropolitan cities, but there are smaller high courts, mufassil courts and district courts in different parts of the country and at remote places which may not be having this technology,” he said, adding the Supreme Court is already working on these challenges.

Justice (Retd) Sikri, who is now an international judge at the Singapore International Commercial Court, was speak-



ing on Saturday at a virtual discussion on the ‘Legal Powerlist 2020’, an event to identify and felicitate hundreds of successful and upcoming lawyers, law firms and law schools in the country.

The event was also attended by senior advocate R Venkatramani, Raian Karanjawala, the Managing Partner of Karanjawala & Co. Law firm; and Karan Kalia, the co-founder and CEO of legal tech platform Legitquest.

Talking about the criticism that judges and the judiciary have been facing on social

media, Venkatramani said rather than pointing towards individuals who behave recklessly on online platforms, there is a need to develop a culture of using social media responsibly.

“There is no option but to live in an open society. Social media is an unowned media. The first milestone to be crossed is that we need to develop a higher level of culture of how one should use social media responsibly. It's useless to talk about picking up individuals who seamlessly cross the limits of this responsibility,” he said.

## Telugu actress Vijayashanthi quits Cong, to join BJP today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After Khusbu Sundar in Tamil Nadu, it's Vijayashanthi in Telangana. The yesteryears' A-list actress, who during her prime was also known as the Amitabh Bachchan of south cinema, quit the Congress on Sunday and is set to rejoin the BJP on Monday.

She arrived in the national Capital along with Telangana BJP chief Bandi Sanjay Kumar and met Union Home Minister Amit Shah and his deputy and Secunderabad MP G Kishan Reddy.

The former MP was not active in Congress activities and programmes in the state for the past few months as she was not happy with the treatment she was being given in the party, sources said.

“Vijayashanthi will formally join BJP tomorrow. She met with Amit Shah today. All those whom KCR sidelined, will join BJP,” BJP leader G Vivek Venkatswamy said.

Her return to the BJP fold comes at a time when the party has stormed the TRS citadel in Telangana by bagging the Dubbak Assembly seat, a TRS bastion and becoming the number two party in the



GHMC polls. The BJP's impressive performances have continued after winning four Lok Sabha seats last year.

Vijayashanthi had first joined the BJP in 1998 and was made the secretary of BJP's Women's Wing. During the Telangana separate statehood movement, she worked closely with TRS chief K Chandrasekhar Rao. She then became an MP from Medak on a TRS ticket and represented the constituency between 2009 and 2014 but thereafter, she parted ways with the TRS and joined the Congress the same year.

During the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, Vijayashanthi had gone to the extent of calling Prime Minister Narendra Modi a “terrorist” while speaking at a public gathering in

Telangana's Shamshabad.

“Everyone is scared that at what moment Modi will shoot the bomb. He looks like a terrorist. Instead of loving people, he is scaring people. It's not the way how a PM should be,” she said.

But her entry into the BJP, a sort of homecoming, will give a shot in the arm to the saffron party, which has set its eyes on capturing power in Telangana in 2023.

In October, actor-turned-politician Khusbu Sundar had quit the Congress and joined the BJP within hours after that in the presence of BJP General Secretary CT Ravi, BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra and other members. She resigned from the primary membership of Congress, alleging “suppression”.

## 411m Indians need rehabilitation post Covid recovery: Study

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Covid-19 has highlighted the importance of rehabilitation with its post-recovery complications and the need for it to be part of the global public health agenda. And India is among the five countries in the world with the greatest number of people needing rehabilitation services such as physical and occupational therapy or speech and language therapy.

According to a World Health Organisation (WHO) study published in The Lancet journal, China tops the list with 460 million people in need of rehabilitation services followed by India (411 million), the US (149 million), Indonesia (76 million) and Brazil (70 million).

According to the paper ‘Global Estimates Of The Need For Rehabilitation Based On The Global Burden Of Disease Study 2019’, which provides the first-ever global and regional figures on the number of people in need of rehabilitation, in India, the greatest need is for fractures (90 million people) while in China, it is hearing loss (95 million).

Lower back pain (568 million people), hearing loss (403 million people), and bone fractures (436 million people) accounted for the greatest need for rehabilitation therapies, the study said underlining that one third of the world's population are living with a health condition that benefit from rehabilitation.

The need for rehabilitation services, such as physical and occupational therapy or speech and language therapy, has increased 63 per cent since 1990, from 1.48 billion to 2.41 billion people who could benefit at least once in the course of their illness or injury, mostly because of growing ageing population, as per the study, jointly prepared by the WHO and the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME).

The findings indicate the



urgent need to scale up rehabilitation, particularly at primary health care level, to ensure services reach those who need them. The study provides a strong case for policymakers to prioritize rehabilitation to address the functioning needs of their population.

“People living with the long-term consequences of covid-19 have spoken to me again and again about their need for rehabilitation services, along with the need for recognition, and further research,” said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director-general of the WHO.

“Those requiring rehabilitation services may include survivors of both infectious and noncommunicable disease, accidents, conflicts, and so many other health problems that arise over the course of one's life. Rehabilitation services must be part of essential packages of care as part of every country's journey towards universal health coverage,” he said.

The new global estimates establish rehabilitation as a key strategy for Universal Health Coverage in the 21st century, experts said.

Dr Somnath Chatterji, one of the authors of the study, from the WHO said: “Rehabilitation services are often seen as a fallback strategy when preventive or curative interventions have failed, or as a disability-specific service needed only by a minority of the population.”

The study is based on data from the Global Burden of Diseases, Injuries and Risk



## Implement new health warnings with enhanced pictorial images on tobacco products, States told

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

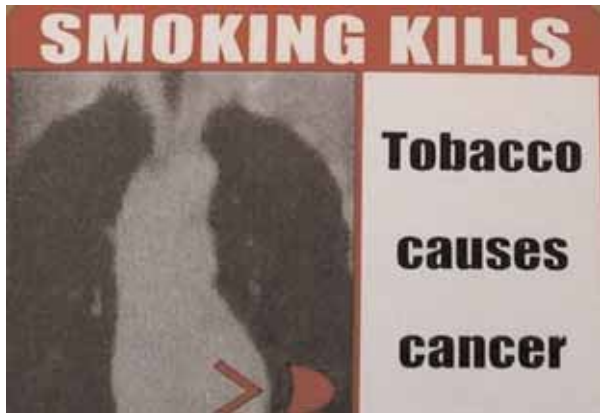
The Union Health Ministry has asked all States to ensure implementation of a new set of health warnings with enhanced pictorial images on all tobacco products as notified by it.

“The depiction of specified health warnings would bring greater awareness and sensitization about the serious and adverse health consequences of tobacco use especially among the youth, children and the illiterate.

“Effective implementation of the Rules depends on concerted efforts of all ministries and departments concerned of the Government of India as well as State Governments. I shall be grateful, if you could kindly take the necessary steps to ensure that the provisions of these Rules are duly enforced, under your jurisdiction,” Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said in a recent letter to chief secretaries and administrators of all states.

The Union health ministry had notified the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Packaging and Labelling) Rules on March 15, 2008.

The rules have been amended from time to time for display of specified health warnings on all tobacco product



packs, thereby mandating the display of specified health warnings on both sides of tobacco product packages covering 85 per cent of the principal display area.

According to the rule five of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Packaging and Labelling) Rules, the specified health warning on tobacco product package shall be rotated every twenty-four months.

The new sets of health warnings with enhanced pictorial images on all tobacco products were notified on July 21

All tobacco products manufactured or imported or packaged on or after December, 1, 2020, shall display the first set of images while the second set

of images will be displayed by the tobacco products manufactured or imported or packaged on or after December 1.

“Any person engaged directly or indirectly in the manufacture, production, supply, import or distribution of cigarettes or any tobacco products shall ensure that all tobacco product packages shall have the specified health warnings exactly as prescribed.

“Violation of the above mentioned provision is a punishable offence with imprisonment or fine as prescribed in Section 20 of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003,” the Ministry had said.

Factors Study (GBD) from 1990 to 2019 (the latest year for which data is available),

which estimates the incidence and prevalence of more than 300 diseases and injuries. The

researchers analyzed data for all 204 countries and territories in the GBD study.

## Cyclone formations in Arabian sea not uncommon, says IMD

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Four of the five cyclones that originated either in the Bay of Bengal or in the Arabian Sea this year were in the category of severe cyclonic storm or above, including Amphan which had escalated into a super cyclone. But formation of cyclones is not uncommon in the Arabian Sea during the pre-monsoon period and in the Bay of Bengal during the post-monsoon months of October to December. Three cyclones – two in the Bay of Bengal and one in the Arabian Sea – have formed in the last one month.

India Meteorological Department (IMD) Director General Mrutunjay Mohapatra said since 1990 four cyclones have formed every year in the seas along the eastern and western coasts (Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea) of the country. “It is normal to have five cyclones a year,” he said.

‘Amphan’ was the first cyclone of the year. It formed in the Bay of Bengal and intensified into a ‘super

cyclonic storm’, the first since the super cyclone of Odisha that had ravaged the state in 1999, killing thousands. ‘Amphan’, however, weakened a bit to become an ‘extremely severe cyclonic storm’ and slammed the coasts of West Bengal and Bangladesh on May 19.

Another circulation formed in the Arabian Sea within a fortnight, intensifying into a severe cyclonic storm which was called ‘Nisarga’. The storm hit Alibag, near Mumbai, and helped monsoon to arrive in Kerala on its normal date of June 1. Cyclone ‘Gati’ intensified into a very severe cyclonic storm. It affected the western coast during its intensification stage, bringing rains over Kerala, but it crossed the Somalia coast on November 23. Another cyclone was brewing in the Bay of Bengal at the same time.

Cyclone ‘Nivar’ was initially projected to be a ‘severe cyclonic storm’. However, it intensified into a ‘very severe

cyclonic storm’, crossing the Tamil Nadu coast on the night of November 25. Less than a week later, another storm gathered momentum and intensified into a cyclonic storm. Cyclone ‘Burevi’ crossed the Sri Lanka coast on November 2 but as it crossed the south Tamil Nadu coast, having its intensity reduced to deep depression. Cyclones not only bring violent winds, but rains accompanied by storm surge.

“A very severe cyclonic storm has a wind speed of 120-160 kilometres per hour and can uproot trees, partially damage communication lines and also damage thatched huts. “An extremely severe cyclonic storm can lead to catastrophic damage, uproot power and communication lines and damage houses and other infrastructure,” Mohapatra said. An extremely severe cyclonic storm has a wind speed of 160 to 220 kilometres per hour.

The IMD chief added the storm surge during Amphan was up to 10 metres when sea waters travelled inland.

## US removes ETIM from list of terrorist outfits

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The US has removed the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) from the list of terrorist organisations, signaling Washington's intent of beginning to recognise the rights of the Uyghurs to fight for their homeland, watchers of developments linked to the East Turkistan Republican Party, considered to be ideologically close to the ETIM, said.

“The removal of the East Turkistan Islamic Movement

from the terror list may lead to more horrific and accelerated Chinese genocide against the completely empty-handed Uyghurs,” the sources said.

The Uyghur community residing beyond East Turkistan are also likely to be persecuted by soft and hard means in accordance with Chinese traditions and methods, they said.

“China is not so afraid of the Uyghurs because the Uyghurs do not have the tools, ability or power to get

rid of China by military force. But China fears that the Uyghur struggle for independence will gain the support of countries such as the United States, Europe and India, so the Chinese have resorted to all tricks to discredit the Uyghurs in the Western world,” they further said.

The political existence of the Uyghurs depends on getting rid of China and accordingly the National Anthem of the East Turkistan State, established on November 12,

1933, is known as the March of Salvation, the outfit said.

“The Uyghurs declared independence in the last century in Kashgar in 1933 and on November 12, 1944 in Gulja. Since then, although we have not been able to get rid of China, but have been looking for all possible ways to get rid of them, it said.

The outfit also views Afghanistan as a gateway of resolution of the Uyghur issue and denied the Chinese charge that the group has any relations with the Al Qaeda.

The ETIM was created and enlarged entirely under China's intelligence program. They were deployed to Afghanistan? Pakistan and Syria and vigorously promoted through the Chinese-influenced media, and have played a role in China's plan to portray the entire Uyghur nation as terrorists and lay the groundwork for genocide, it alleged, adding that the Uyghurs in general are peace-loving and dream for building a modern state for the community.

## Fight to the finish

The Govt, which could have avoided the stir with a consensual approach, is ready to amend laws but farmers are adamant



**T**he farmers' protests are no longer confined to a sectoral concern. As the agitators have descended on Delhi, hoping to be heard justly in the corridors of power, they have gathered traction from transport, taxi unions and civil society. And they have held their own admirably, shunning all politicians and even Government hospitality, choosing to drink their own tea, having their own food, sleeping in their own shelters and even making their own presentation on gaps in the contentious new farm laws. In fact, such is the spontaneous combustion that the stir is turning into a people's movement that, though leaderless, has a beehive unity about

it and tugs at most who have chased big city dreams, coming as they do from farming families themselves. Besides, it epitomises the subterranean resentment of the citizenry at top-down impositions of an autocratic and arrogant dispensation that interprets all dissent as anti-national than rational. If the stalemate drags on, there is a real chance of food supplies getting affected. With sustained pressure, the Government is now not only willing to give the farmers a listen, it is keen to walk the whole distance to the extent of giving a written assurance on Minimum Support Price (MSP) and procurement, just stopping short of legalising it. And given the corporatisation that farm liberalisation entails, the Government is also willing to consider the farmers' demand to approach the courts in case of a dispute over contract farming to shield them from being exploited. The big question is why did the Government act in haste and repent at leisure? Much of the issues raised by farmers, including convening a special Parliament session to debate the farm laws, had already been a part of the Opposition's demand for a consensual approach akin to that followed in rolling out the Goods and Services Tax (GST). If only the Government had been reasonable, consulted all stakeholders and worked a common ground with States than road-rolling the legislation through a voice vote for political point-scoring, things would not have come to such a pass. The prickliest issue has been that of the Minimum Support Price (MSP), which has ensured Government pick-ups of crops, mainly wheat and paddy, at an assured rate and volume. It takes no rocket science to understand that any competitive market policy would ultimately have an impact on a parallel, protected market and shrink it, especially one that has for years led to the prosperity of farmers and has led to an over reliance on and excess production of rice and wheat to the detriment of other crops. Besides, even the corporate majors wouldn't want to deal with trade markets that are under hostile State Governments. Most importantly, the cost of inputs has gone up exponentially, sometimes higher than the MSP Given the unremunerative nature of the MSP itself, farmers are but naturally wary of any contracted price that could drive them down further and, therefore, seeking an equivalence.

