

OPINION 8
COVID'S PITIABLE
SUFFERERS**WORLD 11**
INDIA IS OUR TRUE
FRIEND: HASINA**SPORT 14**
WARNER TARGETS BOXING
DAY TEST RETURN

LUCKNOW, FRIDAY DECEMBER 18, 2020; PAGES 14 ₹3



the pioneer

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I FEEL
PRIVILEGED:
SARA ALI KHAN
12 VIVACITY

Put farm laws on hold, SC advises Govt

Court says it will enable fruitful negotiations, upholds farmers' right to protest peacefully, but adds it can't allow blockade of city

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a morale booster for the agitating farmers, the Supreme Court on Thursday asked the Centre to consider to put on hold the three contentious farm laws and also upheld the right of farmers to non-violent protests.

The Centre opposed the court's suggestion to temporarily shelve the farm laws to enable negotiations saying agriculturists would then not come forward for the talks.

The apex court, however, said it would not be right now to examine the validity of the laws but would prioritise the issue of farmers' protest and others' right to move freely.

Instead of going into the legality of the three laws, the court indicated it wanted the issued to be resolved through negotiation.

It said it is thinking of setting up an "impartial and independent" panel of agriculture experts and farmer unions to resolve the impasse.

While the court upheld the farmers' right to stage peaceful protests, it also said it is of the fundamental rights of others to move freely and in getting essential food and other supplies as right to protest cannot mean blockade of the entire city.

Advising the farmers to hold talks with the Centre, the court said, "You continue the protest. You have the right. But you have a purpose also and



Bharatiya Kisan Union national president Naresh Tikait at Khap Panchayat during farmers' protest against the new farm laws at Delhi-UP border near Ghazipur on Thursday

Ranjana Dimri | Pioneer

that purpose is served only if you talk, discuss and reach a conclusion."

The Bench headed by Chief Justice SA Bobde also said in a democracy, police and authorities have to be given power to prevent the protestors from infringing the rights of others.

The Bench said it would pass order on constituting a committee only after hearing all the parties, including the protesting farmer unions and putting on hold the implementation of new farm laws by the Centre would enable nego-

tiations with farmers.

However, Attorney General KK Venugopal opposed the suggestion and said if the implementation of the farm laws is put on hold then farmers would not come forward for negotiations.

The top court said it is not asking the Centre to stay the farm laws but only suggesting that its implementation be put on hold for the time being to enable the farmers to talk with the Government.

"We are worried about the plight of farmers. We are also Indian but we are worried with

the way things are going on," the Bench, also comprising Justices AS Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian, said and added "they (protesting farmers) are not a mob".

The top court said it will pass orders for serving notices to the protesting farmers' unions and give them the liberty to approach the vacation Bench during the winter break. During the hearing conducted through video-conferencing, the Bench observed that it recognises the farmers' right to protest but this right should not infringe the fundamental rights

Tomar's letter to kisan tries to dispel MSP, mandi fears

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the farmers' protest entered the 22nd day on Thursday, Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar wrote an eight-page open letter in a bid to clear confusion over the three contentious agrarian laws.

Tomar urged the farmers not to believe in the "white lies" being spread by some people that MSP, APMCs and about contract farming.

In his letter to the farmers with six assurances that the Centre is ready to provide, Tomar stated that MSP, APMCs will continue and whatever the situation be, these laws do not allow anyone to seize control over farmers lands.

"New farm laws will constitute the foundation of new phase of agricultural growth in the country and it will make the farmers more empowered and free them of any bondages," Tomar said in the letter, allaying their apprehensions.

The Minister reiterated that the Government was ready to provide a written assurance on MSP and said State Governments can be allowed to levy tax on private markets outside the APMCs.

Tomar also stated that States will have the right to register agricultural deals and no one can claim rights on farmers' lands because these laws do not allow the transfer, sale, lease and mortgage.

Continued on Page 11

of others to move freely and in getting essential supplies.

Maintaining that in a democracy, police and authorities have to be given power to prevent the protestors from infringing the rights of others, the Bench said, "Who will take guarantee that if farmers are allowed to enter the city in such high numbers, they will not resort to violence?"

Continued on Page 11

Kejriwal tears copies of farm laws in Assembly

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Legislative Assembly passed a resolution against the three new farm laws in a Special Session held on Thursday.

While tabling the resolution in the legislative Assembly to repeal the Centre's three new farm laws, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said he cannot betray the farmers and the soldiers of the country, and tore up copies of the Centre's three new farm laws in the Assembly.

Addressing the Assembly, the CM also alleged that the laws "have been made for electoral funding of the BJP and not the farmers".

"I support the resolution tabled in the Assembly today.

I am pained that I have to do this. I did not intend to, but I cannot betray the farmers of my country who have been sleeping on the streets in the cold...when the temperature is just 2 degrees Celsius. This Assembly rejects the three laws and appeals to the Central Government to meet the demands of farmers," he said.

He said the Centre should not be under the impression that the farmers will return to their homes. In 1907, a farmers' protest had continued for nine months till the British repealed some laws, he said.

The Government convened a one-day Special Session of the Assembly to discuss the alleged misappropriation of nearly Rs 2,500 crore in the municipal corporations.

Books emerging as protesting farmers' best friends

New Delhi: Protesting farmers, who have been holding their fort at the Singhu Border for over 20 days, are keeping monotony and boredom at bay by adding new books to their reading list — day after day.

For many, it is a new found love.

Thirty-two-year-old

Harbans Singh, for instance, who has been camping for past one week, said he can't recall the last time he picked a book for reading.

His reasons for doing it now: "to keep tempers down" and "to get inspired by the greats".

"There are many like me

who have started reading books during the protest only. Currently, I am reading 'Punjab Tera ki Banu' by novelist Jaswant Singh Kanwal. I look forward to finish this one and read another soon," said Singh, who hails from Barnala district in Punjab and has come with his friends to protest. *PTI*

Centre killing federalism, cries Didi as 3 IPS officers shunted

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday lambasted the Union Government for "forcing its will" on the State by ordering three senior Indian Police Services (IPS) officers out of Bengal.

The forced transfer order — against the wishes of the State Government — came days after alleged Trinamool Congress hooligans attacked BJP president JP Nadda's convoy injuring senior leaders like Kailash Vijayvargiya and Mukul Roy while they were travelling to Diamond Harbour in South 24 Parganas.

An infuriated Chief Minister tweeted, "The Government's order of Central deputation for the three serving IPS officers of West Bengal despite the State's objection is a colourful exercise of power and blatant misuse of emergency provision of IPS Cadre Rule 1954," depicting the act as



"nothing but a deliberate attempt to encroach upon State's jurisdiction and demoralise the serving officers in West Bengal."

She said, "This move, particularly before the elections is against the basic tenets of the federal structure. It's unconstitutional and completely unacceptable," vowing not to allow "this brazen attempt by the Centre to control the State machinery by proxy! West Bengal is not going to be cowed into submission in front of expansionist and undemocratic forces.

Earlier, the Union Home Ministry on Thursday issued a

reminder to West Bengal Government to immediately repatriate the three IPS officers to Central deputation by issuing posting orders to them. The three officers — Bhalanath Pandey, SP of Diamond Harbour; Praveen Tripathi, DIG of Presidency Range; and Rajeev Mishra, ADG of South Bengal — were responsible for the security of the BJP chief JP Nadda, whose motorcade was attacked by TMC workers.

The MHA said Pandey has been appointed an SP in the Bureau of Police Research and Development, Tripathi as a DIG in the Sashtra Seema Bal (SSB) and Mishra an IG in the ITBP. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in the reminder letter to the West Bengal Government and the DGP said that they have failed to adhere to the rules and according to Section 6 (1) of IPS cadre rules — "in case of any disagreement, the Centre's decision shall prevail".

Continued on Page 11

Local defence buy worth ₹28K crore cleared by Rajnath

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the objective of giving a boost to the local defence industry, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday cleared procurement proposals worth over ₹28,000 crore. The items include airborne radars, offshore patrol vessels and modular bridges.

The deals were given the go-ahead in the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) chaired by the Defence Minister. The armed force will have to procure items worth over ₹27,000 crore of the total amount from the Indian industry, officials said here.

They said the apex body, responsible for giving the nod for the deals, approved capital acquisition proposals of various weapons, platforms, equipment and systems required by the

Indian Army, the Indian Navy and the Indian Air Force at an approximate overall cost of ₹28,000 crore.

The major procurements include the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) designed and developed Airborne Early Warning & Control (AEW&C) Systems for the IAF, next generation offshore patrol vessels for the Indian Navy and modular bridges for the Indian Army.

The IAF plans to induct at least six AEW systems. They will be mounted on planes acquired from Air India. Expected to cost more than Rs 10,000 crores, these modified planes will enable the IAF to look deep into Pakistan and China while flying in its own airspace.

Continued on Page 11

Suvendu, Jitendra quit TMC, to join BJP in Shah presence

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress on Thursday suffered a twin blow with two rebel leaders quitting the ruling party within hours of each other.

While powerful satrap Suvendu Adhikari left his primary membership of the party in the morning, former Asansol Mayor and MLA Jitendra Tiwari quit in the evening. Both the leaders had on Wednesday night held a secret meeting with another rebel leader and MP of Burdwan West constituency Sunil Mandal whose future course of action has not been known as yet.

Adhikari — once the prime spearhead of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's Nandigram movement that catapulted her to power — and Tiwari are likely to join the BJP in presence of Home Minister Amit Shah who will hold a rally at Midnapore on December 19,



sources close to them said.

While Shah would come to Bengal in a two-day organisational trip, his party leaders Gajendra Shekhawat, Sanjeev Balyan, Prahlad Patel, Arjun Munda, Mansukh Mandaviya, UP Deputy Chief Minister KP Maurya and Madhya Pradesh Minister Narottam Mishra would visit the State after he had left.