Finally, the Government may claim that reforms embedded in the farm Acts would help the small and marginal farmers access markets anywhere, sell directly and get best prices. This argument doesn't fly simply because 86.2 per cent of land holdings are small and marginal, or less than two acres in size. Hence, a majority of our farmers really don't produce enough or are aware enough to get their way around any model, the existing or the proposed, without an interventionist on their behalf, agents or *arhatiyas*. Besides, small farmers can hardly afford the infrastructure to transfer their goods to the local *mandi*, leave aside ferrying them outside their geographical limits. Liberalisation of the farm economy also means putting other farmer-friendly enablers in place, from cold storage to warehousing to connectivity between markets. Only then can the rest make sense. In fact, Bihar did away with Government *mandis* in 2006 but farmers there are still struggling, as dependent on their agents to get the prices, because of the absence of supporting infrastructure. And as farmers in Gujarat, who were sued by Pepsico, and sugarcane growers chasing their dues will tell you, corporatisation hasn't worked. The Government needs to be more transitional and graded when it comes to farm reforms. Some concerns are worth a listen. For example, the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act 2020, allows buys and sales outside the notified Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) *mandis*, thereby limiting their cartelisation tendencies. A licence won't be required to trade in farm produce and anyone with a PAN card can now buy directly from the farmers. So they want clarity on what "outside" means and contrary to perception that they want the middlemen out, they actually have a trusted bond with their existing commission agents, as their licence is proof enough of their credibility and delivery abilities, and would not want to experiment with an untested model. With most farmers not literate enough about exercising their rights, dispute resolution could also end up being loaded against them. Besides, they would want direct payment rather than have the money routed through banks which could deduct amounts as loan recovery. The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020, does allow the farmer to enter into a contract with a corporate entity at a mutually agreed price. But the mechanism for price fixation is not codified, it's not mandatory for a company to make a written contract and companies may not be penalised for not registering their contracts. So farmers fear that corporations could use their institutional heft to manipulate or brow-beat them into accepting their terms. History proves that farmers' movements have been revolutionary and this being the biggest in recent times, cannot be shrugged off easily.

## Legalise cannabis

With its vote at a UN panel, India's stance on marijuana is changing slowly but surely



**I**ndia's vote at the United Nations Commission for Narcotic Drugs (UNCND) to reclassify marijuana from illegal to legal has raised a few eyebrows. Now, this vote is not legally binding on member states and as we are seeing with Bollywood stars right now, marijuana in all its forms, leaf, flower or resin, remains quite illegal under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (NDPS), 1985. However, several think-tanks, including some with substantial links to the present Government, have come out with white papers that have made a strong case for legalisation.

We believe that marijuana consumption should be legalised and like alcohol, its use should be regulated by the State. There are several compelling arguments for this, starting with the fact that marijuana has been legalised in many parts of the Western world thanks to studies proving that levels of intoxication are manageable and that the active compounds in it can help in pain and stress relief. In addition, in places where the plant has been legalised, the State has received a significant amount of tax revenue from sales and simultaneously reduced costs of policing with lower levels of criminal incarceration for drug crime. This has allowed authorities to go after "hard" drugs like cocaine and heroin and their smuggling networks. In fact, until the strict NDPS was introduced by the Rajiv Gandhi government in deference to the Reagan administration and its so-called "war on drugs," marijuana usage and possession here, while frowned upon, was fairly legal. As the West understands the abilities of a plant that is native to India and is an integral part of our medication and social norms, we should unburden ourselves of the laws that make marijuana consumption and possession illegal. In fact, much like several major research institutions and universities across the world, which have begun research into the abilities of the plant, we could do well to sponsor similar studies and R&D. This does not mean that Indian society will continue its *laissez faire* attitude to drug consumption but the positives outweigh the negatives and would also allow Indian farmers new and innovative sources of income.

# Girls please, not brides

With the Coronavirus resulting in widespread job losses and economic hardships, particularly in rural areas, there is an epidemic of child marriages



REENA AMOS DYES

**I**t was a frantic phone call to her school teacher by a desperate 13-year-old Radha (name changed) that saved her from being married off by her impoverished parents at Anoopshahr town of UP's Bulandshahr district in June. In October, the Karnataka Police saved a 14-year-old from a similar fate in Ballari district. Acting on a tip-off, the police raided the marriage hall, where the wedding was taking place, and arrested eight people under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006. These are not isolated cases or an aberration, though the legal age for the marriage of women in India is 18 years. According to the UNICEF, India accounts for a third of the child brides globally. And now, with the Coronavirus resulting in widespread job losses and economic hardships, particularly in rural areas, there is an epidemic of child marriages in the country. As usual desperate parents, suffering from the socio-economic impact of the outbreak, are trying to get rid of "the extra mouth to feed, clothe and educate." Predictably, the girl child is tradeable.

Incidentally, India is not alone. Around the world, Save the Children warns that a whopping 2.5 million more underage girls could be pushed into marriage in the next five years because of the difficult socio-economic conditions created by the pandemic. In its Global Girlhood Report 2020, the charity has predicted that 5,00,000 more girls are at risk of becoming child brides. This will take up the total number of child marriages to around 12.5 million this year.

Closer home, the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development reported 5,584 cases of child marriage between March and June this year. The children's helpline, Childline, saw a 17 per cent rise in distress calls during the same period. These are worrying statistics because there are already a whopping 17.26 million married children and adolescents within the age group of 10-19 years (seven per cent of the population in the same age group) in India. This is according to child rights group CRY's new study, that was released ahead of the International Day of the Girl Child' on October 11. "The data



also reveals that girls between 10 and 19 years of age account for 75 per cent of all the married children in India," says the distressing study. Trends show that while child marriage affects both girls and boys, its impact on the health, education and human rights of girls, especially from marginalised communities, is higher. Experts say there is also an urgent need to strengthen implementation of the Prohibition of the Child Marriage Act, 2006, particularly at the grassroots, where the ease of social custom overwhelms the need to register complaints.

In fact, so prevalent is the practice that a task-force to re-examine and raise the minimum age of marriage for girls was set up on June 2 by the Union Ministry for Women and Child Development. In mid-October, a worried Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the Government would soon take a decision on this vexed issue after it received the committee's report. However, eradication of child marriage in India is a complex issue because it is not just about poverty, it is also about changing rigid and regressive mindsets of a largely patriarchal society, repressing the sexuality of girls and carrying the burden of their safety in a society where victim-shaming is a norm rather than an anomaly. We, as a society, have to ask ourselves the uncomfortable question as to why do parents in the hinterland, despite the flood of girl child schemes and incentives, too, still prize boys over girls? That's because

**THERE HAS TO BE AN INTEGRATED AND COORDINATED APPROACH TO TACKLE THE ROOT CAUSES PROPORTIONATELY, NAMELY FIGHTING SOCIETAL MALAISE WITH AWARENESS PROGRAMMES, STRENGTHENING AND ENFORCING LAWS AND BUILDING A SAFETY AND REHABILITATIVE NETWORK FOR THE ABUSED**

beyond a point, it is cold economics. Parents in the countryside believe that sons will continue to keep contributing to the family income and hold ancestral land even after they are married. Or such is the expectation. That's why, underprivileged parents prefer to send boys to school and college and not girls. Even when they do send a girl child to school, her education is the first casualty if things get difficult financially. So, till we consider the education of a girl child a dispensable privilege and not a guaranteed right and deprive them of the opportunity to pursue higher education and hence the hope of a paying career, this malaise will not stop.

Another major and more sinister reason for girls in economically weaker societies being married off at a tender age, whether it is in urban India or the countryside, is the regressive mindset over the sexuality and purity of women. In a country obsessed with chastity, the loss of virginity/innocence is considered a great shame and a calamity. So burdened with the task of having to protect the girl child, who is neither safe in public places nor within the home, the parents prefer to marry her off as soon as they can, so that they can be absolved of all responsibility and are done with the onerous task of having to protect her "izzat (honour)." Many reports have also drawn a link between increasing cases of female foeticide in villages to increasing rape cases in recent years. Unless we change our

archaic mindsets and start treating boys and girls as equals, give them both equal nutrition and educational opportunities so that girls too can pursue flourishing careers and provide for their parents in their old age, more Radhas will keep on getting married off like cattle. Sold to the highest bidder by parents mired in poverty. More importantly, till we teach our men and boys to respect women/girls and stop all forms of gender-based and sexual violence, poor and unlettered parents, who are unaware of the detrimental effects on the mental and physical health of girls married off in their childhood, will continue to subject them to this tortuous tradition. Till we, as a society, step out of our comfort zone and report each and every case of child marriage that comes to our notice, we will never see the end of this malaise. If we look the other way when the crime of child marriage involves our domestic help, driver, gardener, washerman or security guard, then we too, are a party to this heinous tradition. We, too, are equally responsible for pushing a hapless child into a world of untold misery and suffering. And we need to stop expecting the Government and the NGOs to solve all societal problems and give us a perfect world. As a society it is incumbent upon us to ensure good health and nutrition of girls. We must ensure that they complete 12 years of schooling and get life skill education and opportunities for higher studies. It is a tragedy and a travesty when someone who can afford to spend on an expensive phone, car, handbag or shoes cannot spend 2000 rupees a month to sponsor a child's education. Till we learn to work together as a society, and in the spirit of "each one, teach one," we cannot break this vicious cycle of inter-generational deprivation, malnutrition, poverty and lack of basic human rights. There has to be an integrated and coordinated approach to tackle the root causes proportionately, namely fighting societal malaise with awareness programmes, strengthening laws and enforcing them diligently, building a safety and rehabilitative network for the abused and most importantly skilling and empowering girls from a young age so that they know when to exercise their rights. Otherwise, girls in the countryside will not be seen as anything more than future brides, a liability rather than an asset.

(The writer is Senior Editor, The Pioneer)

### SOUND BITE

There is major mismanagement in police stations of East Champaran. The police are unable to arrest criminals.

**Bihar BJP chief**  
—Sanjay Jaiswal



To me, this show (*Delhi Crime*) is not about crime. It's about the people who we ask and demand to solve it for us.

**Indo-Canadian filmmaker**  
—Richie Mehta



There is no in-house DDCA academy, and in its absence talented boys can't train all the year round.

**Chairman, DDCA's CAC**  
—Atul Wassan



I expressed my determination to host the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games next year as proof that humanity has defeated the pandemic.

**Japan's Prime Minister**  
—Yoshihide Suga



### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Good for the UK

Sir — Great Britain is leading the global vaccine challenge as it was the first nation to announce 95 per cent success of the Coronavirus shot during the trials. But there are immense logistical challenges involved in preserving the vaccine as it must be stored at minus 70 °C and each person needs two injections, three weeks apart. So, it will inevitably take some months before even the most vulnerable are protected in the UK. As a country, Britain is no longer resting on the hope that it can return to normal in the spring. It is working to go that way. Scientists deserve all credit for achieving this victory against all odds that at times seemed impossible.

**CK Subramaniam**  
Navi Mumbai

#### All in the game

Sir — There was a small controversy in the match between India and Australia as in the last over Ravindra Jadeja was hit by a Mitchell Starc shot ball on the helmet and had to be moved out. Yuzvendra Chahal came on as a concussion substitute and Justin Langer, the Australian coach, was

furious and had an argument with the ICC match referee David Boon.

Chahal only worsened the mood of the Australians by taking three wickets. Aided by T Natarajan's three-wicket haul and aided by Jadeja's blitz that resulted in 46 runs in the final three overs, India managed to get out of jail with a 11-run win at the Manuka Oval in Canberra to

take a 1-0 lead in the T20 three-match series. Jadeja's batting and the 46 runs in the last three overs proved to be crucial for India as they continued their resurgence following their win in the third and final ODI at the same venue on December 2.

But Australia was clearly distracted by the Chahal substitution and they paid the price for poor batting and death overs. This was

India's 12th win in 21 T20I encounters against Australia. It is good to see that the boys in blue have gotten over the fear that they used to have of Australia at one time and now put up a fight at least. Of course Australia, too, is a superior team worthy of respect. At the end of the day, it's all in the game.

**Bhagwan Thadani**  
Mumbai

#### Worrying outcome of the GHMC poll

**T**he outcome of the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation election was disappointing to the extent that the BJP's campaign to polarise voters paid the party some dividends. The only redeeming feature of the outcome is that it can be construed as a rejection of communal politics, too, as the BJP couldn't manage an outright win. The speeches made by some of the leaders during electioneering were very inflammatory and bordered on rank communalism. If still the party found favour with many myopic voters and made gains, it indicates the value of Hindu nationalism as a USP.

However, it is doubtful if the gains made by the BJP in the municipal elections could be relied upon to predict that the party will gain in strength to mount a major challenge to the TRS in the Assembly election, which is still over three years away, and supplant the regional party. Remember that a week is a long time in politics. The BJP's emergence as the principal Opposition party in Telangana is explicable in terms of many people accepting its revivalist agenda. Religious resurgence is a phenomenon now,



in the phase of waxing before waning. The adversarial nature of the ideological war is getting starker in Telangana as elsewhere. The BJP's growth as the second-largest party in States where it is not in power highlights the crystallisation of the ideological battle between those who are for India's continued existence as a secular democracy and those who are hastening its retreat from secularism. One hopes that better sense prevails.

**David Milton**  
Maruthancode

#### A disturbing letter

Sir — In a surprise move that might prove embarrassing for India, 36 British MPs from various parties have written to British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab, asking him to raise the issue of farmers' agitation with the Narendra Modi Government. Significantly, some of these MPs are of Indian origin and others represent many constituents with links to Punjab. The letter seeks an urgent meeting with Raab and an update on representations the foreign office may have made with India on the issue, including during the recent visit by Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla.

Signatories to the letter include MPs from the Labour, Conservative and Scottish National Party, including Virendra Sharma, Seema Malhotra, Valerie Vaz, Nadia Whittome, Peter Bottomley, John McDonnell, Martin Docherty-Hughes and Alison Thewliss. The NDA Government must sort this issue out at the earliest.

**Raghu Singh**  
Delhi

Send your feedback to:  
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

## Of immunity, shots and rejuvenation

A rejuvenated era and civilisation would flourish where the old one existed. Hopefully, this would be one with greater splendour



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

The time when the Coronavirus pandemic assailed the world and brought it to its knees will be remembered because of many unique indicators. It was first and foremost a great equaliser as the virus did not discriminate between the privileged and underprivileged. It was also a time for testing boundaries and a vocabulary, which was quite specific to the experiences of the COVID times. It developed as the war with the virus drew on.

The Corona times have had some buzzwords like “social distancing”, “stay home, stay safe,” “mask up” and the community has lapped it up. Among them a major favourite is “immunity.” This word has found close cousins in the form of several edibles such as the Indian gooseberry, bell pepper, lemon, almonds, turmeric, ginger *et al.* The meaning of immunity as understood in the context of biological systems is a system endowed with the capacity to recognise and tolerate whatever belongs to the self and to recognise and reject what is foreign. It can be derived from antibodies from one’s own body, in which case it is active immunity. It can also be categorised as natural immunity. Whether active or natural, it is in a class apart from passive immunity or indeed for that matter artificial immunity. Passive immunity is derived from antibodies from another body. Mother’s milk is a good example of this. It can also be artificial, say typically antibodies which come from a base like anti-venom.

Enter the world of vaccines. The lure of antibodies or vaccines in the context of the COVID era has been so large that individuals who have never written a serious research paper have become expert authors on it. They are well-paired with eminent names which help draw buyers and what is sold is boosting the printing business.