While Adhikari would not issue any political statement since Wednesday noon when he quit as the party MLA — nearly a month after quitting his ministerial portfolios —

Tiwari went all out against the party leadership saying he was not allowed to function properly as the Mayor of Asansol — the second largest city of Bengal — by the leadership sitting in Kolkata. With elections overdue in most of the State's municipal boards Tiwari had been functioning as the Administrator of AMC.

Tiwari who had earlier offered to continue as a common party man later left the party alleging an attack on his office at Pandaweshwar near Asansol. "I had resigned as the Administrator of AMC and also as the District TMC president but had not given up the primary membership of the party... but when some people vandalised and occupied my party office at the instance of the leaders sitting in Kolkata I had no other way but to quit the party too," he said appealing to the State administration for police protection.

Continued on Page 11

Jewar airport will be India's pride: Yogi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that the 'Noida International Airport' would be one of the best airports across the globe and assured that his government would leave no stone unturned to make it world class.

"This airport will become the pride of India. We will present it as a global brand on the world stage," Yogi said after watching a presentation at his official residence in Lucknow on Thursday.

Its name, 'Noida International Greenfield Airport, Jewar', and its logo after UP's state bird 'Stork' along with its design on the lines of London, Moscow and Milan airports, were also approved by Yogi.

The chief minister said that the setting up of Noida International Airport at Jewar

would lead to development of industrial infrastructure in Uttar Pradesh and increase employment.

"This airport will not only encourage manufacturing and exports but air traffic will also pick up steam after it becomes operational," he said.

Pointing out that the aviation sector was a medium of multi-faceted progress in the present time, Yogi h o p e d that the Noida International Airport would significantly help the state in tourism.

The initial capacity of the airport, proposed to be built in four phases, would be 12 million passengers per year and it would be expanded to 70 million passengers per year by 2050.

Besides, while it would be a two-runway airport initially, the number of runways would be expanded to five in

due course of time.

Detailing the updated project status, Civil Aviation Director and Special Secretary Surendra Singh said that the Yamuna International Airport Pvt. presented a master plan before Noida International Airport Ltd for the construction and it had been submitted to the Civil Aviation Ministry.

At present, land for laying out two runways has been acquired, while 3,418 hectares of land is to be acquired for the remaining three runways.

Singh informed the chief minister that acquisition of 1,334 hectares of land for setting up the international airport was taken up by the district magistrate of Gautam Buddha Nagar and so far, 48,097 hectares of land had been acquired for rehabilitation and displacement.

2 Pak terrorists shot during infiltration bid

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Border Security Force (BSF) on Thursday gunned down two armed Pakistani terrorists along the India-Pakistan International Border in Amritsar, Punjab.

"On 17.12.20 at about 0220 hrs, alert troops of BOP (Border Out Post) Rajatal, 71 Bn BSF, Amritsar detected suspicious movement ahead of the fence within Indian territory. In the ensuing firing, BSF troops shot dead two armed Pak intruders," the BSF said in a statement.

The paramilitary recovered one AK 56 Rifle, two magazines, 61 live rounds, one Magnum rifle (caliber 223 bore semi automatic), one magazine, 29 rounds of ammunition, one pistol (Olapia, caliber-30 Bore, Mark Norinco), two magazines and 30 Pak currency, two PVC pipes of approximately 10 feet each, it further said.

India may need \$1.8 billion for 1st phase Covid-19 vaccination

Covid-19 IN INDIA**TOTAL****CASES: 99,74,944****DEATHS: 1,44,786****RECOVERED: 95,16,890****ACTIVE: 3,10,652**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India may need to spend USD1.8 billion on Covid-19 vaccines in first phase of a coronavirus vaccination programme, even after getting

STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	18,84,773	48,499	17,74,255
Karnataka	9,05,901	11,981	8,78,696
Andhra Pradesh	8,77,348	7,069	8,65,825
Tamil Nadu	8,03,516	11,942	7,81,745
Kerala	6,88,410	2,735	6,27,364
Delhi	6,13,357	10,182	5,90,977
Uttar Pradesh	5,69,263	8,118	5,43,344
West Bengal	5,30,456	9,235	5,01,624
Odisha	3,25,147	1,878	3,20,208
Rajasthan	2,95,953	2,589	2,79,717
Telangana	2,79,644	1,505	2,70,967
Chhattisgarh	2,63,485	3,156	2,42,922
Haryana	2,55,728	2,782	2,45,933
Bihar	2,45,398	1,337	2,38,957
Gujarat	2,32,188	4,211	2,15,628
Madhya Pradesh	2,27,949	3,442	2,12,351

support under the Covax global vaccine-sharing scheme, according to estimates by the GAVI vaccines alliance.

India's Covid-19 caseload is close to cross 1 crore mark with 99.51 lakh cases reported on

Thursday, the world's second highest caseload of coronavirus after the United States.

India plans to inoculate 300 million people over the next six to eight months.

Continued on Page 11

CAPSULE

3-DAY ULTIMATUM FOR POST-BREXIT DEAL

Brussels: The European Parliament has issued a 3-day ultimatum to Brexit negotiators to strike a trade deal, warning that MEPs won't have time to ratify an agreement this year unless it is ready by Sunday.

AMIR QUILTS, BLAMES PAK CRICKET FOR TORTURE

Karachi: Pakistan fast bowler Mohammad Amir on Thursday announced a dramatic end to his international cricket career, alleging that he has been "mentally tortured" by his national board's management.

MADRASA TEACHER BOOKED FOR RAPE BID

Amethi: A madrasa teacher has been booked for trying to rape a 15-year-old girl in Shivratnagarj after giving her sedatives, police said on Thursday. According to a complaint filed by the victim's mother on Wednesday, Kaleem, a madrasa teacher, came to her house when her daughter was alone as she had gone to the market on November 26. He then gave sedatives to the girl and tried to rape her.

Two killed as bus rams into truck in Barabanki

Lucknow (PNS): Close on the heels of the death of eight passengers in a road mishap when a UP Roadways bus collided with an oil tanker in Sambhal, in yet another mishap, two women were killed and a dozen passengers injured when another Roadways bus rammed into a stationary truck in Barabanki late Wednesday night. As per reports, a Roadways bus (UP43T-5813) of Ambedkarnagar depot was headed to New Delhi when it crashed into a stationary truck near Safdarganj in Barabanki late Wednesday night. The victims were identified as Noorus Saba (20) of Ramnagar (Ambedkar Nagar) and five-year-old Aaliya from Baskhari (Ambedkar Nagar)



NOTICE

I have changed my name from Sarmeshta to Shakuntala in future I should be recognised by this name, Shakuntala w/o G S Singh S.M.Q No.723/14 Area Air Force Station Agra

NOTICE

A sale deed dated 22-11-2011 executed by Smt. Pushpa Singh W/o Sumit Kumar Singh R/o Plot No. 200, Chandan Nagar Colony, Karuandi (BHU) Varanasi infavour of Chandrakala Singh W/o Jaybeer Singh R/o Barabankpur, Post-Ghatampur, Chunar Distt.-Mirzapur regarding the sale of S.M. Plot No. 208 having an area 1360 sqft. Vill.-Awaleshpur, Pargana-Dehat Amanat, Tehsil & Distt.-Varanasi duly registered with Sub Registrar Office, Varanasi in book No. 1, Vol. No. 3982 on pages 375/400 as D. No. 461 dated 22-01-2011 has been last away. If any person/ institution have any objection or information regarding this sale deed please inform within 15 days on 9451525826, Harishchandra Rai, Advocate, Chamber No. 110, Banaras Bar Building, IInd Floor, Civil Court, Varanasi.

आवश्यकता

ठा0 जय नारायण सिंह मेमोरियल डिग्री कालेज
हवगाम, फतेहपुर-212652 (उप्र0)
(कालेज कोड-02039)
सम्बद्ध प्रो0 राजेन्द्र सिंह (रज्जू भट्टा)
विद्यविद्यालय, प्रयागराज

आवश्यकता है
महाविद्यालय में संचालित
बीएडूक पाठ्यक्रम हेतु-आचार्य/विभागाध्यक्ष (1 पद), सहा आचार्य (16 पद) योग्या- 1 प्राचार्य/विभागाध्यक्ष (01) यो0-55% स्नातकोत्तर + 55% एमएडूक0+विज्ञा मे 10-एमएडूक0+ आचार्य शिक्षा संस्थान में शिक्षण कार्य का 15/08 वर्ष का अनुभव । 2 सहा आचार्य - शिक्षा के परिक्षित (04) यो0-सामाजिक विज्ञान विषयो में 55% स्नातकोत्तर उपार्धि+55% एमएडूक उपार्धि मे 55% एमएडूक (विभागाध्यक्ष)+55%, बीएडूक+नेट (विभागाध्यक्ष) 3 सहा आचार्य -विज्ञान (02) 4 सहा आचार्य-गणित (02) 5 सहा आचार्य-भाषा (02) 6 सहा आचार्य-सांसायिक विज्ञान (02) यो0-55% स्नातकोत्तर उपार्धि विज्ञान/गणित/भाषा/सांसायिक विज्ञान विषयो में 55% एमएडूक । 7 सहा आचार्य-पुनः प्रवेश (01) यो0-55% स्नातकोत्तर उपार्धि प्रवेशि कला विषयो मे । 8 सहा आचार्य-सांसाय एवं शारीरिक शिक्षा (01) यो0- 55% स्नातकोत्तर (एमबीएडूक) । 9 सहा आचार्य- निष्पादन कर्तार (01) यो0-55% स्नातकोत्तर उपार्धि संगीत/गुण/रंगमंच विषयो मे 10 पुनःप्रवेशक (01) यो0-55% अंको के साथ बीएडूक उपार्धि ।

वेतनमान एवं सेवा शर्त- एमबीएडूक0/020/0/ विद्यविद्यालय/यू जी सी. मानकानुसार मोट-1. सभी सहा आचार्यों की उपर्यक्त अर्हता के अनिवारि नेट/बीएडूक0 अनिवार्य है ।

नोट-2 आवेदन पत्र, 04 फोटो एवं समस्त संलग्नकों की स्वामिता प्रत्याग्रीयो सहित विज्ञान तिथि से 21 दिनों के अन्दर महाविद्यालय के पो पर संश्लिप्त कला अवका ई-मेल द्वारा भेजे जा जाना करें। स्नातकोत्तर की सूचना दुरुनम द्वारा दी जायेगी।

प्रवेशक/संपर्क- 9452402590, 7704908732, 7704908728 ई-मेल आईडी00- jncg@gmail.com

आवश्यकता

रानी चन्द्रप्रभा महाविद्यालय
सामा, फतेहपुर-212655 (उप्र0) (कालेज कोड-02008)
सम्बद्ध प्रो0 राजेन्द्र सिंह (रज्जू भट्टा) विद्यविद्यालय, प्रयागराज

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CM lambasts oppn for misleading farmers

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Launching a scathing attack on the opposition for opposing the new farm laws, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that these parties were fighting the battle for middlemen and brokers as they could not digest the welfare of farmers.