This is very much like agencies, who have converted unemployed information technology salesmen overnight to set up outlets promoting communication platforms. One myth which needs to be nailed is that the COVID era promoted only unemployment. The truth is, only those who remain committed to sinking business lines were met with unemployment. It will be good to remember that ever since organised business became a reality forever, there are business lines which sank without a trace and business lines which popped up like Pacific atolls. That way there is nothing unique about these times.

That may itself be the subject matter of a future dissertation fancifully nurtured in a newly-celebrated centre of learning, perhaps somewhere on an Asia-Pacific island or a Himalayan State then well-celebrated for its salubrious climate. Did we not ourselves create the alluring Centre of Advanced Studies in the hills of Shimla perched on the top of a small piece of land where once a building called the Rashtrapati Nivas carried a magical charm? Thus it is that like each era, the COVID one is generating its own lexicon and mythologies. Since the era is a continuing one, people may have expected more additions. In spite of predicted, aspired immunity through vaccines, the era of “mature” COVID vaccines is yet to dawn with re-assured credibility. Some knowledgeable reader will no doubt point out that vaccines have already been launched a few days ago in an island State north-west of Europe. May they be blessed!

The truth of the vaccines (without getting into the fanciful and the not so fanciful names they carry) is that nobody is sure with total definitiveness, how long the effect of a given vaccine or a group of vaccines will last. They are still not 100 per cent sure of the kind of booster dose it would require. The list of uncertainties is, understandably, large. Enumerating them may not be necessarily a contribution to the mental peace of people who would wish to see deliverance round the corner. There is nothing wrong with hope and it is nice to recognise that “hope springs eternal in the human breast.” Be that as it may, the attraction of the vaccines is undoubtedly in the immunity which it is expected to usher. A person who may be interested in the science of language may wonder if there couldn’t have been another word to better represent the ideas communicated by the word “immunity.” It evokes an imagery of putting up one’s guard. It helps to protect. There’s nothing wrong with that.

The word “rejuvenation,” however, evokes an imagery of something coming alive again from a low-energy level of existence. Thus it is that rejuvenation has a focussed meaning. It is also a very positive concept. Perhaps gradually the thinking community will talk of the era of COVID as one which had the potential of rejuvenation. The Corona era would be seen as having a duality. One aspect where life itself was under serious disruption. The other aspect would be of the potential of “rejuvenation.” It could and probably would rejuvenate itself. A rejuvenated era and civilisation would flourish where the old one existed. Hopefully, this would be one with greater splendour. Perhaps it is a world round the corner. Of this, vaccines are the precursors!

(The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute)

WHAT BLOOD DOES *DIDI* HAVE IN HER BODY THAT SHE CANNOT STAND THE ‘JAI SHRI RAM’ SLOGAN? YOU ARE ACTING LIKE A... (EXPLETIVE USED).

—BENGAL BJP CHIEF  
DILIP GHOSH



THERE IS ALWAYS A RIVALRY BETWEEN TWO POLITICAL PARTIES. BUT SUCH REMARKS TARGETING A CHIEF MINISTER ARE CONDEMNABLE.

—TMC MP  
SAUGATA ROY

# Close the gender gap

Giving women direct access to financial services might improve their chances to become entrepreneurs, more independent and increase their participation in family decision-making



MOÏN QAZI

Women make up nearly half the population. A nation cannot have sustained economic prosperity and well-being until the central role of women is recognised and their economic health is used as a measure to shape policy. The human race is like a bird that needs both wings to fly. A great opportunity is wasted when women are isolated from the economy. It is now widely surmised that until they are financially literate and empowered around money, we’ll never truly have equality. Women’s participation in the financial system can have significant benefits in terms of economic growth, greater equality and societal well-being. When accessible finance reaches women, the benefits are particularly sustainable. Women channel money into solving more fundamental issues.

Access and usage of financial services are levers for increasing women’s participation in the economy. They enhance their self-confidence and place financial decision-making power in their hands, resulting in large development pay-offs. We need to study the myriad social and behavioural impediments impacting women and use this knowledge to design customised financial product offerings. In failing to develop client experiences rooted in men and women’s fundamentally-different perspectives on finance, banks are missing a very significant business opportunity.

Women often face several barriers which limit their financial inclusion, other than the universal constraints that low-income communities face: Limited access to mobile phones, lower literacy levels, less confidence in using technology and restrictions on travel or social interaction. We need to address them through behavioural and reformist approaches, instead of the usual hardware-based approach. It’s not that the barriers are necessarily different for rural and urban women. But the same barriers are greater for rural ones. We need last-mile banking agents to help mitigate barriers such as dependency on male family members for travel.

Women make for a low-revenue segment but prove to be loyal and profitable clients when served with appropriately-designed products. Financial service providers need to ensure that their charges are not prohibitive and the tools are so designed that they make women’s engagement with financial service providers friendly, safe, affordable and convenient. The real issue is that many women, despite strides in education, simply aren’t as confident and knowledgeable about financial matters as men. This problem persists even when women handle many of their families’ routine money management duties.

Giving women direct access to financial services might improve their chances to become entrepreneurs, more independent and increase their participation in family and community decision-making. There is also an important insurance effect: Better access to credit, savings or insurance services reduces the need to use child labour as a buffer in case of seasonal income fluctuations and transitory income shocks and allows consumption. In the case of transitory income reductions resulting from health shocks, it also allows faster attention to health problems.

It is now recognised that “the women’s market” represents varied segments of clients, from low-income salaried workers (factory workers, domestic help and so on) and low-income self-employed women in the informal sector, to women who work in agricultural value chains, to small- and medium-enterprises. Serving this market not only makes business sense, it also has a positive impact on society as a whole by expanding economic growth and job creation. When accessible finance reaches women,



THERE ARE FIVE CRITERIA THAT NEED TO BE AT THE CORE OF A SUCCESSFUL WOMEN-INCLUSIVE STRATEGY: POSITIONING PRODUCTS AS SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS; POSITIONING INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND NETWORKING AS CORE PRODUCTS; BUILDING THE FINANCIAL CAPABILITY OF WOMEN CUSTOMERS; ESTABLISHING AN INTELLIGENT, NO ‘PINK MARKETING’ ZONE; AND TRAINING STAFF TO LISTEN TO WOMEN RATHER THAN SELL TO THEM, CREATING A RELATIONSHIP-BASED BUSINESS MODEL THAT SUSTAINS THEIR LOYALTY



the benefits are highly productive and sustainable. The positive economic knock-on effects are obvious. Savings rates are higher, repayment rates of family loans are remarkable, families are healthier, social cohesion is stronger and business growth is stable. This shows that increasing women bank account holders will reduce systemic risks in the economy.

Women should be considered as a distinct segment with specific financial services requirements. Instead of disguising male-focussed products as gender-neutral, we need specific products tailored to their unique needs. Low-income women usually need timely and hassle-free credit to increase their financial prospects.

Women have restricted mobility due to gendered social norms, are sometimes unschooled and are not the sole decision-makers of their households. There is a need to actively employ oral information management tools so that these women can transact independently. Women prefer to learn and work with peers. Bankers must build trust in this segment by using women agents in frontline financial operations. Behaviourally, women customers take more time to develop trust in a new product or service. The same holds good for finance and building confidence and trust in them requires more interaction.

In all societies, howsoever oppressed women may be or low the level of their literacy, they remain the stewards of household savings. Women investors have greater patience for long-term returns and show greater self-control, which results in less impulsive and risky decisions.

A lot more awareness has to be created in women about financial services. This underlines the need for inclusion of women policy makers in designing financial services so that the female perspective is kept in mind. If women are not involved in financial product design and service delivery, then the needs and preferences of women customers may be less likely to be reflected in the marketplace.

Most financial systems have been designed by and for men. Therefore, when an application is made for business or personal loan, the lender asks for collateral, such as land or a house. In most cultures, it is men who traditionally own the land or the house, which immediately excludes women. Plus, women are more price-sensitive and expect affordable fees.

Women are usually tasked with stretching the family budget in times of financial hardship. Providing micro-credit or a small affordable and account-linked overdraft could help them cover their day-to-day contingencies in management of household finances. A woman’s financial needs and responsibilities require bundled solutions of savings, credit and insurance because they are more relevant to her circumstances. There are several barriers that constrain the full inclusion of women in formal finance. Product-driven financial literacy is necessary to ensure that poor women are not short-changed. While financial products have their benefits, there is a clear danger of mis-selling, which could damage marginalised segments who have an uncertain cash flow. The philosophy which the financial inclusion community must foster is that engagement creates knowledge and knowledge creates confidence.

Professionals and practitioners have distilled some salient features of financial products and services that foster women’s active participation in formal finance. They find that women don’t have a straight financial journey and have more interruptions and life-stages in their financial lives (withdrawal from employment during pregnancy and in medical contingencies for nursing sick family members). They may remain active users of bank accounts during these periods. Women should be able to reactivate their accounts without much hassle or penalties. Micro-finance services are focussed on women but they are too loan-obsessed. The sector is awash in credit. In several cases, women are availing loans when their

need is insurance, which is not affordable and easily available. The Government should consider recognising semi-formal titles of land as workable collateral.

One of the most promising ways to close the stubbornly persisting gender divide is technology. The large gaps in mobile subscriptions and ownership mean that if digital financial services are going to deliver on their promise to women, these gaps need to be taken into consideration. Mobile phones are an inspirational and utilitarian item that most of them long for. The key to harnessing mobile technology will be to make sure women have equal access to phones in the first place.

The overall gender gap in mobile phone ownership in the developing world is wider than the bank account ownership gaps. The onus is now on mobile providers to start making products more suitable and affordable for women. One reason for the technological divide is that smart-phones are not marketed as an empowerment tool. Making gadgets available will surely help but we have to bring about a change in the overall outlook.

There are five criteria that need to be at the core of a successful women-inclusive strategy: Positioning products as solutions to problems; positioning information, education and networking as core products; building the financial capability of women customers; establishing an intelligent, no “pink marketing” zone; and training staff to listen to women rather than sell to them, creating a relationship-based business model that sustains their loyalty. In short, what is needed for a broader, deeper and more relevant and meaningful financial inclusion is a nuanced approach that tackles the underlying, interconnected barriers that women face in accessing and using financial services. We cannot overcome poverty until both men and women have equal rights and opportunities. This approach makes financial sense for everyone.

(The writer is a development professional)

## Populists turning reckless in wake of Trump’s defeat?

It’s just straws in the wind right now, but his loss is creating a sense in other populist-ruled nations that the juggernaut has stalled



GWYNNE DYER

There is nothing wrong in participating in a sex party of any kind. However, such meetings with many people are illegal under the Coronavirus laws,” said a source in the European Parliament.

To be specific, 25 men attending a loud party above a gay bar in central Brussels is clearly against Belgium’s Coronavirus laws, which allow no more than four people to meet indoors, so somebody called the police. At least three of those arrested were Members of the European Parliament (MEPs).

It was particularly unfortunate for

József Szájer. He’s a senior founding member of Hungary’s ruling Fidesz party, an ultra-nationalist, populist, authoritarian grouping that defends family values and condemns homosexuality. But Szájer was arrested while fleeing that party (with Ecstasy pills in his backpack). According to the Brussels region’s deputy public prosecutor, he was arrested with bloodied hands after a passerby spotted him “fleeing along the gutter” to escape the raid. Szájer admitted he had been at a “house party” but said the drugs the police found on him were planted. He apologised to his family but made no reference to the nature of the party. It’s hard to feel much sympathy for him. Szájer was a leading anti-gay agitator in Fidesz and boasts that he personally drafted the changes to the Hungarian Constitution that defined marriage as being between a man and a woman. He has now resigned as the leader of the Hungarian delegation to the European Parliament, and will doubtless have to quit the Fidesz, too. But there’s a bigger story here.

There was another scandal in Hungary last week, in which Szilárd Demeter, a senior cultural official linked to Fidesz, wrote an opinion piece for a pro-Government outlet comparing Budapest-born American billionaire George Soros, a Jew who fled the Holocaust, to Adolf Hitler. Demeter also called the European Union (EU) “George Soros’ gas chamber”, and claimed that Hungary and Poland, the two Eastern European EU members with extreme-Right populist governments, are “the new Jews” of Europe.

It’s utterly unheinged, and yet it sounds vaguely familiar. The unbridled arrogance, the self-pity, the shameless, hysterical exaggeration are all hallmarks of the new breed of “illiberal” populists. And when they think they are losing, they always up the ante. I’m thinking, of course, of US President Donald Trump’s recent electoral defeat and his subsequent behaviour, especially towards President-elect Joe Biden.

Could that extraordinary recklessness be a communicable disease?

Could it somehow be spreading to Trump’s acolytes overseas as well? Well, consider Poland. The Catholic, ultra-conservative Law and Justice Party has been in power in Poland since 2015. Elected by the same, older, less well-educated, non-urban, deeply religious coalition that backs populist takeovers elsewhere. And as in other populist-ruled countries, there has been a steady erosion both, in human rights and in respect for democratic norms.

The Law and Justice Party was re-elected just last year, and its leader, 71-year-old J Kaczynski, was widely supposed to have his finger on Poland’s pulse. But it all fell apart when a Law and Justice Party-appointed court declared in late October that abortions would not be permitted even in cases of severe foetal abnormality where the child would die immediately after birth. Poland already had tight restrictions on abortion rights, but this turned out to be the last straw for the citizens. Millions of young people, and especially young women, filled the

streets of Poland’s cities in the biggest anti-Government demonstration since the fall of Communism in 1989. They spoke out in favour of the reproductive rights of women. “I wish I could abort my Government”, said one popular banner. The demonstrations continued every day until a new lockdown was declared, and the Law and Justice Party has now backed down, postponing the publication of the court’s decision indefinitely. But something has definitely changed in Poland: Support for Kaczynski has now plunged to only 30 per cent.

Then there’s President Jair Bolsonaro, or “Tropical Trump”, whose favoured candidates were thrashed in all Brazil’s big cities in local elections last month, and the UK’s Prime Minister Boris Johnson, dubbed “Britain Trump” by “The Donald”, who is now trailing the Opposition leader in the polls for the first time ever.

It’s just straws in the wind at this stage, but the defeat of Donald Trump, the populist standard-bearer, is creating a sense in other populist-ruled

countries that the juggernaut has stalled. It seems that the effect hasn’t reached Asia yet. Prime Minister Narendra Modi in India and President Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines are still riding very high in the polls. But the main thing that the populists had going for them was momentum, and in Western countries it seems to be dropping off.

Was there really a “coat-tail effect”? Hard to say. After all, both the Law and Justice Party in Poland and Fidesz in Hungary came to power before Trump was elected in late 2016. But populist leaders across the West seem to believe that somehow or other their fates are tied to Trump’s. It shows in the growing recklessness of their behaviour and in the frequency of their failures. Does this mean that they are all destined to vanish in his wake? Probably not, but that would be nice if it were to happen. The sooner the better.

(Gwynne Dyer’s new book is *Growing Pains: The Future of Democracy and Work*)



### FOREIGN EYE



#### A STORY TOLD ON A CAVE WALL

Around 4,000 years ago, forest communities were fertilising soil, planting trees and clearing land for crop cultivation. Their successors are today’s indigenous populations whose existence is threatened. The ancient cave paintings discovered in Colombia are not just a spectacle, they are the roots of a way of life that our greed has done its best to end. (The Guardian editorial)

# Petrol price up 28 paise, diesel 29 paise a litre

## Rates touch two-year high

**New Delhi:** Petrol price on Sunday was hiked by 28 paise per litre and diesel by 29 paise, the fifth straight day of increase in rates due to firming international oil prices.

Petrol price in Delhi rose to ₹83.41 per litre from ₹83.13. Diesel rates went up from ₹73.32 to ₹73.61 per litre, according to a price notification of oil marketing companies.

Rates crossed ₹90-mark for petrol and ₹80 in case of diesel in Mumbai.

This is the fifth straight day of price hike and the 14th increase in rates since November 20 when oil companies resumed daily price revision after nearly two-month hiatus.

Rates are now at the highest level since September 2018.

In 17 days, the petrol price has gone up by ₹ 2.35 per litre and diesel rate has risen by Rs

**This is the fifth straight day of price hike and the 14th increase in rates since November 20 when oil companies resumed daily price revision after nearly two-month hiatus**

3.15.

Brent crude oil has risen 34 per cent from USD 36.9 per barrel on October 30 to USD 49.5 on December 4 - the last trading day - on hopes that COVID-19 vaccines would lead to demand recovery.

Prior to the November 20 hike in rates in India, petrol prices had been static since September 22 and diesel rates hadn't changed since October 2.

Public sector oil marketing companies - Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd

(BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) - revise rates of petrol and diesel daily based on benchmark international oil price and foreign exchange rate.

They had, however, resorted to calibrating the rates since the pandemic broke out with a view to avoiding volatility in retail prices.

The 58-day hiatus in petrol price revision and 48-day status quo on diesel rates were preceded by no change in rates between June 30 and August 15 and an 85-day status quo between March 17 and June 6.

In Mumbai, the petrol price was raised to ₹90.05 per litre from ₹89.78, while diesel rates went up from ₹79.93 to ₹80.23.

Rates vary from state to state depending on the incidence of local sales tax or VAT.

# FPIs pump in ₹17,818 crore in just 4 trading sessions of December

**New Delhi:** Overseas investors remained net buyers to the tune of ₹17,818 crore in Indian markets in first four trading sessions of December amidst better than expected economic recovery around the world and positive sentiment on the back of various vaccine results.

As per depositories data, foreign portfolio investors (FPI) pumped in a net sum of ₹16,520 crore into equities and ₹ 1,298 crore in the debt segment during December 1-4.

This translated into a total net investment of ₹17,818 crore during the period under review. In November, the total net investment of FPIs stood at ₹62,951 crore.

“The economies world over have continued to improve at a pace that is much better than what was expected and hence, Indian markets may continue to see this kind of an inflow,” Harsh Jain, co-founder and COO at Groww. Said.

The announcements of

various vaccine results is giving confidence to investors about the possible future of the markets, Jain added.

According to Himanshu Srivastava, associate director - manager research, Morningstar India, there has been “unprecedented interest” among FPIs towards emerging markets and India too has been benefiting from this trend.

The pace of net inflows increased considerably after the outcome of US presidential election. Besides, attractive valuation compared to the developed markets and weakness in the dollar has been supporting buying trend, he noted.

Commenting on future of FPI investment, Vinod Nair, head of research at Geojit Financial Services, said that in the near-term, inflows can slowdown as FPIs will have to review the strategy of next year considering the fiscal and monetary policies of developed economies and vaccination plan.

# FDI equity inflows into India cross \$ 500 bn milestone

**New Delhi:** Foreign direct investment (FDI) equity inflows into India crossed the USD 500 billion milestone during April 2000 to September 2020 period, firmly establishing the country's credentials as a safe and key investment destination in the world.

According to the data of the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), the inflows during the period stood at USD 500.12 billion.

About 29 per cent of the FDI came through the Mauritius route. It was followed by Singapore (21 per cent), the US, the Netherlands, Japan (each 7 per cent), and the UK (6 per cent).

India received USD 144.71 billion from Mauritius and about USD 106 billion from Singapore during the period under review.

The other big investors have been from Germany, Cyprus, France and Cayman Islands.

Since 2015-16, FDI inflows have been recording significant

**India received USD 144.71 billion from Mauritius and about USD 106 billion from Singapore during the period under review**

growth. In that fiscal, the country received USD 40 billion FDI, an increase of 35 per cent over the previous year. In 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20, the investments stood at USD 43.5 billion, USD 44.85 billion, USD 44.37 billion and USD 50 billion, respectively.

The key sectors which attracted the maximum of these inflows include services segment, computer software and hardware, telecommunications, trading, construction development, automobile, chemicals, and pharmaceuticals.

“Indian FDI journey began with enactment of FEMA (that replaced the draconian FERA) in 1999. Looking back, the half-trillion dollar FDI in India is an indication of foreign investor's firm belief in India's strong economic fundamentals,

stable political outlook and sustained economic growth which generated returns for investors even during the global recession of 2007-08,” Nischal Arora, Partner-Regulatory, Nangia Andersen India said.

He said as the country cautiously steps into the next decade under the shadow of the ongoing pandemic, it is imperative that the government continues its measures to attract FDI in the manufacturing and high-end technology sectors.

Rajat Wahi, Partner, Deloitte India, said FDI equity inflows crossing USD 500 billion “is indeed a great milestone, and continues to show the trust and faith that the global investors have in India's growing economy”.

This growth is a strong reflection of the market potential of India coupled with the steady state of market reforms that India has undertaken since 2000, including opening up of various sectors of the economy to 100 per cent FDI over the last 5 years, he said.

# I-T Dept allows revision of declarations filed under ‘Vivad Se Vishwas’ scheme

**New Delhi:** Entities filing declaration under the direct tax dispute resolution scheme ‘Vivad Se Vishwas’ can revise them till the time tax authorities issue certificate mentioning details of tax arrear and the amount payable, the Income Tax Department has said.

Issuing a set of FAQs on ‘Vivad Se Vishwas’ scheme, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) also said the scheme cannot be availed in a case where proceedings are pending before Income Tax Settlement Commission (ITSC) or where writ has been filed against the order of ITSC.

The CBDT also clarified that in a case where Mutual Agreement Procedure (MAP) resolution is pending or the assessee has not accepted MAP decision, the related appeal shall be eligible under ‘Vivad se Vishwas’.

“In such case, the declarant will be required to withdraw both MAP application and appeal,” it added.

The I-T department also clarified that a taxpayer would be eligible for

making declarations in cases where the Authority for Advance Ruling (AAR) has ruled in favour of the taxpayer and the department has filed appeal before the High Court/Supreme Court and the total income of the taxpayer was quantified before AAR.

“Yes, the taxpayer is eligible since the income is quantifiable. In such case, since the issue is covered in favour of taxpayer, only 50 per cent of the disputed tax is payable,” the CBDT said.

The government had in October extended for the third time the deadline for making payment under the direct tax dispute settlement scheme ‘Vivad Se Vishwas’ by three months to March 31, 2021, in view of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. However, declarations have to be filed by December 31, 2020.

Nangia Andersen LLP Partner Sandeep Jhunjhunwala said the provision of revision would enable the taxpayer to revise the application filed in case the matter is revisited on account of any errors or factual clar-

ifications.

“The authorities are ensuring that the scheme is utilised by maximum number of taxpayers and as the scheme is new, this provision enabling revision before the certificate is issued would equip the applicant to revise the application in case any errors are discovered or any clarification is subsequently obtained from the Authorities itself,” he added.

Till November 17, the government had garnered Rs 72,480 crore tax through the scheme.

A total of 45,855 declarations were filed under the scheme, involving disputed tax demand of ₹31,734 crore till November 17. Besides, central public sector companies are also settling their dispute totalling Rs 1 lakh crore under the scheme.

The scheme provides for settlement of disputed tax, disputed interest, disputed penalty or disputed fees in relation to an assessment or reassessment order on payment of 100 per cent of the disputed tax and 25 per cent of the disputed penalty or inter-

est or fee.

The taxpayer is granted Immunity from levy of interest, penalty and institution of any proceeding for prosecution for any offence under the Income-tax Act in respect of matters covered in the declaration.

The Direct Tax Vivad se Vishwas Act, 2020 was enacted on March 17, 2020 to settle direct tax disputes locked up in various appellate forum.

In order to provide more time to taxpayers to settle disputes, earlier the date for filing declaration and making payment without additional amount under Vivad se Vishwas was extended from March 31, 2020 to June 30, 2020.

Later again, this date was extended further to December 31, 2020.

Therefore, earlier both the declaration and the payment without additional amount under the Vivad se Vishwas were required to be made by December 31, 2020.

The payment date has since being extended to March 2021.

# Economy to reach pre-Covid-levels by end of FY2022: Niti Aayog

**New Delhi:** India's economic growth is likely to reach pre-COVID-19 levels by the end of the 2021-22 fiscal as the GDP contraction in this financial year is expected to be less than 8 per cent, Niti Aayog vice chairman Rajiv Kumar said on Sunday.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has also revised its forecast of economic growth for the current fiscal year (2020-21) to (-)7.5 per cent as against its earlier forecast of (-)9.5 per cent.

“We should reach pre-COVID-19 levels at the end of fiscal year 2021-22 for sure,” Kumar told PTI when asked about growth projection for the next financial year. He added that the GDP contraction this fiscal is expected at less than 8 per cent.

India's economy recovered faster than expected in the September quarter as a pick-up in

manufacturing helped GDP clock a lower contraction of 7.5 per cent and held out hopes for further improvement on better consumer demand.

Replying to a question on asset monetisation, he said this is ongoing work and it has received attention at the highest level. “We will continue to pursue this and make sure that the targets of asset monetisation are reached,” Kumar stressed.

The government is looking to raise Rs 2.10 lakh crore through disinvestment in the current fiscal. This includes Rs 1.20 lakh crore from Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE) stake sale and Rs 90,000 crore from sale of government stake in financial institutions.

Talking about banking reforms, he said the sector needs further expansion and an increase in competition

because India's private debt to GDP ratio remains limit to mid 50s. Stating that in case of other emerging economy, private debt to GDP ratio is well beyond 100 per cent, Kumar said that “so we need to increase private debt and this will happen when our banking sector will expand”.

On the Indian agriculture sector, he said the Niti Aayog now is very strongly pushing the programmes for chemical free natural farming which has a potential to reduce cost for agriculture production dramatically and also has very positive impact on the environment. Kumar said the expansion of natural farming all over the country will make Indian agriculture more competitive and it also promises to have a significant positive impact on farmers' income.

# MFs selling spree continues; withdraw ₹30,760 cr from equities in November

**New Delhi:** Continuing their selling spree for the sixth straight month, mutual funds pulled out ₹30,760 crore from equities in November on profit booking and experts believe the outflow trend will continue unless there is correction in markets.

With this, net withdrawal by mutual funds (MFs) has reached to over ₹ 28,000 crore in the first 11 months of the ongoing year (January-November), data available with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) showed.

The markets, despite the withdrawals from mutual funds in the last few months, have continued to rise as flows from FPIs have been robust.

Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) have put in over ₹1.08 lakh crore in the Indian equity markets during January-November period of 2020.

“With markets touching new highs and Nifty PE (private equity) valuations crossing 36 times, there is profit book-

ing happening. This is visible from the increased 'outflow' number compared with September -October,” said Vidya Bala, co-founder of PrimeInvestor.In.

The gross inflows have also not picked up much as the impact of COVID-19 on individual investor's income is yet to normalise, she added.

Making similar statement, Omkeshwar Singh, head RankMF at Samco Securities, said there has been a very sharp rally in November coupled with markets at an all-time high, which prompted many investors to book profits as they are not very comfortable at this level and the same can be visible in the latest data.

According to the data, MFs pulled out ₹30,760 crore from equities in November. This has taken the outflow to over ₹68,400 crore since June.

MFs withdrew ₹14,492 crore in October, ₹4,134 crore in September, ₹9,213 crore in August, ₹9,195 crore in July and ₹612 crore in June.

However, they invested over ₹40,200 crore in the first five months of the year (January-May). Of this, ₹30,285 crore was invested in March.

Divam Sharma, co-founder at Green Portfolio, said the rise in markets and higher valuations have triggered the recent withdrawals from equities.

Going ahead, Bala said, “we expect equity outflows to continue to remain tepid until there is some correction in the equity market”.

Kaustubh Belapurkar, Director - Manager Research at Morningstar India said net inflows into equity schemes from investors, which could be triggered by a market correction or a longer term visibility of pick-up in economic growth, would result in net positive investments by MFs in stocks.

Green Portfolio's Sharma said decent correction would induce investors to increase equity allocations going forward.

# Over 80% consumers support Govt's move to cap surge pricing for online taxi platforms: Survey

**New Delhi:** About 81 per cent consumers support union government's move to cap surge pricing for online taxi booking platforms like Ola and Uber at 1.5 times of base fare, according to a survey report by online platform LocalCircles.

Consumers in the survey supported Motor Vehicle Aggregator Guidelines 2020, including the clause to impose a penalty of ₹ 100 on drivers if they cancel the ride.

“The survey that collected responses from more than 16,000 consumers states that 81 per cent approve of the 1.5 times surge pricing cap and the clause of penalty of up to ₹100 if the driver cancels a ride,” the survey report said.

The guidelines were released on November 27, after which LocalCircles did a survey across 219 districts, covering 16,585 respondents.

“Many consumers discussed this becoming a ground reality and urged the various state governments across the country to operationalise these guidelines at the earliest,” LocalCircles founder and chairman Sachin Taparia told PTI.

In a survey done last year, LocalCircles had found that consumers were facing 5-10 times rise in online taxi ride pricing.

The survey this year found that 55 per cent citizens were unable to speak with app taxi customer service in case of an emergency or need.

# IRFC IPO may hit markets this month

**New Delhi:** Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC) initial public offering of about ₹4,600 crore is likely to hit the markets later this month.

This will be the first IPO by a railway NBFC (Non-Banking Financial Company).

“In all probability, it (IPO) will be by the third week but, if the market is not okay then we can go to the first or second week of January also,” Amitabh Banerjee, Chairman and Managing Director, IRFC, told PTI here.

The company, the dedicated financing arm of the Indian Railways, will be going for the anchor investment also.

“The government is planning to have anchor investors in place for this IPO,” he added.

In January 2020, IRFC filed draft papers for its IPO.

According to market sources, the IPO is likely to be worth around ₹4,600 crore.

On reasons for bringing the anchor portion, the CMD said it is a confident market and the anchor investors would be assured of the fact that they will be able to get the desired proportion of issuance without regular bidding.

“They will be able to get the amount that they want to invest in IRFC without going for the bidding route. Also, it will give a lot of confidence to other investors in the market who are sitting on the fence,” he said.