Addressing a farmers' gathering in Bareilly on Thursday, Yogi Adityanath said that the opposition leaders were plotting to mislead farmers by spreading rumours about the end of minimum support price (MSP) and mandis, thereby pitching in for middlemen and brokers.

The chief minister said that vested interests of these parties were impeding the welfare of the farmers that was being ensured by Prime Minister Narendra Modi through a series of agricultural reforms.

“These people cannot digest farmers' welfare. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is dedicatedly working for the betterment of farmers and ensuring that they get all facilities like seeds, fertilisers, markets and MSP,” he stressed. Yogi said that farmers' loan



to the tune of Rs 36,000 crore had already been waived and the Union cabinet had decided to send Rs 3,500 crore of cane export subsidy directly to the accounts of farmers on Wednesday.

“Benefits of the schemes are directly reaching the farmers and this is why they (opposition) are having problems. They were always into robbing farmers' rights. Now there is no middlemen between the government and the farmers and this has disturbed them,” he said. Yogi further said, “The

government is guaranteeing MSP and the Union cabinet has increased it. The new law will ensure a healthy competition in the market and the farmers will get higher prices for their produce as they can sell their crops anywhere and there will be no taxes anywhere.”

“Those who do not like to see the farmers progressing are spreading rumours. Soon after the formation of Bharatiya Janata Party government in UP in 2017, crop loans of the farmers totalling Rs 86 lakh were waived. We are continuously buying farmers' produce and purchase centres have been opened across the state,” he said.

Yogi claimed that during the previous regimes, sugar mills closed down one after the other and for six years, cane dues were not cleared.

“We sent Rs 1,12,000 crore of cane dues directly to farmers' accounts and more than Rs 22,000 crore was transferred to farmers' accounts under the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme. The next instalment of Rs 4,300 crore will soon be directly sent to their accounts,” the chief minister said.

PM Modi to attend AMU centenary celebration

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be the chief guest at the centenary celebration of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) on December 22. This was confirmed by AMU Vice-Chancellor Prof Tariq Mansoor on Thursday.

Besides, Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal would also accompany

the prime minister.

Prof. Mansoor also said that in the coming days, President Ram Nath Kovind would also pay a visit to the AMU to join the celebrations.

“The entire university campus has been illuminated and decorated with lights for the celebrations,” he said.

Meanwhile, AMU authorities appealed to the university's fraternity, including stu-

dents, to keep its centenary programme “above politics” as it announced that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had accepted an invitation to address the function on December 22.

In a letter to the staff, students and other members of AMU fraternity, Vice-Chancellor Tariq Mansoor appealed to them to keep the centenary programme above politics.

Industries to get power through short term open access in UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government has initiated a process to facilitate procurement of power by industrial units through short-term open access, thereby fulfilling a long-standing demand.

Additional Chief Secretary (Energy) Arvind Kumar told news persons in Lucknow on Thursday that the UP Power Transmission Corporation Ltd. (UPPTCL) has uploaded standard operating procedure and integrated online ABT portal on its website www.online.upsldc.org/abt for granting permission, inspection and installation consent for Availability Based Tariff (ABT) meters.

“The ABT meters provide a flexible solution for energy monitoring and billing bulk inter-utility power flows, particularly for power supply through open access,” he said.

Customers intending to avail short-term open access can now obtain the no-objection certificate (NOC) online through UP State Load Dispatch Centre (UPLSDC) web portal www.eass.upsldc.org/eass/OAPreRegistration.jsp for one-time registration on the prescribed application format.

“So far 63 short-term open access consumers have registered in the state, of which 58 are active registrations and consumers have already availed 224.42 megawatt out of a total

of 347.56 megawatt power sanctioned under open access in UP,” Kumar said.

The senior official further said that open access was one of the strategic measures to create a competitive and healthy industrial environment, where by medium and large consumers could have access to transmission and distribution networks to obtain power from suppliers other than local distribution company (discom).

As per UP Electricity Regulatory Commission (UPERC) regulations for open access, short-term open access means the right to use intra-state transmission system and/or distribution system for a period of not exceeding three months at a time.

Akhilesh slams government for travails of common man

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Hitting out at the Bharatiya Janata Party government at the Centre over the rising prices of LPG, former chief minister and Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav said that the ruling party was not bothered by the travails of the common man as price of the cooking gas was hiked twice in 13 days.

“In the BJP rule, it has become difficult for the common man to live with the government's 'back-breaking' inflation. If the government can't bring down prices then at least they should not hike prices. The government must roll back the increased price of LPG cylinder in public interest,” the SP chief said in a statement released on Thursday.

“People in power are openly supporting illegal mining in UP. The police, the administration and the government are silent and getting their shares. In Bidhuna area of Kanpur, a BJP leader's kin is neck deep in illegal mining on the land of gram sabha. A Hindu Yuva Vahini leader was caught mixing dung, straw and harmful oil to make fake spikes in Hathras. Animal fat, bones, feet and hooves have been found in a fake ghee factory in Agra. Why has the chief minister not yet imposed NSA on these adulterators?” the SP chief asked.

Further attacking the government for backing crime in the state, Akhilesh Yadav said that the opposition party workers were being killed in daylight but the police were not taking action. “The truth is that criminals are being patronised by those in power,” he said.

The SP chief also hit out at the BJP government for “avoiding the opposition” by not holding the winter session of Parliament this year citing the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Union government had assured to hold



“In the BJP rule, it has become difficult for the common man to live with the government's 'back-breaking' inflation. If the government cannot bring down prices then at least they should not hike prices. The government must roll back the increased price of LPG cylinder in public interest”

the session in January next year.

“The BJP government is trying to evade facing the farmers and the opposition by doing away with the winter session of Lok Sabha using COVID-19 as an excuse. The sessions of Lok Sabha and UP Assembly should be convened immediately to discuss farm laws, privatisation, unemployment, price rise and law and order issues in UP, women's security and stalled development,” Akhilesh Yadav said.

Acid attack leads to communal tension in Budaun

Lucknow (PNS): -An incident of acid being thrown at a girl by a youth from another community in Mujariya area led to communal tension in Badaun on Thursday.

The victim was admitted to a hospital in a serious condition and a heavy police force was deployed in the area to avert any untoward incident.

As per reports, a BA second year girl student from a village in Mujariya accused her neighbour Mahesh Pal aka Bantu of raping, promising to get married. When the girl complained to the police, a piqued Pal attacked her with acid while she was returning home from a market.

Senior Superintendent of Police at Budaun, Sankalp Sharma, said that the victim accused the youth of sexual harassment on the false promise of marriage after which a case of rape was registered at Mujariya police station and investigations were on.

In Ballia, a 13-year-old girl was raped by her 22-year-old teacher in the Bairaia area two months ago. An FIR was lodged by the victim's father on Wednesday. He alleged that his daughter was raped by the teacher as she went to the school to fill up a scholarship form. The accused was later arrested.

Elsewhere in Lalitpur, a 32-year-old woman and her

lover were arrested for killing the woman's husband, Manoj Nigam (38), and throwing his body into Jakhlaun canal from where it was recovered on

Tuesday.

A case was registered at Lalitpur police station on the basis of a complaint filed by Nigam's family.

During probe, it surfaced that Nigam's wife, Deepmala, and her lover, Jairam Sen (20), were behind the murder after which both were arrested.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This is notified for the information of rail passengers that Railways have decided to extend the periodicity of the run of following Festival Special trains as under:-

EXTENSION OF PERIODICITY		
Train No. & Name	Notified Upto	Extended Upto
07323 Hubli Jn.-Varanasi Mail/Express	25.12.2020	29.01.2021
07324 Varanasi-Hubli Jn. Mail/Express	27.12.2020	31.01.2021
02683 Yasvantpur Jn.-Lucknow Superfast	28.12.2020	25.01.2021
02684 Lucknow-Yasvantpur Jn. Superfast	31.12.2020	28.01.2021
02539 Yasvantpur Jn.-Lucknow Superfast	30.12.2020	27.01.2021
02684 Lucknow-Yasvantpur Jn. Superfast	01.01.2021	29.01.2021
Note:- There will be no change in Timings, Path, Frequency, Composition & fare structure of the above special trains.		

In addition to extension of periodicity, the time-table of the following trains will also be revised as under:-

EXTENSION OF PERIODICITY AND REVISION OF TIME-TABLE			
Train No. & Name	Notified Upto	Extended Upto	Revised Timings w.e.f.
06229 Mysore Jn.-Varanasi Express Special	31.12.2020	28.01.2021	22.12.2020
06230 Varanasi-Mysore Jn. Express Special	02.01.2021	30.01.2021	24.12.2020

THESE SPECIAL TRAINS WILL BE HAVING FULLY RESERVED SERVICE ONLY.