The issue is of up to 178.20 crore shares, comprising a fresh issue of up to 118.80 crore shares and offer for sale of up to 59.40 crore shares by the government, according to the draft prospectus.

On plans to utilise the funds mopped up from the offer, he added that 10 per cent of the IPO proceeds will go to the company's balance sheet and that will increase its net worth and this the firm will be using for raising more money from the market.

He said this will add to the company's capability to explore the market further and garner more funds from the market which is the order of the day because the government is in need of funds for its capex expansion outlay requirements.

“Therefore, 10 per cent will come to my balance sheet and 5 per cent will go to the government of India's exchequer,” he added.

Banerjee said the prospect for

having a good IPO is “very much bright”. “Everyone (domestic and foreign investors) has a lot of interest in this particular issue,” he said.

“Indian Railway Finance Corporation happens to be one of the safest havens as far as investors are concerned,” he added.

Banerjee is hopeful that the IPO will be one of the landmark issuances of the fiscal.

“I hope that it will be one of the landmark issuances in this fiscal which augurs well for the other issuances that are coming forward for the government of India in this fiscal,” the CMD said.

The book running lead managers to the issue are DAM Capital Advisors, HSBC Securities and Capital Markets, ICICI Securities and SBI Capital Markets.

One of the purposes of the IPO is to unlock the value that the company has built over so many years of its existence.

“We have already traversed a period of 34 years since its inception in 1986. So, it will unlock the value of the company, it will bring in better corporate governance norms in the organisation which is extremely necessary in any public sector company.

# Banks need to hire experienced chief risk officers to deal with cyber attacks: Report

**New Delhi:** The banking industry needs to upgrade its IT infrastructure and appoint experienced chief risk officers to effectively deal with incidence of cybercrimes, says a report by Deloitte India.

Observing that banks are the most targeted sector, the report said that nearly 22 per cent of cybersecurity attacks which took place in India in 2018-19 were on the banking industry...These (cyber) attacks are becoming complex day by day. To address these challenges, banks need to appoint experienced Chief Risk Officers who can take the responsibility of skilling the employees and lead investment in military-grade cybersecurity solutions to detect the most advanced attacks,” said the Deloitte report on “Digitizing the post COVID world: The ‘3I’ approach”.

Banking sector, the report added, has been fast to adapt to the changing demands by accelerating efforts toward contactless business operations and speeding up digital transition to enable employees to work from home post the lockdown.

As a result of the technology integration, the sector has been facing several challenges with respect to ensuring data security, the

report said.

It noted that the year 2020 has been quite challenging for Indian banks when it comes to cybersecurity.

After the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, banking operations were disrupted severely as banks struggled to provide uninterrupted services to their clients during various stages of lockdowns.

In the following months, they accelerated their digital transition efforts (such as digital banking and remote access to employees) to ensure contactless business operations.

“With a surge in digitisation, banks also witnessed a spike in cyber attacks as cybercriminals found new opportunities and vulnerabilities,” it said.

Munjal Kamdar, Partner, Deloitte India said banks will likely adopt technologies such as mobile, cloud, remote access out of the need to sustain business during the pandemic and thrive thereafter.

For bank executives, the focus will be on achieving business goals even as they recalibrate strategies to address the ever-evolving cyber risks. Such transformative digitisation will also result in an increased attack surface, he said.

# Value of LIC's equity holdings rallies 40% in H1 to \$ 77 bn

**Mumbai:** The value of equity holdings of the nation's financial powerhouse LIC has crossed USD 77 billion (₹5.7 lakh crore) by the end of the September quarter which is a shade below its record holding of USD 84 billion in the March 2018 quarter, rallying over 40 per cent in the first half, says a report.

But since the second quarter, the market has rallied around 13 per cent which could have increased the value of LIC's portfolio if not in as many percentage but considerably.

According to a weekend note by Kotak Institutional Securities, in the March 2000 quarter, the value of LIC's holdings was a pale of this at USD 4 billion when the BSE market capitalisation was only USD 102 billion and this touched USD 59 billion in March 2010 when the mcap was at USD 1.14 trillion.

Since then it was steadily rising with LIC's stake touching a record of USD 84 billion in March 2018 while the mcap rose to USD 1.67 trillion. The mcap peaked to USD 1.8 trillion in March 2019 and LIC owned USD 81 billion of that and at USD 1.77 trillion, LIC's ownership is at USD 77 billion,

says the report.

At the end of the second quarter, the holdings by foreign portfolio investors, including ADRs and GDRs, in the BSE-200 Index rose to USD 415 billion from USD 360 billion in the first quarter. The BSE 200 Index accounts for 84 per cent of the country's market capitalisation.

During the quarter, FPIs pumped Rs 46,900 crore into the market, says the brokerage, taking the FPI ownership in the BSE-200 index to 23.3 per cent.

As against this, domestic institutional investors' holdings in the BSE-200 Index slipped to 13.6 per cent in Q2 from 14 per cent in Q1, as they sold shares worth Rs 63,500 crore since April.

As of July-September, the value of LIC's holdings in top 200 stocks stood at USD 77 billion. Between October 1 and December 4, the market has rallied around 13 per cent to 45,079 and if the value of LIC's holdings has risen in line with the markets, the value of its portfolio should be around USD 87 billion—a record high over the previous record of USD 84 billion in March 2018, according to the Kotak report.

# PLI scheme well timed, to fuel manufacturing ecosystem for telecom, networking products: Qualcomm

**New Delhi:** The production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme is expected to fuel the overall manufacturing ecosystem in India for telecom and networking gear, components as well as tech products, and its strategic timing places the country in a “great position” for the future, a senior official of Qualcomm has said.

The PLI scheme for telecom, announced recently by the government, would not only boost the local network gear manufacturing industry but would also help build a robust ecosystem, Rajen Vagadia, VP and President, Qualcomm India and SAARC, said.

“The strategic timing of the PLI scheme has placed India in a great position for the future,” he told PTI.

India is an “enormous” consumption market and has an incredible technology-savvy and technology-hungry constituent base, he said adding that the country is emerging

as the tech platform for global companies to drive innovations.

“The production linked incentive (PLI) scheme by the government is a big catalyst as it will help global companies move their manufacturing and large parts of their supply chain to India and local companies to serve not just India but also export their products,” Vagadia said in an email interview.

The incentive scheme will fuel the overall manufacturing ecosystem in India for telecom and networking products, components, as well as technology products. Further, it would boost the local network gear manufacturing industry, while helping build a robust ecosystem.

“Considering Qualcomm has a play across each of these sectors, it will drive the continued adoption of our technologies in these segments, through our ecosystem partners,” Vagadia added.

# Election was ‘rigged’ in favour of Biden: Trump

**Washington:** A defiant Donald Trump is showing no signs of surrender and has reiterated yet again his unsubstantiated allegations of widespread voter fraud, claiming at his first post-poll rally in Georgia that he won a “rigged” US presidential election that he lost.

Trump alleged on Saturday that the last month’s US election was rigged in favour of his Democratic opponent Joe Biden, who is now the President-elect.

“They cheated and they rigged our presidential election, and they’re gonna try to rig this election too,” Trump told his cheering supporters at the rally in Georgia where he campaigned for his Republican candidates for the Special Senatorial elections.

Trump began by falsely claiming he won Georgia in the presidential race. The state has already certified its election results, declaring Biden the winner.

Trump claimed he won an election that he lost.

“If I lost, I would be a very gracious loser. If I lost, I would



President Donald Trump speaks at a campaign rally for Senate Republican candidates, Sen Kelly Loeffler, R-Ga, and Sen David Perdue, R-Ga, at Valdosta Regional Airport on Saturday

say I lost and I would go to Florida and I would take it easy,” Trump said at the rally.

Trump was a resident of New York. After becoming the president, he moved his residence from New York to Florida.

Thousands of his support-

ers, not only from Georgia but also from the neighbouring states, as far as California and Ohio, came to hear his speech.

This was Trump’s first public rally after he lost the election and Biden was declared as the President-elect.

“I think they say that if you

win Florida and if you win Ohio, in history you’ve never lost an election. This has got to be a first time - but the truth is they were right, we’ve never lost and we’re winning this election,” Trump said.

He urged his supporters to go out and vote for the January

5 Senate elections in Georgia.

“You must go vote and vote early starting December 14. You have to do it. They cheated and they rigged our presidential election, but we will still win it. We will still win it. We’ll still win it. And they’re going to try and rig this election, too,” he said.

“If you don’t vote, the socialists and the communists win. They win. Georgia patriots must show up and vote for these two incredible people. They are two of the finest people you will ever meet,” he said.

The cheering crowd frequently erupted into chants of “stop the steal!” and “fight for Trump.”

“This election was rigged, and we can’t let it happen to two of the most respected people in Washington. We can’t let it happen again. Your governor could stop it very easily if he knew what the hell he was doing. He could stop it very easily,” he claimed.

“The answer to the Democrats’ fraud is not to stay at home; that’s what (House

Speaker) Nancy Pelosi and (Senate Minority Leader Chuck) Schumer want you to do - stay at home. If you want to do something to them — I don’t want to use the word revenge, but it is a sense of revenge — to the Democrats, you show up and vote in record numbers,” he said.

The president alleged that “hundreds of thousands of illegal votes were cast in each state” and insisted falsely that poll watchers were “thrown out” of polling places in Pennsylvania.

Trump has allowed the official start of Biden’s transition to power but has not yet conceded defeat.

Trump has yet to concede the election, which he has repeatedly alleged was massively rigged. State officials and media have said that they have not found any such evidence.

The Trump campaign has filed a slew of lawsuits across the United States in an attempt to turn his defeat in the November 3 election into a victory. Except for one, all have been rejected by the courts. **PTI**

# Saudi prince strongly criticises Israel at Bahrain summit

**Dubai:** A prominent Saudi prince harshly criticized Israel on Sunday at a Bahrain security summit that was remotely attended by Israel’s foreign minister.

Prince Turki al-Faisal, who led Saudi intelligence for more than two decades and served as ambassador to the US and Britain, warned that any normalisation deals needed to help the Palestinians obtain their own independent state.

He described Israel as a “Western colonising” power.

He said Israel has “incarcerated (Palestinians) in concentration camps under the flimsiest of security accusations— young and old, women and men, who are rotting there without recourse to justice.

They are demolishing homes as they wish and they assassinate whomever they want.”

Although the prince does not hold any official position, his stance is seen as closely mir-

roring that of King Salman.

In contrast, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has signalled greater willingness to quietly engage with Israel to counter common rival, Iran, and boost foreign investment in the kingdom.

Prince Turki’s comments come as neighbouring Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates recently moved to normalise relations and establish ties with Israel.

Saudi Arabia has insisted that any normalisation between it and Israel can only happen alongside a lasting peace deal involving a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Israeli Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi, who spoke immediately after Prince Turki, said: “I would like to express my regret on the comments of the Saudi representative.”

“I don’t believe that they reflect the spirit and the changes taking place in the Middle East,” he said. **AP**

# Nepal PM skips crucial Standing Committee meeting of ruling party

**Kathmandu:** Nepalese Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, one of the chairmen of the Communist Party of Nepal (NCP), on Sunday skipped a crucial meeting of the party’s 45-member strong Standing Committee, amid growing internal rift within the ruling party due to factional feud.

In a letter sent to the party’s Standing Committee, Oli said that he was unable to attend the meeting, NCP spokesperson Narayan Kaji Shrestha said.

Shrestha said that the next Standing Committee meeting has been scheduled for December 13.

The NCP’s internal dispute which had surfaced after the dissident group leaders, including the party’s executive chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal ‘Prachanda’ and senior leader Madhav Kumar Nepal, demanded Oli’s resignation from both as the party’s chairman and as Nepal’s prime minister after he accused the dissident leaders of conspiring to topple his government.

In a 19-page political document presented on November 13 at the party’s Secretariat meeting, Prachanda criticised Oli for failing to properly run both the government and the party. He even accused Oli of corruption.

Oli, however, denied the



allegations and challenged Prachanda to legally prove the graft charges or apologise.

Taking a strong exception to the political document, Oli made it clear that he couldn’t join Sunday’s meeting if the same proposal is presented before the Standing Committee meeting. He also termed the political document presented by Prachanda “allegation paper” directed against him.

In the letter, Oli reiterated his stance that Prachanda should unconditionally withdraw his political proposal tabled during the Secretariat meeting.

“The Standing Committee meeting should discuss about finalising the pending works relating to the party unification, making preparations for the party’s upcoming general convention and working toward better response to con-

tain the COVID-19 pandemic,” Oli wrote in the letter.

Oli also said that the issue of change in party’s leadership should be settled through the first general convention of the unified party which is just four months away.

“The ongoing intra-party crisis must be resolved through dialogue and the party should remain united as there is just four months left to hold the first general convention of the party. The question of leadership change in the party can be well settled through the general convention,” he said in the letter.

During Sunday’s meeting, Deputy Prime Minister Ishwar Pokharel, who is also one of Secretariat members, read out Oli’s letter to the Standing Committee.

As Oli chose to boycott the meeting, the Standing Committee meeting was postponed for a week. During next week’s Standing Committee meeting, discussion will start on both the political documents presented by Oli and Prachanda separately, said Ganesh Shah, one of the Standing Committee members.

“Now the Standing Committee’s only agenda is to settle the party’s internal problem,” party’s spokesperson Shrestha said. **PTI**

# 95 held during protests across France over security law

**Paris:** Police arrested 95 people during protests across France against a planned security law, and 67 officers were injured during the demonstrations, Interior Minister Gerard Darmanin said Sunday.

In Paris, the site of the worst violence, 48 police officers or gendarmes were injured during Saturday’s street clashes, the interior ministry said on Twitter.

A firefighter was also injured in the capital after being hit by a projectile, a police source said.

Paris police held 25 people, including two minors,



Riot police officers detain a man during a demonstration on Saturday

said the prosecutors’ office.

It was the second weekend of violence in the capital dur-

ing protests against a security bill currently going through French parliament.

Demonstrators clashed with police, vehicles were set alight and shop windows smashed.

The weekly nationwide protests are becoming a major headache for President Emmanuel Macron’s government, with tensions intensified by the beating of a black music producer by police last month.

Paris city officials and others also expressed outrage over the way police broke up an improvised migrant camp in the heart of Paris in November.

Darmanin has ordered an investigation into the incident.

The numbers demonstrating on Saturday were significantly down, with the nationwide figure at 52,350 against 133,000 a week earlier, the interior ministry said.

Around 5,000 people demonstrated in Paris against 46,000 last week, it added. A police source on Saturday blamed the violence on 400 to 500 radical elements.

There were also clashes in the eastern city of Nantes, where four officers and a gendarme were injured, one of them by a Molotov cocktail, said local officials.

There was violence, too, in the eastern city of Lyon. **AFP**

# Mexican President wants to restrict US agents in Mexico

AP ■ MEXICO CITY

Mexico’s President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has tossed another hot potato to US President-elect Joe Biden with a proposal that would restrict US agents in Mexico and remove their diplomatic immunity.

The proposal submitted quietly this week by López Obrador would require Drug Enforcement Administration agents to hand over all information they collect to the Mexican government, and require any Mexican officials they contact to submit a full report to Mexico’s Foreign Relations Department.

“The proposal is that foreign agents will not have any immunity,” according to a summary of the president’s proposal to the Mexican Senate published Friday. In most countries, the chief DEA agent in the country often has full diplomatic immunity and other agents have some form of limited or technical immunity.

“The proposal requires that foreign agents give Mexican authorities the information they gather,” according to the proposed changes.

Mike Vigil, the DEA’s for-

mer chief of international operations, said of the handover of all information, “That is not going to happen.” “Sadly, there is endemic corruption within the (Mexican) government. It’s going to be leaked, it’s going to compromise agents, it’s going to compromise informants,” Vigil said.

The history of leaks is well documented. In 2017, the commander of a Mexican police intelligence-sharing unit that received DEA information was charged with passing the DEA data to the Beltran Leyva drug cartel in exchange for millions of dollars.

The proposed changes also specify that any Mexican public servant — state, federal or local — who has as much as a phone call or text message from a U.S. Agent would be required “to deliver a written report to the Foreign Relations Department and the Public Safety Department within three days.”

“It’s just going to make a burdensome system,” Vigil said, adding, “It is going to hinder bilateral operations, it is going to hinder bilateral exchange of information. This is going to be much more detrimental to Mexico than to the United States.”



A member of JAXA retrieves a capsule dropped by Hayabusa2 in Woomera, southern Australia on Sunday

# Japanese space officials eager to analyse asteroid samples

**Tokyo:** Japanese space officials said they are excited about the return of a capsule that safely landed in Australian Outback on Sunday while carrying soil samples from a distant asteroid so they can start analyzing what they say are treasures inside.

The capsule’s delivery by the Hayabusa2 spacecraft completes its six-year sample-return mission and opens the door for research into finding clues to the origin of the solar system and life on Earth.

“We were able to land the

treasure box” onto the sparsely populated Australian desert of Woomera as planned, said Yuichi Tsuda, Hayabusa2 project manager at the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, or JAXA, adding that the capsule was in perfect shape.

“I really look forward to opening it and looking inside,”

The capsule will be packed in a container as soon as its preliminary treatment at an Australian lab is finished and brought back to Japan this week, Satoru Nakazawa, a project sub-manager, said during

an online news conference from Woomera.

Hayabusa2 left the asteroid Ryugu, about 300 million kilometers (180 million miles) from Earth, a year ago. After it released the capsule on Saturday, it set off on a new expedition to another distant asteroid.

Scientists say they believe the samples, especially ones taken from under the asteroid’s surface, contain valuable data unaffected by space radiation and other environmental factors. **AP**

# Ethiopia’s conflict stokes humanitarian, virus crisis

**Hamdayet (Sudan):** Ethiopia’s month-long war in its northern Tigray region has severely hampered efforts to fight one of Africa’s worst coronavirus outbreaks, as the fighting has displaced almost 1 million people and strained local humanitarian services to the breaking point.

Tens of thousands of those fleeing the conflict between Tigrayan and Ethiopian federal forces have crossed into neighboring Sudan, where countrywide virus numbers are also rising rapidly.

More than 45,000 refugees from the Tigray conflict are now living in remote parts of Sudan, where they have taken shelter in crowded camps that have no coronavirus testing or treatment capabilities.

“With COVID-19, it’s not



comfortable in these buses,” said one refugee, Hailem, who said over 60 people were crammed

onto the transport that took them from Hamdayet, on the Sudanese side of a main border

crossing, to the camps.

Many staying in the camps are forced to share shelters and

crowd together in lines for food, cash and registration with different aid agencies. There are few face masks to be seen - or available for distribution.

At the Umm Rakouba camp, Javanshir Hajjiev with aid group Mercy Corps told The Associated Press that the number of chest infections was high, but that humanitarian workers had no materials to test for the coronavirus.

Few of the refugees see the pandemic as their first concern, having witnessed deadly attacks as they fled Ethiopia, and now living in fear for family members left behind. “I just escaped from war,” said one, Gebre Meten. “I think the war is worse.” The virus outbreak is a threat, Gebre said, but the drastic conditions in the refugee camps make people

forget its risks, as they face hunger, heat, and thirst. But Sudan’s growing virus cases has raised concerns that a new countrywide lockdown could be imposed - including measures that could stop further refugees from crossing the border. “The people that are fleeing from conflict and violence are also fleeing for their lives,” U.N. Refugee chief Filippo Grandi said last weekend about the Tigray conflict. “So we have a difficult dilemma.”

He added that with the right health measures, “the policy of open borders” can be maintained. Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed declared victory in the month-long conflict last weekend, but fighting between federal and regional forces has continued. According to humanitarian officials, the

crisis in the Tigray region of 6 million people remains critical, with medical supplies running low, including those needed to fight the coronavirus pandemic. “The pandemic is still with us, despite the fighting and a new humanitarian crisis unfolding in its wake,” the International Committee for the Red Cross said recently after visiting struggling health centers in the Tigray and neighboring Amhara regions. The largest hospital in northern Ethiopia, in the Tigray capital of Mekele, “is running dangerously low on sutures, antibiotics, anticoagulants, painkillers, and even gloves,” said the ICRC’s Maria Soledad.

Ethiopia surpassed 100,000 confirmed infections last month shortly after the deadly conflict began.

All humanitarian aid to the Tigray region, from medical supplies to food, has been blocked since the fighting began, to the growing distress of the humanitarian community and health experts alike.

On Wednesday, the U.N. Said it had signed a deal with Ethiopia’s government to allow aid access in Tigray - but only to those areas of it under the federal government’s control.

That access will take time, as fighting continues.

Norwegian Refugee Council chief Jan Egeland said aid workers still “have a lot of concerns” as they prepare to return to the Tigray region, where there has been scant information on how the conflict has impacted local health facilities and infrastructure, or the outbreak’s spread. **AP**

## TrendSlazer

### Never thought I'd play a man: Adah

Actor **ADAH SHARMA** plays a man in her new film, *Man To Man*. She says she never imagined she would play a man in life.

"This film is a romantic comedy. A boy falls in love with a girl and gets married to her but then he finds out that she is not a girl but she is a man. I am playing a man in this film. I can't reveal too much about. I can promise you that you haven't seen something like this before," Adah said.

She added, "I never thought I would play a man ever. My character in the film goes through a sex change surgery to become a woman and I hope that we would be able to do justice to the transgender community through the film."



**'When I choose my films, I look at the story. I try and understand if the concept will be clutter-breaking, if it is fresh and not done to death and if it will deliver superlative entertainment. I feel responsible that when I'm personally reaching out to people across the country, it needs to deliver a kind of entertaining communication that's unique to me.'**

**—Ayushmann Khurrana**

Actor **NAWAZUDDIN SIDDIQUI** has had a good year. Despite lockdown, he stood out with roles in the burgeoning OTT space.



This year, he has impressed as always with roles in the digitally-released films *Raat Akeli Hai* and *Serious Men*. The actor agrees this has been a special year.

"This has been a special year owing to two completely contrasting characters that I portrayed — of Jatil Tadav and Ayyan Mani. They represented distinct ideologies and mannerisms, which make them stand apart. I am thankful for all the love and appreciation from the audience," he said.

### Billie Eilish calls off a tour

Singer **BILLIE EILISH** has officially cancelled her forthcoming *When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go* tour, saying she tried to explore many ways to make it possible, but could not find a way.

The tour, which was supposed to last for at least six months, launched in March. It was postponed after just three shows due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I wish that I could have seen you on tour this year. I've missed performing on stage," Eilish wrote on Twitter.

"We've tried as many different scenarios as possible but none are possible. I know so many of you want to hold onto your tickets and vip passes, the best thing we can do is to get the money back into your hands asap," she added.



# AN INBORN TALENT

More than picking references for his roles, actor **ARSHAD WARSI** tries and manufactures his own identity. He tells **AYUSHI SHARMA** that he didn't want to look caricatured on screen. He prefers to bring out his original style

When it comes to actor Arshad Warsi, we know we are talking about someone who can be congruent in a lot of different roles, believable as a rogue or a lawyer or a goon or just a boy next door. Is there a need to name the films these roles are being listed from? No, right? Well, it's his versatility yet a natural way of expression that ensures his roles are etched in the audience's minds. And now, with his next, *Durgamati*, a horror drama, he is all set to make us believe in him as a politician.

It seems that there wasn't really much to do for him in terms of preparation for the role since he is already someone who has 'been there, done that.' Warsi tells us that director G Ashok wanted him to look older and like somebody, who has a tremendous amount of experience and maturity. For that, he had to gain a few kilos too. "Not too much though as it gets difficult when you have to shed the extra weight," he chuckles.

The film is a remake of Ashok's Telugu-Tamil bilingual film, *Bhaagamathie*. It revolves around Ishwar Prasad (played by Warsi), a powerful politician, who enjoys massive public support. When idols from 12 temples go missing, CBI officer Nidhi Verma suspects Ishwar of the theft. In order to expose him, she recruits suspended IAS officer, Chanchal Chauhan to find the clues. Chanchal goes to live in the ancient Durgamati mansion and soon enough, the ghost of Durgamati takes control of her body and swears revenge on everyone who did wrong to her.

There has been a lot of mystery built behind Warsi's character and when asked, he wishes to tell us more about it, however, "Put it this way... If I have done it, there must have been a very valid reason for me. Other than that you need to watch the film to find out what's the actual suspense," he says.

A remake certainly sets reference points for the preparation. However, Warsi believes in manufacturing his own identity and prefers to do his homework in his head. And hence, he watched *Bhaagamathie* after he finished shooting for the film. He says, "Personally, I don't do much of homework. Everything usually happens in my mind. When I hear about a particular role, I instantly start figuring out how one can play with this character, what can be added or, if necessary, removed. More than looking at



somebody or picking up different references for my roles to look the same, I try to create my own presence and identity. I have done in most of my films. I think that's why you like the novelty... I come across as somebody you haven't seen before. So I really like doing that. For instance, Circuit was a *tapori* role and a character like him has been played by so many other people. But when you saw me doing it, you liked it because it was different from others," he says with confidence gushing in voice from the other end of the phone.

He gives another instance. "When I did *Ishqiya*, my reference point was actually Jagdeep Sahab in *Sholay*. That's all I have seen of a Bhopali person. I didn't want to look caricatured. I wanted to bring out my original style. So I kept on thinking about it. I have a friend who is from Bhopal and lives in Dubai now. So I called him and asked about the lingo, the language, the swearing and slang words which Bhopali people use. I keep adding little things to my character. I did the same with Ishwar Prasad, too. I was told that he's a politician so there's a certain way he would behave. I worked on the body language, hair, sitting and walk postures and the way of talking. To be honest, it's pretty much a figment of my imagination, just like most of my characters. Well, they are a figment of the writer's imagination, which I bring to life as much as I can with my personal touch," adds he.

For him, when he listens to a script or decides to go for it, it's completely on the basis of — "Would I want to see it?" He says, "Sometimes, I could go wrong or sometimes the decision could turn out right." And he feels that *Durgamati* has all the elements to be called a "good" film. "It's thrilling, keeps you at the edge of your seat and is totally unpredictable. It's not gruesome. There's no blood shed or ugly

**'DURGAMATI HAS ALL THE ELEMENTS TO BE CALLED A "GOOD" FILM. IT'S THRILLING, KEEPS YOU AT THE EDGE OF YOUR SEAT AND IS TOTALLY UNPREDICTABLE. IT'S NOT GRUESOME. THERE'S NO BLOOD SHED OR UGLY VIOLENCE. IT SIMPLY SCARES YOU'**

violence. It simply scares you... the whole environment of it does."

Since horror presents highly fictionalised phenomenon, stories are set up in a different background altogether and do not find any connection with reality. However, from the trailer, it seems like *Durgamati* has been set up in a real world. Warsi says that it's not the first horror film to be set up in pace with the real scenario. "I saw Anushka's (Sharma) *Pari* and I thought it was very smart of them to show a world that we know and can connect easily. And that is the real challenge — to merge this genre with reality."

Talking about how realism has

become a recurrent theme in cinema now, he tells us that he looks up to films "for entertainment only." He adds, "Everybody is trying to be politically correct as much as possible. I don't take them seriously, be it fiction or a reality-based thriller." For Warsi, a film doesn't have to be "necessarily" socially responsible. "We have schools and teachers for that. If everything becomes about being responsible, then there will be no entertainment at all. I can't show a great film to a murderer and expect him to suddenly become a good man and vice versa. It's not possible! I can't expect a good human being to start being violent just because he saw a crime genre. He won't just head out and start killing people. It's never going to happen that way. Either you are good or you're bad. Films can't change your personality. Or else, people would just use that as an excuse," says he.

When it comes to horror, the genre has not been well-experimented or explored in mainstream Indian cinema. Warsi believes that it's because it's not been widely watched. He says, "There's a major segment which is scared of horror, and hence, directors don't want to get into that space. Filmmakers make movies for business and they would rather prefer experimenting with some other common genre such as comedy or romcom because they know that everybody would see it. Why make horror and risk it with nobody watching it? If I, as an audience, probably would have to choose between horror and comedy, I'd definitely go for the latter. Or maybe an action film."

The actor doesn't seem to enjoy film promotions much. He would rather just interact with people casually or stay at home with his family. Since the COVID-19 pandemic has brought new ways of promotion, Warsi says life is so much easier because of digital film promotions. "I have realised this lately that I really like staying at home. I don't know why... Now that promotions are going on from home, I am absolutely fine. I can chat with the media all day if I'm doing from the comfort of my home. I don't really enjoy the hassle of getting in and out all day," he chuckles and signs off.

(The film, which also stars Bhumi Pednekar, Mahie Gill and Jisshu Sengupta, is slated to release on December 11 on Amazon Prime Video.)



# Beyond just crime

For filmmaker **RICHIE MEHTA**, the audience's positive response to *Delhi Crime* was more of a validation than the series winning the International Emmy Award



Indo-Canadian filmmaker Richie Mehta does not seek validation from his International Emmy win for his web series, *Delhi Crime*, but by audience response. He says the real point of pride was when people resonated with everything that he was trying to convey with the story.

Last month, his web series *Delhi Crime* won the Best Drama Series award at the 48th International Emmy Awards. The show became the first Indian programme to win an International Emmy. Overwhelmed after the win, Mehta said, "It's the culmination of years of work for me and for hundreds of people."

The web series opens the files of the notorious December 2012 gangrape in Delhi that shook the world. The case made headlines around the world, and also started having a ripple effect on the image of the country. And that bothered Mehta. "It is also a kind of gratification that you can take a subject, which is as dark as what we have tried to tackle, and turn

it around and make something that is actually hopeful and positive. A lot of people around the world started to define India based on crimes like this, and that made me very uncomfortable," he added.

The filmmaker continued, "Because they were missing the point that for every crime like this — and there are so many of them, which is awful — there are also people all over the country, especially women, who are trying to deal with it and tackle it, and people who are honourable and courageous. You have to look at both sides. So, to me, this was a kind of gratification that a story about that resonated globally."