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

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

Security Helpline No. 182

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PRINTING OF E-ADMIT CARD FROM 06 -10 JAN 2021

- The Indian Coast Guard, an Armed Force of the Union, offers a challenging career to young and dynamic Indian male candidates for General Duty branch as an Assistant Commandant (Group 'A' Gazetted Officer) and invites 'online' application for SC, ST and OBC category only.
- Branch and Eligibility.** Indian citizens having following minimum qualifications are eligible to apply:

SL	EXAM	AGE (Borne Between)	GENDER	EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION
(a)	General Duty	Born between 01 Jul 1996 to 30 Jun 2000 (Both dates inclusive).	Male	(i) Candidates who have passed Bachelor's degree from any recognised university with minimum 60% marks in aggregate (i.e. 1st Semester to 8th Semester for BE/B. Tech Course or 1st year to last year for Bachelor Degree candidates wherever applicable). (ii) Mathematics and Physics as subjects up to intermediate or class XII of 10+2+3 scheme of education or equivalent with 60% aggregate in Mathematics and Physics. (Candidates not in possession of Physics and Maths in 10+2 (intermediate) or equivalent level are not eligible for General Duty (GD)).

* Date of opening online application will be : 21 Dec 2020 from 0001 Hrs.
* Date of closing online application will be: 27 Dec 2020 upto 2359 Hrs.
* Admit card through URL www.joinindiancoastguard.gov.in will be available for print from 06-10 Jan 2021.

Note (i) Upper age relaxation of 5 years for SC/ST and 3 years for OBC candidates. (ii) Maximum 5% relaxation in aggregate in the degree certificate for SC/ST candidates. No relaxation is applicable for 12th class marks. (iii) Indian Coast Guard reserves the right to fix the cut off percentage for issue of PSB call up letters.

- Vacancy.** The total category wise posts for Assistant Commandant - 02/2021 (SRD) batch are as mentioned below:-

SC	ST	OBC	Total
05	14	06	25
- Additional Eligibility Criteria.**
 - While short listing applications for call-up, priority will be given to candidates with higher percentage of marks in the degree.
 - Only candidates cleared their final year/ final semester exams and completed their degrees are to apply.**
 - Candidates withdrawn on disciplinary grounds from any other service training academy are not eligible to appear.
 - Candidates should not have been arrested, convicted or prosecuted on criminal charges.
 - Free boarding & Lodging facility for the duration of FSB will be provided. To & Fro rail fares (AC III Tier / Chair car) or actual bus fare to the candidates appearing in FSB (Stage-II) will be reimbursed as per GOI policy.

DISCLAIMER. Information published in various News Papers is for guidelines only. In case of any ambiguity regarding eligibility criteria, date and time of examination and other procedures, the contents given in the Coast Guard recruitment website www.joinindiancoastguard.gov.in will be final.

*** Important : Please read the instruction given in the website before submitting your application. This is an indicative advertisement only.**

CAUTION: SELECTION IN COAST GUARD IS FAIR AND ON MERIT ONLY. CANDIDATE SHOULD NOT FALL PREY TO UNSCRUPULOUS PERSONS POSING AS RECRUITMENT AGENTS. FOR COMPLAINT AGAINST SUCH PERSONS, CANDIDATE MUST APPROACH THE DIRECTORATE OF RECRUITMENT, COAST GUARD HEADQUARTER, NOIDA ON TELEPHONE-0120-2975817 AND EMAIL ID: dte-rect@indiancoastguard.nic.in

davp 10119/11/0020/2021

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Training for Covid-19 immunisation begins

235 test +ve,
7 succumb

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The 3-day district-level immunisation kicked off in Lucknow on Thursday. Additional CMO and district immunisation officer MK Singh said all the safety measures would be followed during the vaccination process. Health education officers and data entry operators are being told about the waiting room, observation room and vaccination room. The ANMs, staff nurses and pharmacists are also being told how to verify the beneficiaries and how to upload the data during vaccination. They are also being trained in cold chain maintenance and conditioning of the ice pack. The trainees were briefed regarding the usual side effects of the vaccination process which includes nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, anxiety, giddiness and vertigo.

They were also briefed about the biomedical waste management.

Singh said they are still working on the number of centres where the vaccination will take place.

On Thursday, 235 persons tested positive for coronavirus in Lucknow while 180 patients recovered. With seven more deaths, city's toll climbed to 1,072.

There are still 2,866 active cases in the state capital. The fresh cases included 16 from Gomtinagar, 15 from Indiranagar, 18 from Rae Bareli road, 12 each from Hasanganj & Chinhath, and 10 each from Hazratganj, Talkatora and Ashiyana. Across the state, 1,539 persons tested Covid positive, including 68 in Kanpur, 113 in Ghaziabad, 73 in Gautam Buddh nagar, 64 in Varanasi and 72 in Meerut, taking the UP tally to 5,70,789. There are 18 deaths in the state, including two in Varanasi, and one each in Prayagraj, Meerut, Moradabad, Deoria, Jaunpur, Azamgarh, Pratapgarh, Ghazipur & Hapur, taking

the toll to 8,136. Besides, 1,159 patients recovered across the state. A senior official at the CMO office pointed out that there has been a dip in the number of active coronavirus cases in Lucknow and the same have come down below 3,000.

"The cases have come down in all the areas, including in the high-risk ones. We had sent public health experts to the areas with maximum cases. Hopefully by the end of this month, the situation will improve further," he said.

Meanwhile, incharge of ICU-3 at the Rajdhani Covid hospital of SGPGI Dr Tanmay Ghatak said the number of serious patients continues to remain the same. "We are getting moderate to severe patients also suffering from diabetes, COPD and other chronic diseases. The winter season is making the matters worse for COPD patients. The patients include those from the city and others referred from other districts," he said. Ghatak said they were following the ICMR protocols for treatment.

Vegetable seller robbed of ₹2L

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a daring incident, six unidentified miscreants looted Rs 2 lakh from a vegetable wholesaler in Kakori on Thursday morning. However, police doubted claim of the victim and said they did not find any eyewitness to the case.

As per reports, the victim, identified as Chandra Shekhar Lodhi of Dubagga, left his house for the shop on a motorcycle around 4 am. He said six miscreants riding three different motorcycles surrounded him when he reached near a school in Kakori. "The miscreants attacked me with sticks and later they looted the cash and two gold chains. They all had their faces covered with hankies. The hanky of one of them fell off in a hurry to flee the scene and I identified him," he said. Lodhi said he called out the name of the miscreant but the latter threw dust in his eyes and all of them sped off.

The police worked on the case and scanned CCTV. The victim, identified by the complainant as Gulab Singh of

Kakori, was later arrested. The police said they were interrogating Gulab Singh.

Meanwhile, an imposter, impersonating a policeman, duped a woman of her ornaments in Vikas Nagar on Thursday. Reports said the woman, identified as Alimunnisa (70) of Shekhupura Colony in the area, was going to Dandaiya Bazaar for shopping around 2 pm. When she reached Vishnupuri Colony, a bike-borne unidentified man stopped her and asked her where was she going. When the woman exclaimed, he told her that he was a policeman. He also told her that a youth had killed a man after looting his ornaments. He asked the woman not to move on the road while wearing ornaments and asked her to take the same off. The woman kept the ornaments in her purse which the conman took from her. He later took out a sachet and put the ornaments in it before handing it to the woman. When the woman returned home and checked the sachet, she found artificial ornaments. She later complained to police about the incident.

Three buses go up in flames



PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Three luxury (Scania) buses parked opposite a workshop in Banthra were went up in flames under mysterious circumstances on Thursday morning. Police said that the buses were there for maintenance and that they were investigating the cause of fire.

As per reports, some com-

muters spotted flames leaping high from the buses around 10 am and alerted the police. A police team, along with fire tenders, reached the scene. Traffic was stopped and the rescue operation was started. The police said they were yet to get any complaint regarding the incident. The buses were registered in the name of a Mumbai-based travel company.

Sources said that the cost of buses was over Rs 4.5 crore and they were once run on contract with roadways. However, the police did not confirm the same. Roadways officials, on condition of anonymity, said the contract of the buses had ended a few months back and they were parked outside the workshop of the manufacturer's company.

Gayatri Prajapati's son held for fraud, criminal conspiracy

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Son of former cabinet Minister Gayatri Prasad Prajapati was arrested by a Gomti Nagar Vistar police team in Lucknow on Thursday. Anil Prajapati was named in a case of fraud, misappropriation of land and criminal conspiracy on September 17. The FIR was lodged by Brij Bhawan Dubey, who is also a former director of a company run by the former minister. Dubey had also named Gayatri Prajapati in the case. He had alleged that Gayatri, along with his son Anil and aides, forced him to get a land (current cost approx Rs 2.5 crore) registered in the name of a woman. Dubey had stated that she was the same woman who had accused the minister of gangrape in 2017. Dubey further alleged that the same woman turned hostile and was threatening him to take his name in her statement to be recorded in another rape case registered last year in Gautampalli police station, while the aides of Prajapati were also threatening to kidnap his son. Prajapati is already lodged in Lucknow jail. Inspector Akhilesh Pandey said Anil was arrested from Hazratganj following a tip-off by an informer.

Meanwhile, a joint team of Gomti Nagar Vistar police and crime branch nabbed a hardened criminal bearing a cash reward of Rs 25,000 during an encounter late on Wednesday night. He suffered firearm injuries in the exchange of fire with the police. The accused was identified as Ram Sanahi Loniya (26) of Sitapur. He has served jail term in a case of dacoity and under Gangster Act. The team that carried out the operation was headed by inspector Akhilesh Pandey (Gomti Nagar Vistar) and inspector Ajay Prakash Tripathi (crime branch).

The police said they got a lead about the movement of the miscreant during constant surveillance of criminals. Later, the crime branch team shared the inputs with the Gomti Nagar Vistar police and both the teams left for the operation. The accused was surrounded at a place and asked to surrender, but he opened fire. The cops returned fire and overpowered the accused, who suffered bullet injuries in a leg.

RAPED

A middle-aged man was accused of raping a mentally unsound girl in Mohanlalganj on Wednesday. As per reports, the accused, identified as Angnu of the locality, raped the girl who was all alone in her house. He later threatened to kill her parents if she approached police. On Wednesday night, the girl shared her ordeal with her parents, who lodged a case in this connection on Thursday.