Soon after the win, a section of users called out the filmmaker for glorifying a crime, and questioned how a show about a horrific incident would be a source of pride and celebration. Asked



about his reaction to such views, Mehta said, "I feel either they didn't see it or maybe they missed the point." He explained, "The first episode is very valuable, because you can lose the viewer, especially in the first half an hour, viewers can turn it off and say 'this is not for me'. And in the first episode of *Delhi Crime*, I use half an hour of screen time to show the backstories of these cops. That's a very valuable time and I don't show the crime. To me, this show is not about crime. It's about the people who we ask and demand to solve it for us. It just so happens that these people, especially the women, have been spending so much time in that darkness that they've figured out what causes it. That's what I wanted to get into the show. That is what the show is about. If you think it's about the crime, then why didn't I show the crime?"

According to Mehta, the global coverage of the case became a bridge connecting people with the emotions and complexities of the story. "The subject had something to do with it. Everyone around the world heard about this. So they knew and had some point of reference, and I took advantage of that in terms of (that) I wanted to dispel the myths of what people had heard and thought they understood. There was nobody around the world who I think watched the show and didn't have some basic understanding and a very strong emotional reaction already (about it) before they pressed play," said Mehta, whose first feature film *Amal* released in 2007.

—JANS

## WEBBED



### TINY PRETTY THINGS

When an attack brings down the star student at an elite ballet school, her replacement enters a world of lies, betrayal — and cutthroat competition. Starring Lauren Holly, Kylie Jefferson and Casimere Jollette, Season 1 releases on December 14 on Netflix.



### EDGE OF TOMORROW

Bill Cage is stuck in a time loop, reliving the day he died in a battle — unless he can find a way to not only survive, but defeat the alien invaders. It releases on December 14 on Netflix.



### A CALIFORNIA CHRISTMAS

With his carefree lifestyle on the line, a wealthy charmer poses as a ranch hand to get a hardworking farmer to sell her family's land before Christmas. Starring Lauren Swickard, Josh Swickard and Ali Afshar, the film releases on December 14 on Netflix.

# FROM THE ARCHIVES

Filmmaker, art historian and photographer **BENOY K BEHL** studies how the ancient murals at the Ajanta Caves still have the potential to lend a new perspective to Indian art

India has one of the finest traditions of paintings in the world. This early tradition is not generally known, as many of these paintings are hidden in dark recesses in ancient temples and caves. These had not been clearly photographed or sufficiently represented to the world before as it was generally believed that we didn't have such a tradition.

My photography of the early Indian murals has given a new perspective to the Indian tradition of paintings. The murals of India have also been established as one of the greatest and most sublime traditions of the art of the world. In 1930, Laurence Binyon, Director of the British Museum and a leading authority on Asian art, wrote, "In the art of Asia what a supreme and central position Ajanta owns! Whoever studies the art of China and Japan, at whatever time he begins, starts on a long road which will lead him ultimately to Ajanta."

## TRUE COLOURS OF AJANTA

In 1991-92, I had the privilege of documenting the glorious paintings of Ajanta of the second century BCE and fifth and sixth centuries CE. Scholars and institutions around the world responded to state that this was the first time that they were able to see the true details and colours of the Ajanta paintings, which were considered to be the fountainhead of the classic traditions of painting in Asia.

## DARK CAVES

The ancient caves are dark, strong lights were not allowed to be used inside as these would damage the paintings. Photography was normally not allowed in order to save the paintings from the adverse effects of flash lights. Some earlier photography of the paintings, which had been carried out with special permission, was not very accurate, as there was much surface reflection from the painted surfaces. I had fortunately developed a technique of photographing in extremely low light to document the wall and ceiling paintings of the Ajanta Caves in 1991-92. The then Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India M.C. Joshi wrote to me that I had "conquered the darkness of the Ajanta Caves."

## WORLDWIDE RESPONSE

Scores of the most prestigious uni-



versities and museums around the world invited me to speak on Ajanta and show the paintings. National Geographic Magazine were among the hundreds of journals and newspapers,

who hailed my photography as path-breaking. In 2008, National Geographic Magazine published an 18-page story about Indian art as revealed to the world through my photographs. It was the cover story in some of the European editions of the magazine.

In the meantime, many noted international book publishers offered to publish my book on the Ajanta paintings. The first edition of the book came out in 1998, with an American Edition by Harry N Abrams.

There was a unanimous response of the leading art critics and historians at the great capital cities of the world, where I was invited by the art institutions. They felt that the Ajanta paintings "were surely the finest art of humankind." Experts commented on the technical virtuosity found in these paintings. They saw qualities in them which appeared in Western art only in the High Renaissance, Impressionist, Expressionist and Modern periods.

## CAPTURE THE SHADES

Numerous attempts of the reproduction of the Ajanta paintings with colour photography were made. In the

earlier part of this century, photography was not developed enough to capture the colours of the paintings accurately. In recent years, the Archaeological Survey of India has not permitted the use of photographic lights as these would damage the 2200 to 1500-year old paintings. Strictly limited attempts to photograph some of the panels with lights were allowed, but these too failed to capture the colours accurately. Thus, the exquisite beauty of these paintings seemed to remain in the dark interiors of the remote caves.

## ESTABLISHING A CONTINUOUS TRADITION

Subsequently, in 1992, I went on to photograph the 10th century paintings in the dark and narrow corridors of the Brihadeshwara Temple at Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu. These had not been clearly photographed before and scholars around the world responded warmly when they saw my photographs. Dr. Milo C. Beach, Director of the two American National Galleries of Asian Art (in the Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC) said that he would

have to revise his understanding of the history of Indian paintings. He explained that the paintings had been well-known, but since paintings before and after Ajanta for the next eight hundred years, were not known, it was not seen or studied as a part of a continuous tradition of art. However, since he was now seeing the art of the tenth century, which had the same technical virtuosity as the fifth century paintings, it pointed towards the fact that there was a continuity and a great tradition of art.

## ANCIENT MURALS

I had a good fortune to photograph other Indian mural paintings of the fifth and the later centuries of the ancient and medieval periods, clearly establishing a continuous tradition. As the paintings are considerably damaged, the digital restoration has made it much easier for the people to appreciate this early art.

## EARLY SURVIVING PAINTINGS

Descriptions of the *Badami* paintings in the 1950s included paintings that were lost by the time I reached there to photograph in 2001. National Geographic Magazine, when they were doing a story about my work in 2008, could hardly see even those paintings which I had seen and photographed in 2001. Therefore, this photography and restoration is of fundamental importance for the Hindu tradition specifically as well as for overall tradition of the paintings of India.

## VIRTUAL MUSEUMS

The government has a vision of the vast documentation and digital restoration of Indian art, as well as the making of virtual museums to take this art to the people. For this purpose, Government Advisory Company Sapio Analytics have been taking shared rights from me for some of my photographs, as well as Badami and other early Indian paintings. Sapio Analytics will be using these photographs and my digital restoration for the virtual museums. They will also be using my digital restoration for training purposes, to establish a base for future digital restoration.

(The article includes the paper which was preserved in Arctic World Archives on October 21, 2020.)



## Open the doors of knowledge

We should learn something everyday to achieve better goals and shed the ego and false perception that we know everything, says **RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI**

When you stop learning, you start dying," said Albert Einstein once. As conscious beings, we have five sense organs, which are also known as the 'doors of knowledge.' Hence, it would not be wrong to say that because of nature, we constantly keep learning. For instance, through our ears, we are always listening and grasping new things. The words that go through our ears to our brain are like lessons we receive constantly. Similarly, through our eyes, we view new things and learn them. Then comes the tongue. The electric impulse that we receive through our skin or tastebuds reach our brain, and stimulates a new kind of learning.

However, one must understand a fact that all the above mentioned processes of learning take place by the virtue of self-awareness and consciousness that is present in our brain. Without all these processes, learning is next to impossible. In this context, we should know that our sense organs are only the doors. Learning is actually a process that is undergone by the consciousness. It can be called the 'feeling of mind, intellect and memory' or simply, the 'soul' as every information or message we receive influence the soul. And then it's determined whether something was a good or a bad experience.

We must know that there are two kinds of knowledge that we acquire. — material things, and spiritual things like soul, and karma. The latter kind of knowledge, when put into actions, results in personality values or *sanskars*. Most of our actions performed again and again under the influence of a *sanskaar* result in experiencing happiness or sorrow. Throughout the journey of life, we constantly learn such lessons that result in the formation of *sanskars* according to our karma. Hence, we should know how learning is clearly unavoidable and that we are always learning good or bad things. Likewise, if we know that our *sanskars* go along with us life after life, we will be more careful and particular about learning good things in life and giving up on inappropriate things because education seems to be an elixir that can help us form a healthy mind and body along with a lasting and fruitful life.

We all know that in today's time, nobody is perfect as far as goodness and virtues are concerned. Hence, it cannot be denied that we all need to be enlightened and we urgently need to improve the quality of our thoughts, speech and actions. Since we cannot avoid learning, even if we wish to, why don't we then learn to inculcate in us moral values, virtues and good qualities so that we make progress towards perfection? Why do we wish to carry a heavy load of rubbish on our heads? Why do we want to delay our march towards our goals? What do we gain by making lame excuses, saying that we have no time or that we are not interested? Why shouldn't we find what we are really interested in? Are we interested in our downfall, decay or doom? Why are we letting ourselves sink and drown deep down in the quagmire of vice and evil?

Remember, the more we delay, the worse will be our condition and more difficult would it be to rectify our ways. The process of learning, as said earlier, is ceaseless and continuous and hence, it has been rightly said, "We need to learn everyday and shed the ego and the false perception that 'we know everything.'" Well, why not we remain alert and follow the right path to save ourselves from tragedy, trauma, tension and turmoil?



# Human touch

A team of Indian-origin engineers has made it possible to communicate digitally, just by touching a surface

A team of Indian-origin researchers in the US has made it possible to essentially let their bodies act as the link between the card or smartphone and the reader or scanner, making it possible to transmit information just by touching a surface.

The prototype, developed by Purdue University engineers, doesn't transfer money yet but it's the first technology that can send any information through the direct touch of a fingertip.

While wearing the prototype as a watch, a user's body can be used to send information such as a photo or a password when touching a sensor on a laptop, the researchers said.

"We're used to unlocking devices using our fingerprints, but this technology wouldn't rely on biometrics — it would rely on digital signals. Imagine logging into an app on someone else's phone just by touch," said Shreyas Sen, a Purdue associate professor of electrical and computer engineering.

"Whatever you touch would

become more powerful because digital information is going through it," Sen added in the study published in *Transactions on Computer-Human Interaction*, a journal by the Association for Computing Machinery.

Shovan Maity led the study as a PhD student in Sen's lab. The technology works by establishing an "internet" within the body that smartphones, smartwatches, pacemakers, insulin pumps and other wearable or implantable devices can use to send information.

"These devices typically communicate using Bluetooth signals that tend to radiate out from the body. A hacker could intercept those signals from 30 feet away," Sen said.

Sen's technology instead keeps signals confined within the body by coupling them in a so-called 'Electro-Quasistatic range' that is much lower on the electromagnetic spectrum than typical Bluetooth communication.

This mechanism is what enables information transfer by



only touching a surface. Even if your finger hovered just one centimetre above a surface, information wouldn't transfer through this technology without a direct touch. "This would prevent a hacker from stealing private information such as credit card credentials by intercepting the signals," the authors wrote.

Credit card machines and apps such as Apple Pay use a more secure alternative to Bluetooth signals, called near-field communication, to receive a payment from tapping a card or scanning a phone. Sen's technology would add the convenience of making a secure payment in a single gesture. "You

wouldn't have to bring a device out of your pocket. You could leave it in your pocket or on your body and just touch," Sen said.

The technology could also replace key fobs or cards that currently use Bluetooth communication to grant access into a building. Instead, a person

might just touch a door handle to enter. The researchers believe that the applications of this technology would go beyond how we interact with devices today.

"The ability to transfer information through your touch would change the applications of that big touch screen," Sen said. —IANS

Someone is sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago.  
—Warren Buffett

## ANTIVIRAL DRUG BLOCKS COVID IN 24 HRS

Researchers have discovered that the treatment of SARS-CoV-2 infection (COVID-19) with a new anti-viral drug, MK-4482/EIDD-2801 or Molnupiravir, completely suppresses the virus transmission within 24 hours.

According to the study, published in the journal *Nature Microbiology*, the research team from Georgia State University (GSU) originally discovered that the drug is potent against influenza viruses.

"This is the first demonstration of an orally available drug to rapidly block SARS-CoV-2 transmission. MK-4482/EIDD-2801 could be game-changing," said study author Richard Plempner from GSU. Because the drug can be taken by mouth, treatment can be started early for a potentially three-fold benefit: inhibit patients' progress to severe disease, shorten the infectious phase to ease the emotional and socio-economic toll of prolonged patient isolation and rapidly silence local outbreaks.



## AIRFLOW IN CAR RISKS TRANSMITTING COVID-19

Airflow patterns inside a car's passenger cabin offers some suggestions for potentially reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission while sharing rides with others, say researchers, including one of Indian-origin.

The study, published in the journal *Science Advances*, used computer models to simulate the airflow inside a compact car with various combinations of windows open or closed. The simulations showed that opening windows — the more windows the better — created airflow patterns that dramatically reduced the concentration of airborne particles exchanged between a driver and a single passenger.

The researchers found that blasting the car's ventilation system didn't circulate air nearly as well as a few open windows. "Driving around with the windows up and the air conditioning or heat on is definitely the worst scenario, according to our computer simulations," said study author Asimanshu Das from the Brown University, US.



## AUTOIMMUNE PATIENTS RISK DEATH BY COVID

Researchers have now found that people with rare autoimmune rheumatic diseases are at a greater risk of dying at a younger age amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

For the study, published in the journal *Rheumatology*, the research team looked at the electronic health records of 170,000 people in England with rare autoimmune rheumatic diseases. During March and April 2020 (the first two months of the COVID-19 pandemic), the team found that 1,815 (1.1 per cent) of people with these diseases died.

"People with rare diseases often have poorer health outcomes generally, so we wanted to find out what impact the pandemic has had," said study co-author Fiona Pearce from the University of Nottingham in the UK. "From our study, we know that during the early months of the pandemic, people with these diseases were more likely to die than other," Pearce added.

The results showed that the risk of dying during COVID-19 for people with these conditions increased from age 35.



## BLOOD SUGAR DRUG CUTS COVID DEATH RISK

Metformin, a generic medication for managing blood sugar levels in patients with diabetes, has been linked to significantly reduced COVID-19 death risks in women in an observational study.

It also reduces inflammation proteins like TNF-alpha that appear to make COVID-19 worse, said the research published in the journal *The Lancet Healthy Longevity*.

"Seeing a bigger association with protection in women over men may point towards inflammation reduction as a key way that metformin reduces risk from COVID-19," said principal investigator Carolyn Bramante, Assistant Professor at the University of Minnesota Medical School in the US.

"However, more research is needed," Bramante said. The study is based on analysis of de-identified patient data from healthcare company UnitedHealth Group.



## PETS PLAYED LIFE-SAVING ROLE IN PANDEMIC

In the absence of human-to-human contact, in millions of households worldwide, animals or pets have provided much-needed comfort via cuddles, pats and a constant physical presence, say researchers.

The study, published in the journal *Behavioural Economics for Policy (JBEP)* outlined how pets have a crucial role to play in an era where human-human contact can be life endangering.

According to the researchers, physical touch is a sense that has been taken for granted — even overlooked — until COVID-19 visited our door.

"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 lockdown," said study author Janette Young from the University of South Australia.

"Breeders have also been inundated, with demands for puppies quadrupling some waiting lists," Young added.



## Hardik surge in last over gives India T20 series win

PTI ■ SYDNEY

India sealed the T20I series against Australia with a game to spare after a swashbuckling Hardik Pandya finished what Shikhar Dhawan had set out to achieve with a scintillating 36-ball 52 in the second and penultimate match here at Sydney Cricket Ground on Sunday.

The visitors thus avenged their 1-2 ODI series loss, chasing down a challenging 195-run target in 19.4 overs with six wickets in hand. India won the opener in Canberra by 11 runs on Friday.

This was India's 10th successive win away from home in T20Is.

Needing 25 of the final 12 balls after fetching 12 in the 18th over, Pandya brought the equation down to 14 in the last over with two fours. The all-rounder then hit two sixes to seal the match in India's favour and also claim the player of the match honours.

Pandya remained unconquered on 42 off 22 balls.

India were off to a sedate start with no boundaries coming in the first two overs. But fours and sixes rained from the willows of Dhawan (52) and KL Rahul (30) once the duo got their eye in.

Australia got their first breakthrough when Rahul gave a simple catch to Mitchell Swepson at deep point. But India had still managed a strong start, reaching 60 for one at the end of the Powerplay.

Having played some fine shots, Dhawan top-edged an attempted slog sweep off leg-spinner Adam Zampa to give Australia their second wicket.

Sanju Samson got out after a 10-ball 15 but it was debutant Daniel Sams, who gave the hosts their biggest breakthrough when he had Virat Kohli caught behind

# Kings of 20/20



It was not about what they are doing, it was about what I can do. It's a matter of two big shots and today it came off. I always back myself. I like to look at scoreboard and play so that I know which bowlers to target.

HARDIK PANDYA

for a well-made 24-ball 40.

Earlier, stand-in skipper Matthew Wade led from the front with a blistering half century and

powered Australia to a strong total after a fairly commanding performance with the bat.

Leading the side in the

absence of an injured Aaron Finch, Wade smashed 58 off 32 balls while Steve Smith made a breezy 38-ball 46 after India opted to field.

For the visitors, T Natarajan finished with fine figures of 2/20 in his four-over spell. Australia accumulated 62 runs in the last five overs after a few tight middle overs.

## Proud to win series without Rohit, Bumrah: Kohli

PTI ■ SYDNEY

India captain Virat Kohli on Sunday said winning the T20 series against Australia without established players like Rohit Sharma and Jasprit Bumrah meant a great deal to him and lavished praise on the marauding Hardik Pandya's "raw talent".

Pandya struck an unbeaten 22-ball 42 to take India home with six wickets in hands.

"Yeah meant a great deal. We've played as a team in T20 cricket. The fact that we don't have Rohit and Bumrah, our established white ball players, in and still doing well makes me happy and I am very proud of this team," Kohli said after the win.

The India skipper believes that with his raw talent, Pandya, who earned the man-of-the-match award for his batting, can become a bankable player for the team in years to come.

"The reason for him (Hardik) coming into the team in 2016 was



pure ability. He has raw talent. And now he realises that this is his time, the next 4-5 years, to be that bankable player that can win you games from anywhere. His plans are right and I'm glad to see that," Kohli said.

"He now realises that this is the time to establish in that (finishing) role and play match-winning knocks for us. He plays with all his heart and he certainly got that competitive nature about him and also has the skill to execute that at the highest level."

## Langer compares Pandya's finishing skills to Dhoni

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australia coach Justin Langer on Sunday described India all-rounder Hardik Pandya's match-winning innings in the second T20I as an "incredible spectacle" and likened him to former captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni as a finisher.

"It was an incredible spectacle of a game. We know how dangerous he (Pandya) is. In the past we had MS Dhoni and the way he (Pandya) played today," Langer said at the post-match conference. "He has played really well all summer so, obviously it was a great innings in the end there."

Langer admitted that India were too good for his side with a

lot of experienced T20 players in their ranks.

"I thought the whole game was a very close one. Our fielding was absolutely incredible, it was electric to watch, but India with their experienced T20 players were too good for us today," said the Australia coach.

According to Langer, his side thought they had enough runs on the board to defend and India had to bat really well to win the match. "I am proud of my players. It was a great spectacle, on a Sunday night India versus Australia, it got so close, it was a really exciting game. We batted really well, had enough runs and thought India would have to bat really well."

## Hardik don't mind staying back for Tests

**SYDNEY:** He is not in India's Test squad for the upcoming series against Australia but fresh from his white-ball heroics, all-rounder Hardik Pandya on Sunday said he wouldn't mind staying back if the team management wants.

Coming back from a back surgery, Pandya, who is yet to start bowling on a regular basis, shone bright with the bat in the limited overs matches against Australia, helping the visitors claim the T20 series after two big losses in the ODI rubber.

Asked if he aspires to stay back for the four-match Test series starting December 17, Pandya said, "It's a different ball game, I think I need to be, I mean I don't mind but at the end of the day, the call is on the management. So, yeah, I don't think I can say much about it."

Pandya arrived in Australia having played a key role for Mumbai Indians in their title-winning run in the IPL and on Sunday, he powered India to a six-wicket win with a blazing 42

off 22 balls.

The all-rounder said he had worked on gaining mastery over "finishing games when it mattered the most" during the coronavirus-forced lockdown.

"During lockdown I wanted to focus on finishing games where it matters the most. It doesn't matter whether I score or don't score more runs," Pandya said at post-match conference.

The all-rounder was not new to the kind of situation he faced with at the SCG on Sunday, having won some and lost a few in the past.

"I have been in these situations many times and I learnt from my mistakes. My game is always around the confidence which I carry, it has that fine line where I back myself and not become overconfident."

"I always remember all those times when we chased big totals and it helps," said the man who is a pretty good zone at the moment and playing according to the situation instead of getting too excited.

PTI

## Rahane leads from front with 108

PTI ■ SYDNEY

A jinkya Rahane geared up for the much-anticipated four-Test series against Australia with a resolute century, steering India A to 237 for 8 against Australia A on the opening day of the first warm-up match here on Sunday.

Rahane (108 off 228 balls), leading the side, and Cheteshwar Pujara (54 off 140 balls), who will be to India's batting mainstay especially once Virat Kohli goes for paternity leave after the first Test, shared a 76-run stand for the fourth wicket after India A were reduced to 40 for 3 early on.

The Mumbaiaikar then added 69 with Kuldeep Yadav (15) to keep India A afloat.

Rahane, who won the toss and decided to bat, watched the ball closely and punished anything over-pitched or short to pick up 16 boundaries and a six during his long stay at the crease.

Returning to action after almost nine months, Pujara struck form right away and his innings was laced with five fours.

Pujara played the leg-glance to pick up three boundaries in the fine leg area, two off them in successive deliveries of James Pattinson in the ninth over.

At stumps, Rahane and Mohammed Siraj (0) were at the crease.

Earlier, Shubman Gill and Prithvi Shaw, who are fighting for one of the opening slots



in the Test team, did their chances no good after registering ducks.

While Gill edged the first ball he faced to Marcus Harris at third slip, Shaw nicked one to wicketkeeper Tim Paine as India slipped to 6 for 2 in the third over.

Playing his first competitive game since the coronavirus-induced break, Hanuma

Vihari (15) looked good for a while before Jackson Bird found him plumb in front in the 19th over.

Pujara and Rahane then joined hands to steady the innings. The former reached his fifty with a shot at deep mid-wicket in the 45th over which yielded three runs.

Pujara was dismissed in the 47th over, caught at leg gully by Harris off Pattinson.

Back in action after recovering from a hamstring injuries, Wriddhiman Saha, a contender for the wicket-keeping spot, had a dismal outing as he was out for naught after being trapped by Travis Head in the 50th over.

Ravi Ashwin (5) then became the third victim of Pattinson as India went into the tea break at 128 for six in 53 overs with Kuldeep joining Rahane in the middle.

Rahane struggled a bit after the break before reaching his fifty with an upper cut six off Pattinson in the 61st over.

Rahane kept the scoreboard ticking but Head removed Kuldeep, who misjudged a sweep shot as the side slumped to 197-7.

For Australia, Pattinson, who played a crucial role in Mumbai Indians' title winning IPL campaign, continued his good run with three wickets.

Pacer Michael Neser (2/51) and Bird (1/34) too bowled well, while skipper Travis Head too picked up two wickets with his off-spin.



New Zealand's players celebrate their innings and 134 run win over Windies

AP

## Kiwis extend unbeaten home run

AFP ■ HAMILTON

New Zealand stretched their unbeaten run at home with a comprehensive win by an innings and 134 runs in the first Test against the West Indies in Hamilton on Sunday after ending a battling rearguard century by Jermaine Blackwood.

The West Indies were all out before lunch on day four for 247 after making only 138 in their first innings in reply to New Zealand's 519/7.

Blackwood was the penultimate wicket to fall, for 104, after a 155-run stand with Alzarri Joseph who made 86.

The victory, set up over the first two days when New Zealand captain Kane Williamson crafted a majestic 251, highlighted the difficulty overseas teams have on New Zealand wickets.

The latest victory extended New Zealand's unbeaten home streak to an impressive 14 Tests, a statistic which took Williamson by surprise.

"To be honest, I didn't know that was the case, but it's great. It was a really good performance for us to put together collectively," said Williamson, who deflected all credit away from himself.

## Chelsea go top of table

Lampard's men come from behind to beat Leeds

AFP ■ LONDON

Manchester United roared back to beat West Ham 3-1 on Saturday, while Chelsea moved top of the Premier League by the same scoreline over Leeds as fans returned to the English top-flight for the first time in nine months.

United fell behind at the London Stadium, but for the fifth consecutive away league game came back to win as a three-goal blitz from Paul Pogba, Mason Greenwood and Marcus Rashford turned the tables in a 13-minute spell after half-time.

United, who have won nine successive league games on the road, are now fourth in the table, one point ahead of city rivals Manchester City, who won 2-0 against Fulham.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer started with Bruno Fernandes and Rashford on the bench in an attempt to keep two of his star men fresh for Tuesday's crucial Champions League trip to RB Leipzig.

But they were needed to inspire a second-half turnaround after Tomas Soucek's goal seven minutes before half-time gave West Ham a deserved lead at the break.

Cheered on by 2,000 fans in their cavernous 60,000-seat stadium, the Hammers should have been further ahead but squandered their chances.

Pogba started the fightback in the 65th minute with a superb strike from distance and minutes later United



were ahead, Greenwood turning and firing home in the area.

Rashford struck a post as United looked to extend their lead, and it was the England striker who made it 3-1 12 minutes from time.

Chelsea also came from a goal down to win 3-1 as fans made a return to Stamford Bridge for the first time since March.

Patrick Bamford gave Leeds a shock early lead as he took advantage of hesitation in the Chelsea defence to round Edouard Mendy and slot home his eighth goal of the season.

However, Lampard's men are now unbeaten in 16 matches in all competitions and showed why they



are serious title contenders by storming back to win comfortably.

Olivier Giroud, who earned a rare Premier League start after scoring four against Sevilla in the Champions League on Wednesday, levelled on 27 minutes from Reece James's low cross.

Illan Meslier in the Leeds goal ensured Werner continued to have a frustrating night in front of goal, but Chelsea finally made their chances count when Kurt Zouma headed home Mason Mount's corner.

And in stoppage time, Werner turned provider for Christian Pulisic to secure all three points.

## Hakimi leads Inter win

**MILAN:** Inter closed the gap on Serie A leaders Milan as Achraf Hakimi scored twice to help Antonio Conte's team to a 3-1 victory over Bologna.

With Milan not playing until Sunday, Inter took the chance to move to within two points of their city rivals as they claimed a third straight league win.

Romelu Lukaku got the ball rolling with his 12th goal of the season in all competitions, before Marcelo Brozovic's sublime pass played in Hakimi for a second.

Emanuel Vignato's 67th-minute goal threatened to make things tense for Inter, but Hakimi's second — a fine finish at the culmination of a fantastic run infield — wrapped things up.

Earlier in Turin derby, Juventus came from behind to beat Torino 2-1 with American midfielder Weston McKennie scoring for the first time since he joined the Italian champions on loan.

McKennie's close-range header on 78 minutes put Juve level after Nicolas Nkoulou had given Torino a first-half advantage.

After McKennie's equaliser, Leonardo Bonucci produced an almost identical header in the 89th minute to give Juve victory and put them on 20 points from ten games, a total littered with five draws.

Torino remained in the relegation zone, two points from safety, with only six points from its first 10 matches.

AFP



Barca's Lionel Messi reacts during the La Liga match against Cadiz

AP

## MATS errors punish Barca

AFP ■ MADRID

Lionel Messi's Barcelona suffered a fourth Liga defeat of the season as they went down 2-1 to Cadiz on Saturday.

Barca are now a distant seventh, 12 points off leaders Atletico Madrid, who beat Real Valladolid 2-0.

Koeman made three changes from the mid-week Champions League win at Ferencvaros with goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen coming in for Neto.

But Ter Stegen made a first costly error in Andalusia after eighty minutes as Alvaro Gimenez claimed his second goal in as many games.

The Barca defence failed to clear a corner which fell to Ter Stegen, but his weak parry onto his own line was tapped in by

Gimenez.

Koeman's men were all-square after 56 minutes as Jordi Alba's low cross was deflected into his own goal by defender Pedro Alcala.

But Ter Stegen's second costly error came eight minutes later.

Clement Lenglet made a hash of Alba's throw in before Ter Stegen failed to clear under pressure from Negredo and the former Manchester City striker claimed his third goal league goal of the campaign.

Earlier, Atletico, now unbeaten in 26 games in La Liga, moved to the top of the table after France international Thomas Lemar and Spain midfielder Marcos Llorente scored for Diego Simeone's men against Valladolid.



## Mbappe reaches goal century for PSG

**PARIS:** Striker Kylian Mbappe came off the bench to score his 100th goal for Paris Saint-Germain as the French league leader secured a hard-fought 3-1 win at Montpellier.

Mbappe's century of PSG goals — in 137 games — was completed when the 21-year-old turned in a cross from Layvin Kurzawa from close range in the 90th minute.

Up until then, it was uncertain for PSG after English striker Stephy Mavididi equalized for Montpellier in the 40th and the home side pushed strongly for a winner after the break.

PSG striker Meisse Kean broke away and netted with a fine finish in the 76th to put the visitors ahead. Mbappe then stroked the ball home from Kurzawa's quick pass to embellish a win which moves PSG two points ahead of second-place Lille.

AP