SUICIDE

An 18-year-old boy committed suicide at his house in Talkatora early morning on Thursday. Reports said the teen, identified as Rajesh of B-Block in the area, was found hanging from a wooden pole with a dupatta tied around his neck. Father Jamuna Kanauija spotted Rajesh hanging around 4:30 am and informed police.

Cold winds add to chill

Lucknow (PNS): Cold winds increased the chill in the state capital on Thursday. Lucknow recorded the minimum temperature at 7.8 degree Celsius while the maximum temperature at 20.6 degree Celsius.

MeT director JP Gupta said the chill was because of cold winds coming from the north-western region where hills witnessed a snowfall. "The cold weather conditions will continue till the western disturbance brings relief," he said. In the state, the lowest minimum temperature (3.5 degree Celsius) was recorded in Meerut.

The forecast for Lucknow is shallow fog in the morning and clear sky thereafter. The maximum and minimum temperature is expected to be around 22 degree Celsius and 7 degree Celsius, respectively.

Across UP, the weather is most likely to be dry with shallow to moderate fog likely at isolated places over the state in the morning. There is a warning for cold wave conditions at isolated places over eastern UP and severe cold wave conditions at few places over western UP. The cold day conditions are expected at isolated places over western UP.

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- ◆ 3,93,447 स्वयं सहायता समूहों से लगभग 45,24,640 परिवार लाभान्वित।
- ◆ 67 हजार समूह सदस्यों द्वारा 1 करोड़ 28 हजार स्कूल ड्रेस का निर्माण, रु. 100 करोड़ से अधिक की आमदनी।
- ◆ 51,981 आंगनवाड़ी केन्द्रों में सूखे राशन का वितरण।
- ◆ 18 जनपदों में आई.सी.डी.एस. के अन्तर्गत टेक-होम राशन का वितरण, संभावित टर्नओवर रु. 1,200 करोड़।
- ◆ 1,010 उचित दर की दुकानों का संचालन।

- ◆ 58 हजार ग्राम पंचायतों में बैंकिंग कॉरस्पोंडेंट सखी की नियुक्ति प्रक्रियाधीन।
- ◆ बिजली बिल कलेक्शन कार्य महिला स्वयं सहायता समूहों के माध्यम से भी।
- ◆ 7,213 स्वयं सहायता समूहों के माध्यम से सामुदायिक शौचालयों का संचालन।
- ◆ 1,515 उत्पादक समूहों के माध्यम से रु. 1.50 करोड़ मूल्य की सब्जी का वितरण।

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उत्तर प्रदेश

गरिमामयी उपस्थिति

आनन्द स्वरूप शुक्ल
राज्यमंत्री, संसदीय कार्य, ग्राम्य विकास एवं समग्र ग्राम विकास, उत्तर प्रदेश

मिशन शक्ति
गरीबी मुक्तता गरीबी सम्मान गरीबी स्वावलंबन

दिनांक : 18 दिसम्बर, 2020 | समय : अपराह्न 4:00 बजे

स्थान : 5, कालिदास मार्ग, लखनऊ

उत्तर प्रदेश राज्य ग्रामीण आजीविका मिशन, ग्राम्य विकास विभाग, उत्तर प्रदेश

Big fan of chikankari: Shilpa

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Actress Shilpa Shinde is a big fan of Lucknow's chikankari and has a huge collection of chikan kurtis. Known for her role in TV serial 'Bhabhiji Ghar Par Hain' and a Bigg Boss participant, Shilpa was in Lucknow along with co-actress Poulomi Das for promotion of their show. Shilpa and Poulomi, who play the pivotal and challenging characters of Queen Meerawati and Kala respectively, vouched for the chaat and kebabs that Lucknow is famous for. Asked about shooting and promoting their show in Covid times, Shilpa said there has to be some sort of start, albeit with precautions. Poulomi said they have been regularly getting themselves tested for Covid and ensuring all the precautions. "It was wonderful to portray an ambitious character in a show which touches upon a lot of serious issues like male patriarchy, gender politics, power etc that existed even in those times. I am delighted to be a part of



such an interesting show. We are here for promotions and I am in love with this city. The chikan kurtis and kebabs are my favourite," Shilpa said.

Shilpa, who has faced quite a few ups and downs in her career, said she has learnt from the past and is extremely happy doing this role. "Despite all that happened in the past, I was positive that something good will come my way," she said.

She added that she was interested in doing roles with equally talented actors and the show is all about palace politics

had some great actors are part of the show. "I am glad to be a part of such a great ensemble and it is going to be remarkable for Indian OTT platform. Today we are in Lucknow and we are really thankful to all the people for showering us with love as always. I hope the people of Lucknow watch and love our show," Poulomi said. The period-drama series, directed by Shachindra Vats also stars Milind Soman, Sahil Salathia, Annu Kapoor, Anantvijay Joshi, Flora Saini, Aditya Lal and Kashish Rai, among others.

35 furniture shops damaged by inferno

Lucknow (PNS): Over 35 furniture shops in Purania scrap market were damaged in a fire which broke out under mysterious circumstances on Thursday night. Police teams and fire tenders rushed to the scene to douse the flames. No casualty was reported in the fire.

As per reports, the fire broke out in one of the shops around 8:30 pm and soon engulfed the neighbouring shops. Locals called the police and a team of cops, along with firemen, reached the scene. Before the rescue operation could begin, the fire took a violent turn and engulfed some of the nearby shanties. Fire tenders from different locations in the city were sent to the spot and the exercise to contain the fire was on till last reports came in.

CDRI scientist conferred award

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Principal scientist at Central Drug Research Institute (CDRI) Dr Ritu Trivedi has been conferred with NASI-Reliance Industries Platinum Jubilee Award (2020) in Biological Sciences. The award carries a plaque and cash of Rs 3 lakh. CDRI spokesperson Sanjeev Yadav said the major scientific contributions of Dr Ritu Trivedi are in the area of metabolic bone disorders, specifically post-menopausal osteoporosis and osteoarthritis. "Her

work has led to potential products from natural resources and small molecules for improvement of bone health. She has shown that Dalbergia sissoo or Indian rosewood exhibited osteogenic efficacy with novel osteogenic markers which led to translational benefits as a rapid fracture healing agent by the name, Reunion, which is in the market. One-year clinical trial has been done in post-menopausal women," he said. He added that another product by the name 'Joint Fresh' for osteoarthritis from

Spinacia oleracea or Spinach has cartilage proliferative ability. "These contributions have led to 23 patents both national and international to her credit with more than 100 articles in peer reviewed journals," he added. She is the fellow of the National Academy of Sciences (India). She has got the prestigious TATA Innovation Fellowship 2019-20 by the Department of Biotechnology, Union Ministry of Science and Technology in recognition of her outstanding research contributions.

NER GM inspects railway stations

Lucknow (PNS): General manager of North Eastern Railways (NER) Vinay Kumar Tripathi inspected different railways stations, including Lucknow Junction, and asked the officials to improve civic amenities and facilities related to train operations and freight services. He said the railways had to live up to the satisfac-

tion of the passengers and focus on improved services. "We have to work constantly and attentively to achieve the goal of passenger satisfaction. Availability of modern civic amenities their expansion is an important aspect that one should never forget," he said.

The GM visited the integrated crew lobby and sought

details related to train operations, safety arrangements in foggy weather and problems of employees. He also met representatives of the employees' union. The GM later held a meeting with the officials and sought progress reports of different undergoing projects asking them to ensure completion in time.

CITYBRIEFS

HIGHEST REVENUE

The Lucknow division of North Eastern Railways (NER) earned the highest revenue (Rs 48.23 crore) in the financial year 2020-21 amongst all the divisions of Indian Railways by sale of scrap through e-auction. A spokesman said the e-auction was conducted on s-procurement portal of Indian Railways. He said the work was conducted under the guidance of DRM, NER, Monica Agnihotri and the revenue earned was the highest amongst all divisions of Indian Railways. He said a total of 14,990 metric tonne scrap was disposed and efforts were on to make the Lucknow division of NER scarp-free.

PRABHAT PHERI

A *prabhat pheri* was organised in RDSO on Thursday under the 'Fit India Movement' to promote fitness across the country. The programme is being organised under the guidance of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. Officers, staff and their families participated in the *prabhat pheri* to spread the message of 'Fitness ka dose aadha ghanta roz' by means of banners, placards and slogans.

DEPARTEMT OF PRINTING AND STATIONERY UTTAR PRADESH, PRAYAGRAJ CANCELATION NOTICE

Tender Notice No. 3/M/2020-21 Date - 05.12.2020 issued by the Directorate of Printing and Stationery Uttar Pradesh Prayagraj regarding purchase of printing machines wide ref. No. 451/kraya(Yantra)/2020-21 date 05.12.2020 is here by quashed due to indispensable reason.

Director,
Printing and Stationery
Uttar Pradesh Prayagraj

U.P.: 157888, Date : 15.12.2020
विज्ञापन वेबसाइट www.up.gov.nic.in पर उपलब्ध है।

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY E-Tender Notice

On behalf of the President of India, acting through Chief Administrative Officer/Con, N. E. Railway, Gorakhpur invites the following E-works Tenders: **S.No.-1, E-Tender No.: Dy CE-C-Br.-10-2020**, Closing dated 11-01-2021. Name of Work: Construction of Minor bridges, Earth work & Blanketing for formation between Gonda Kachery (Excl.) Km. 662/7 to Sarju Station (Incl.) 694/0 in connection with Gonda-Burhwal 3rd Running line project in Lucknow Division of North Eastern Railway. Approximate Value: ₹ 99,70,08,459.71, Earnest Money (Rs.): ₹ 51,35,100/-, Cost of Tender Form (Rs.): ₹ 00, Completion Period: 18 (Eighteen) Months.

- Bid starting date on 28-12-2020.
- Last date of submission of above E-Tender up to 15:00 hrs. on 11-01-2021.
- Date of opening of above E-Tender 15:30 hrs. on 11-01-2021.
- Detailed tender notice, eligibility, criteria, terms & conditions is available on website <https://trep.gov.in>.
- In case any disparity arises between Hindi and English version of tender notice, English version will hold good and will be followed.

Shri Prakash Chandra XEN/Con/ Gonda 09794844284
Dy. Chief Engineer/Con/Br. CPRO/W-164 Gorakhpur

About any passenger amenity complaint SMS on Mob. No.: 09794845955

Never travel on roof and foot boards.

उत्तर प्रदेश पावर ट्रान्समिशन कारपोरेशन लिमिटेड ई-निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना प्रतिष्ठित, अनुभवी एवं ई-निविदा हेतु पंजीकृत निमाताओं या उनके अधिकृत प्रतिनिधि/आयुक्तिकाओं से परांपन्न दक्षिण-पूर्व क्षेत्र, प्रयागराज के अन्तर्गत निम्न सामग्री की आपूर्ति हेतु निविदाये दो भागों में उनके समुच्च अंकित तिथि एवं समय तक आमंत्रित की जाती है। निविदा के भाग प्रथम एवं भाग द्वितीय, निर्धारित तिथि एवं समय तक उपरोक्त सरकार के ई-निविदा पोर्टल सिस्टम के अन्तर्गत वेबसाइट www.etender.up.nic.in पर अपलोड किये जा सकेंगे। निविदा शुल्क एवं धरोहर राशि आरटीसीएन/एआईएफडी के माध्यम से जमा करणी जायेगी। निविदा खुलने की तिथि निर्धारित तिथि एवं समय (यदि अकारण हो तो अगले कार्यदिन में) पर खोली जायेगी। निविदा की वेबसाइट खुलने की तिथि से 06 माह होनी चाहिए। सराफत निविदाये किसी भी दशा में स्वीकार नहीं होगी। ई-निविदा सं०-10/मुओअ (पाठ०२०२०)/2020-21, विद्युत परांपन्न खण्ड-चतुर्थ, वाराणसी के अन्तर्गत निमाणांश 132 केओवी उपकेंद्र कछया हेतु फायर प्लांट इन्वेंट्री/सहित निविदा। निविदा प्राप्त करने की अंतिम तिथि 12.01.2021 समय 17:00 बजे निविदा खुलने की तिथि 13.01.2021 समय 12:00 बजे। निविदा प्रपत्र शुल्क (जीएसटी सहित) रु० 1,180/- (रु० एक हजार एक सौ अंसी मात्र)। धरोहर राशि रु० 7,000/- (रु० सात हजार मात्र)। ई-निविदा सं०-11/मुओअ (पाठ०२०२०)/2020-21, विद्युत परांपन्न खण्ड - प्रथम, प्रयागराज के अन्तर्गत 765 केओवी एलसीएन वाराणसी 'डी' - उन्नाव लाइन के अनुसूचक कार्य हेतु सामग्री की आपूर्ति। निविदा प्राप्त करने की अंतिम तिथि 12.01.2021 समय 17:00 बजे निविदा खुलने की तिथि 13.01.2021 समय 12:00 बजे। निविदा प्रपत्र शुल्क (जीएसटी सहित) रु० 4,720/- (रु० चार हजार सात सौ अंसी मात्र)। धरोहर राशि रु० 70,000/- (रु० सात हजार मात्र)। निविदा प्रपत्र की हॉर्ड कॉपी डाक द्वारा अथवा व्यक्तिगत सत्यापक के माध्यम से किसी भी दशा में स्वीकार नहीं किये जायेंगे। निविदाओं से सम्बन्धित विवरण / डाउनलोड / डाउनलोड / डाउनलोड / विस्तारिकरण हेतु निविदा खुलने के दिनांक तक वेबसाइट www.etender.up.nic.in पर देखी जा सकती है निविदाओं को बिना कारण बताये अस्वीकृत/विभाजित करने का अधिकार मुख्य अभियन्ता (पाठ०२०२०), प्रयागराज के पास सुरक्षित रहेगा। अधिशासी अभियन्ता (पाठ०), कृते मुख्य अभियन्ता (पाठ०२०२०), संक 2008 दिनांक 17.12.20 राष्ट्र हित में ऊर्जा बचाये



Workers warm themselves around a bonfire amid the snow-laden area at Sonamarg in Ganderbal district of Central Kashmir on Thursday

PTI

Maha infections down to 3,880, deaths drop to 65

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a drop in the infected cases and fatalities, Maharashtra on Thursday logged 3880 fresh Covid-19 infections and 65 deaths, even as 4358 people were discharged from various hospitals across the state after full recovery.

A day after 95 people died of Coronavirus and 4,304 others tested positive for the pandemic, the infections dropped by 424 and deaths came down

by 30 in the state. With 3880 fresh infections, the total infections in the state climbed from 18,80,893 to 18,84,773. Similarly, with 65 fresh deaths, the Covid-19 toll in Maharashtra rose from 48,434 to 48,499.

As 4358 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the state after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March this year rose to 17,74,255. The recovery rate in the state

rose marginally from 94.1 per cent to 94.14 per cent.

With 10 new deaths, the Covid-19 toll in Mumbai went up from 11003 to 11,013, while the infected cases went up by 586 to trigger a jump in the infections from 2,84,404 to 2,84,990. Meanwhile, the number of "active cases" total cases in the state dropped from 61,454 to 60,905. The fatality rate in the state dropped from 2.58 per cent to 2.57 per cent.

Serial conman held as he flees from Navi Mumbai hotel with costly items

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

After having cheated several high-end hotels across the country, 63-year-old savvy conman Vincent John's luck ran out, when he tried to pull off a cheat-and-run game plan at a five star hotel at Navi Mumbai. The local police arrested John with a whopping 58 PAN and Aadhar cards.

Wanted in as many as 187 similar crimes in several parts of the country, John was taken into custody by the police on Tuesday, as he was preparing to escape after having cheated a five-star Hotel from the Tunga Hotels chain at Navi Mumbai.

John, who hails from Tamil Nadu, was produced before a Thane court which remanded till December 18.

John's modus operandi has been to stay in luxury hotels using his false identities, running up hefty bills and walk away whatever prized items he can lay hands.

John's attempt was no different when he checked into a high-profile suite and stayed at a five-star hotel from the Tunga Hotel chain between December 12 and 14 using a photocopy copy of his Aadhar card. During stay, he ordered costly cigarettes and liquor through hotel service.

"During his stay at the hotel, John also booked a banquet hall for a dozen guests for business meet-cum-party scheduled on the evening of December 13 for which he placed orders for

food and beverages. He even took a laptop from the hotel purportedly for a presentation," Inspector Ravindra Patil said.

However, when no guests turned up at the banquet hall for the party. The hotel management got suspicious and looked out for John who by then had quietly fled the scene with the lap-top.

Having realised that it had been taken for a ride by John, the hotel management lodged a complaint with the Navi Mumbai. Without losing any time, the Navi Mumbai police formed a team which tracked John down to a hide-out along Ghodbunder Road at nearby Thane, where he was arrested on December 15.

Patil said that John hails from ila-Urduddi in Thoothukudi district of Tamil Nadu. "John has been moving around with different nicknames. We have seized 58 PAN and Aadhar cards from him obtained by him using his fake nicknames. He has confessed that he would sell outside the expensive liquors, cigarettes and other stuff +that he picked up from hotels without clearing the bills from the deluxe hotels. He would sell the stuff to finance his lavish lifestyle that included air travel," the Investigating Officer said.

The investigations have revealed that he has committed similar crimes in Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and other states and cities across the country.

Day after results, groupism in Kerala's Cong comes to fore

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

A day after the announcement of the results of the election held to the local bodies in Kerala, the factional fight in the Congress party has come out in the open. Thursday saw the entire Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee head quarters at Thiruvananthapuram plastered with printed posters alleging massive scale favoritism and groupism in selection of party candidates for the local body polls by the Congress leadership.

While the printed posters carried highly critical allegations against the KPCC leadership and asked for its restructuring, it also featured names of senior party leaders who handpicked their "concubines", "girl friends" and "lovers" overlooking the claims of party's long time activists and workers. Names of leaders includes that of former ministers, MPs, MLAs and State level office bearers. The posters were tore down by the

KPCC staff within minutes of the media teams reaching the spot. But veteran party leaders like K Sudhakaran MP, Ajay Tharayil and former deputy chairman of Rajya Sabha P J Kurian came out in the open lambasting the party leaders in the selection of candidates.

"There was a situation favorable to the UDF as a result of the dilemma faced by the CPI(M) that was facing multiple charges of corruption and scams. But the Congress leadership failed to exploit the situation," said Sudhakaran. He said he was not interested in continuing as the working president of the KPCC as the leadership has lost the sense of collective responsibility. Group owing allegiance to K Muraladeharan MP, son of late K Karunakaran, launched a campaign demanding the appointment of the former as the KPCC chief. But P J Kurian has another story to tell.

"The minorities, especially the Christian community in the State is keeping away from

the party as a fall out of unhappiness in the selection of candidates and the failure of the party leadership to take them into confidence," said Kurian.

Adding to the woes of the KPCC leadership, P K Kunhalikutty MP and leader of the Muslim League and Shibu Baby John of the RSP (both constituents of the UDF) too blamed the Congress for the lackluster performance of the UDF.

"Both the LDF and UDF had alliances with parties like Welfare Party of India and Jama-at-E Islami in past elections. But this time we saw the Congress leaders themselves washing dirty linen in public over the alliance. This could have been avoided," said John.

Meanwhile the CPI(M) managed to cobble up majority in the Kochi and Thrissur Corporation councils with the help of dissident Muslim League and Congress candidates who scored "shock wins" over official candidates.

"STOP CORONAVIRUS-WEAR MASK, MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCING, HAND WASH REGULARLY"

DELHI JAL BOARD: GOVT. OF NCT OF DLHI OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (E&M) I CHANDRAWAL WATER WORKS NO. 1, CIVIL LINES, DELHI-110054 EMAIL ID:- eenem1chwtup@gmail.com

PRESS NOTICE INVITED TENDER NO. 11 (2020-21)

S. No.	Subject	Estimated Cost	Earnest Money (In Rs.)	Tender Fee (In Rs.)	Date & ID of release of tender in e-procurement solution	Last date of submission of tender
1.	Renovation of under drainage system for filter bed no. 21 to 24 in Jessop Filter House at Chandrawal WW.I (Re-Invite)	Item Rate	59500/-	500/-	17.12.2020 2020_DJB_197589_1	28.12.2020 at 2:15 PM

The tender is available at the E-Portal website: <https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in>

ISSUED BY P.R.O. (WATER)
Advt. No. J.S.V. 264/2020-21

Sd/-
(T.P. Singh)
EE(E&M) I

कार्यालय जिला पंचायत, फतेहपुर

पत्रांक :- 646 /जि।पं०-निर्माण/2020-21/ दिनांक-16.12.2020

निविदा सूचना

जिला पंचायत, फतेहपुर के समस्त पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों जिला पंचायत, फतेहपुर में पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों के साथ-साथ उपरोक्त के सरकारी विभागों (सिंचाई विभाग/लोक निर्माण विभाग) में पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों को सूचित किया जाता है कि पंधराव वित्त/राज्य वित्त आयोग/जिलापिथ योजनामन्त्रालय व निरस्त कार्यों की धनराशि से निर्माण कार्यों को सम्पादित कराने हेतु मुहरबन्द निविदायें दिनांक 06.01.2021 को पूर्वान् 10:00 बजे से अपराह्न 2:00 बजे तक कार्यालय जिला पंचायत, फतेहपुर में आमंत्रित की जाती है तथा दिनांक 06.01.2021 को अपराह्न 2:30 बजे ठेकेदारों के समक्ष खोली जायेगी। निविदा प्रपत्र दिनांक 05.01.2021 अपराह्न 5:00 बजे तक किसी भी कार्यदिन में निर्धारित शुल्क जमा कर, जिला पंचायत कार्यालय, कलेक्ट्रेट एवं विकास भवन फतेहपुर से क्रम क्रिये जा सकते हैं, प्रस्तावित कार्यों का विवरण, कार्यालय के नोटिस बोर्ड पर देखा जा सकता है। निविदा फार्म में भरी जाने वाली रई, निविदा दाता द्वारा अंको एवं शब्दों में सुरक्षित रूप से लिखी जायेगी तथा निविदा को रिजिस्टर्ड डाक द्वारा अथवा कार्यालय में निर्धारित तिथि व समय तक सील का किता जा सकता है। निविदा फार्म को वेबसाइट atehpur.nic.in से सील डाउनलोड किया जा सकता है। निविदा फार्म का मूल्य/बयान की धनराशि किसी भी राष्ट्रीयकृत बैंक की डीडी/एफडीआर, राष्ट्रीय बचत पत्र के रूप में अथवा जिला पंचायत, फतेहपुर के बैंक ऑफ इंडिया, पटेलनगर, फतेहपुर में खुले खाता संख्या 50310100006837 आरपीएफआर कोड BARBOPATPAT में ऑनलाइन जमा की जा सकती है, जिसका विवरण/ट्रांजेक्शन नम्बर व अन्य विभाग के ठेकेदार होने की दशा में उस विभाग का पंजीयन प्रमाण पत्र आदि निविदा के साथ संलग्न करते हुये टेंडर बॉक्स में जमा करना अनिवार्य होगा। निविदा के समय मूल अभिलेख (निविदा शुल्क, बयान की धनराशि की डीडी/एफडीआर आदि) टेंडर बॉक्स में न डाले जाने की दशा में वित्तीय निविदा खोले जाने के पश्चात एक सप्ताह के अन्दर कार्यालय में जमा करना अनिवार्य होगा। अन्धथा की दशा में सम्बन्धित निविदादाता के विरुद्ध कानूनी कार्यवाही करते हुये उसका पंजीयन निरस्त कर काली सूची में डाले जाने की कार्यवाही की जायेगी। सराफत निविदा मान्य न होगी। विभाग के सख्त अधिकारी को पूर्ण अधिकार होगा, कि वह बिना कारण बताये किसी भी या सभी निविदाओं को अस्वीकार कर दें। निविदा स्वीकार होने के पश्चात यदि ठेकेदार द्वारा निर्धारित अवधि में 10प्रतिशत जमानत राशि जमा कर अवशेष नहीं कराया जाता है तो कार्य की निविदा में प्रतिशत जमा धरोहर धनराशि जवा कर ली जायेगी। अनुभव के समय कुल 10प्रतिशत धनराशि जमानत के रूप में मात्र राष्ट्रीयकृत बैंक की एफडीआर व राष्ट्रीय बचत पत्र द्वारा जमा करनी होगी। निविदा की विस्तृत जानकारी (अन्य तर्त आदि) कार्यालय जिला पंचायत, फतेहपुर से किसी भी कार्यदिन में प्राप्त की जा सकती है। इस समय में सूचित किया जाता है कि यदि किसी ठेकेदार को तौनी स्थानी (कार्यालय, जिला पंचायत, फतेहपुर/कार्यालय मुख्य विकास अधिकारी, फतेहपुर व कार्यालय जिलाधिकारी, फतेहपुर) में निविदा प्राप्त करने में कोई असुविधा का सामना करना पड़ता है तो तत्काल अपर मुख्य अधिकारी जिला पंचायत, फतेहपुर से सम्पर्क कर प्राप्त कर सकते हैं। निर्माण कार्यों की स्वीकृति/अनुभव की कार्यवाही धनराशि की उपलब्धता के आधार पर की जायेगी। निविदा मुख्य में 12 प्रतिशत जीएसटीआर की धनराशि सम्मिलित है तथा कार्य की लागत में जीएसटी, की 12 प्रतिशत धनराशि सम्मिलित नहीं है। अन्य विभाग में पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों द्वारा डाली गयी निविदा न्यूनतम होने की दशा में एक सप्ताह के अन्दर कार्यालय जिला पंचायत, फतेहपुर में समस्त अभिलेख उपलब्ध कराते हुये पंजीकरण कराना अनिवार्य होगा। परियोजनाओं का विवरण निम्नवत् है:-

क्र० सं०	परियोजना का नाम व प्रकृति	धनराशि (लाख रु में)	बयान की धनराशि (रु में)	निविदा मुख्य जी.एस.टी सहित रु में	कार्य पूर्ण करने की अवधि
1	ग्राम समा बावन सौ० सौ० मार्ग से ग्राम समा गढ़ी के मध्य अवरधे भाग में सौ० सौ० रोड निर्माण कार्य	8.93	17860.00	280.00	तीन माह
2	शादीपुर पिच रोड से रहसपुर गाँव तक सौ० सौ० रोड निर्माण कार्य	8.93	17860.00	280.00	तीन माह
3	बौदा सागर रोड से दलीली तक सौ० सौ० रोड निर्माण	8.93	17860.00	280.00	तीन माह
4	बावन-मध्वा पिच रोड से ग्राम समा मध्वा तक सौ० सौ० रोड निर्माण कार्य	8.93	17860.00	280.00	तीन माह
5	ग्राम बहरीली में पिच रोड से दिवालय तक सौ० सौ० रोड निर्माण कार्य	8.93	17860.00	280.00	तीन माह
6	ग्राम समा छीछा में पिच रोड से सौ० सौ० रोड निर्माण कार्य	8.93	17860.00	280.00	तीन माह
7	जी० टी० रोड से बहरीली प्राथमिक पाठशाला संपर्क मार्ग में सौ० सौ० कार्य	7.83	15660.00	280.00	तीन माह
8	मध्वा पिच रोड से ग्राम रहरा संपर्क मार्ग के आबादी भाग में सौ० सौ० रोड निर्माण कार्य	8.78	17560.00	280.00	तीन माह
9	रारा सौ० सौ० रोड से जुनियर हाई स्कूल संपर्क मार्ग में सौ० सौ० कार्य	8.82	17840.00	280.00	तीन माह
10	रारा मोड़ से अंबेदा संपर्क मार्ग के आबादी भाग में सौ० सौ० कार्य	8.88	17760.00	280.00	तीन माह
11	ग्राम शिवदासपुर से शिवदासपुर बेलवा संपर्क मार्ग खंडित तक सौ० सौ० रोड निर्माण	8.83	17860.00	280.00	तीन माह
12	गाजीपुर पिच रोड से बर संपर्क मार्ग में सौ० सौ० रोड निर्माण	8.91	17820.00	280.00	तीन माह
13	नारुखा जाम मार्ग से मूला संपर्क मार्ग में सौ० सौ० रोड निर्माण	8.93	17860.00	280.00	तीन माह
14	पिच रोड से ग्राम नसीरपुर संपर्क मार्ग में सौ० सौ० रोड निर्माण	8.89	17780.00	280.00	तीन माह
15	जी०टी०रोड से आई०टी०आई० कॉलेज, अमरपुर संपर्क मार्ग में सौ० सौ० निर्माण कार्य	8.76	17520.00	280.00	तीन माह
16	दिलालपुर में नाला निर्माण।	8.93	17860.00	280.00	तीन माह
17	ग्राम अजना करीब में नाला निर्माण	8.93	17860.00	280.00	तीन माह
18	खखरु कोट मार्ग में दरियापुर में बस स्टॉप के सामने यात्री प्रतीक्षालय का निर्माण।	1.79	3580.00	168.00	तीन माह
19	खखरु कोट मार्ग में कुलीपुर में बस स्टॉप के सामने यात्री प्रतीक्षालय का निर्माण।	1.79	3580.00	168.00	तीन माह

अभियन्ता
जिला पंचायत, फतेहपुर

अपर मुख्य अधिकारी
जिला पंचायत, फतेहपुर

अवध
जिला पंचायत, फतेहपुर

Jaiswal inaugurates Khadi Utsav

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

UP Minister of State (Independent Charge) Ravindra Jaiswal lit the lamp near the bust of Mahatma Gandhi after cutting the lace to mark the inauguration of Khadi Utsav- 2020 at Urban Haat, Chowkaghat Cultural Complex here on Thursday afternoon. Speaking on the occasion, Jaiswal appealed to the people to popularise the call of 'vocal for local'. He said that if people use the goods produced by the entrepreneurs and cottage industries around them, then not only small entrepreneurs would be encouraged but it would also create employment opportunities in the area.

Highlighting the purpose of Khadi Utsav, he said that this type of exhibition is organised every year by Khadi Village and Industries Commission



UP Minister Ravindra Jaiswal inaugurating Khadi Utsav in Varanasi on Thursday

(KVIC), whose main objective is to promote local entrepreneurs and cottage units. According to him, KVIC has provided employment to 1,000 people against the target of giving employment to 250 people this year, which is praiseworthy. He informed that as many as 27 departments are giving subsidies to increase different types

of employment opportunities and in this direction a workshop would be organised by these departments during the Utsav from December 22 to 26 so that the youths can be informed about employment generation. He said that he would also attend the proposed workshop. More than 60 stalls have

been set up at the Khadi Utsav and the festival will remain open till December 26.

In addition to the stalls of Varanasi division, the products from Jammu and Kashmir, West Bengal and others have also been displayed in the exhibition selling items like Khadi and cotton garments, silk sarees, blankets, kurtas, Sadri, mattresses, quilts, bed sheets, carpets, jams, jellies, pickles, namkeen, wooden furniture, cupboards, Ayurvedic medicines and pain relieving oil etc. District KVIC Officer UP Singh said that the main objective of the exhibition is to provide a market to the entrepreneurs of rural areas and encourage them to assist in marketing and selling of their products.

Special guest was the KVIC member Dilip Sonkar, Joint Commissioner (Industries) Umesh Singh and others were present.

122 new Covid cases in Prayagraj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

After 25 days the number of persons infected with COVID-19 has crossed 100. The reduced number of patients almost doubled. At the same time, the number of those who beat Corona for the fourth consecutive day was less than the infected. On Wednesday, 122 new corona infected people were found in the Prayagraj district.

Out of these, the Covid report of 57 people came positive only in Focus Target Sampling. About 58 people became infection-free in 24 hours. A corona infected died during the course of treatment.

According to Nodal Officer for Corona Dr Rishi Sahai, on Wednesday, 4,343 people were tested for Covid. It has reported positive of 122 people. A total of 13 patients were discharged from different Covid hospitals. 45 people completed home isolation. One patient died during treatment.

According to Nodal Officer for Corona Dr Rishi Sahai, Focus Target Sampling was started among the decreasing number of patients. The infected people were found at both places, the danger of spreading the infection was also realised. The Covid report of 30 students in ECC and 27 in CRPF Camp Parila Phaphamau has come positive. Dr Sahai said

that none of the people who were sampled during the Target test found any symptoms of Covid. Testing will be made to those people who came in contact with such infected persons.

To prevent the spread of corona infection, ECC will have a Covid screening of all the teachers along with other students on Friday. At the same time, by conducting special operations in the CRPF camp, the infected will be identified. According to Dr Sahai, Wednesday's action is a major achievement to prevent the spread of corona by identifying the infected patients among the corona patients. Now the order of testing of the Focus Target

Group will continue.

The increased number of corona infected includes two doctors from SRN Hospital along with OT technicians from CHC Soraon. At the same time, the report of BSNL Divisional Engineer and Additional Officer Superintendent has also come positive. Two of the four infected teachers belong to DPS. Among the infected, the Assistant Account Officer of CDA Pension, Mutthiganj Inspector and a constable of the police station have also been infected. In the CRPF's Target testing, one nursing assistant, two sub inspectors and 11 constables have been identified as corona infected.

37 more test positive in Varanasi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

As many as 37 more new patients have been detected in the district on Thursday, increasing the total number to 20,474. The day also saw one more death, increasing the toll to 339. During the day, the follow-up negative reports included 68 and all of them have been recovered from home isolation, increasing the number to 16,700. As no patient has been discharged from any hospital, the number of patients remained at 2,890. The total number of patients who have

been recovered so far is 19,590, leaving 545 active cases. The recovery rate is 95.68 per cent, while the mortality rate is 1.65 per cent.

Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr VB Singh has informed that in the first report of the day, 18 positive patients were found out of 2,636 reports received. Till then, the total test reports received were 4,78,155 and the results of 3,001 are awaited. Out of them, 4,57,700 were negative, while 20,455 positive. The total number of samples collected was

4,99,280. Earlier, a male aged 76 from Madhauri succumbed to COVID-19 at Sir Sundarlal Hospital, Banaras Hindu University (SSH BHU). With the addition of six new red zones, the total number of hotspots has increased to 2,588 including 217 red zones. One green zone has been converted into a red zone again. There are 2,371 green zones with five new ones.

On the instructions of the District Magistrate (DM) Kaushal Raj Sharma, mass/group antigen tests continued to be conducted at Varanasi

Junction (Cantt.) and Manduadih railway but all 37 and 110 tests conducted there respectively have been found negative.

Besides, all the 245 tests have been found negative at Shree Shiv Prasad Gupta (SSPG) Hospital, Kabirchaura apart from 135 at LBS Hospital Ramnagar, 210 at Government Women's Hospital, 75 at Swami Vivekanand Hospital, Bhelupur and 52 at SSH BHU. However, one out of 42 tests has been detected positive at CHC Shivpur.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

North Central Railway joins hands in creating awareness on 'One Nation One Ration Card'. Audio spot is being played on public announcement (PA) system at stations for mass awareness.

Ministry of Consumer Affairs Food and Public Distribution is implementing nationwide portability of ration cards covered under the National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA) through the

ambitious 'One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC)' which is also a part of the Prime Minister's technology driven system reform under the Atam Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan. The objective of ONORC is to empower migrant (NFSA) population to seamlessly access their food security benefits under the Act, from any Fair Price Shop (FPS) of their choice in the country by using their existing/same ration card through biometrically/Aadhaar authenticated transactions on an

electronic point of sale (ePoS) device.

Railway being most popular and common mode of transport of migrant population across the country, it has been decided to play audio spot/ jingle using public announcement system at stations to create mass awareness on ONORC system. Role of North Central Railway is particularly important as this Railway caters to most populous area of the country and had recently contributed significantly in movement of migrant

population by operating more than 53 per cent of approximately 4,500 Shramik special trains run by Railways during COVID-19 pandemic.

To meet the above said objective audio spots of approximately 40 seconds containing voice of the Prime Minister in Hindi and other regional languages have been shared with Prayagraj, Jhansi and Agra division for playing on public announcement system at stations to create large-scale awareness on 'One Nation One Ration Card'.

BJP wins 3 seats in 6-member executive committee of Municipal Corporation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) succeeded in winning three seats in six-member executive committee of the Varanasi Municipal Corporation (VMC). The election of all the members took place unopposed.

The VMC met on Thursday to elect six members of its executive committee at Town Hall here. As the construction work is being carried out at VMC office, the Mini House is shifted to Town Hall.

Since, all the political parties have already reached to a consensus realising their strength of numbers in the

House and they decided not to go for the polls. There is at present 89 members in out of total 90 members of the House comprising 39, 21, 14, 2 and 13 from the Bharatiya Janata Party, Indian National Congress (INC), Samajwadi Party (SP), Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and independent respectively while one seat is lying vacant.

Rajesh Yadav Challu of the BJP proposed the names of Narsingh Das Baba, Dr Ravindra Kumar Singh and Rajesh Keshari for the members of executive committee from the party and Sitaram Keshari of the INC proposed the name of Riyazuddin, while Harun Ansari of the SP proposed the name Bhaiyya Lal

Yadav as the members from the party. Ajit Singh proposed the name of independent corporator Haji Vikas Ansari for the member of the executive committee. All the party reached to a consensus and thus Narsingh Das Baba, Dr Ravindra Kumar Singh & Rajesh Keshari (BJP), Riyazuddin (INC), Bhaiyya Lal Yadav (SP) and Haji Okas Ansari (Independent) were elected unopposed for the six-member executive committee of the House. After the meeting was over the piquant situation prevailed at Town Hall when the husband of the corporator from Khanduri Ward Priti Chaubey, Mayank Chaubey laid before the vehi-

cle of Municipal Commissioner Gorang Rathi to put up protest against the deplorable condition of the road in Khajur area for the long time. He blamed that the corporation officers did not pay any heed towards this problem despite the repeated complaints. Rathi assured of paying serious attention to the problem. In the meantime, the heated exchange of words also took place between Rathi and corporator from Nawabganj Ward Sita Sharma on the matter of works being carried out by the corporation in the ward. The Mayor Mrdula Jaiswal presided over the proceedings and congratulated to new members of the executive committee.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Union Minister of State for Health Ashwani Choubey came for a day's visit to Prayag. The minister also took the information about the preparation of health services by holding a review meeting with Dr SP Singh, Principal of Medical College and doctors and staff of CGHS at Circuit House. On the issue of crunch of doctors, the minister said that according to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, MBBS seats have been increased significantly. By 2022,

a sufficient number of doctors will be available in the country.

In the review meeting, in reference to the Medical College, the minister directed the principal of the college to ensure better treatment to the patients. Especially serious patients should be taken care for properly. He also asked them not let any kind of negligence in the case of COVID-19. He has assured that on the next visit, he would discuss over the staff shortage issue at the Swaroop Rani Nehru Hospital. Preparations for vac-

cination etc were also discussed.

Thereafter, he also went on to inspect the CGHS No-1 George Town. The arrangement here was satisfactory but the hospital administration maintained that there was a shortage of doctors. On this, the Health Minister also assured to take some concrete steps soon. After this, the Health Minister left for Chitrakoot. Choubey will again come in a couple of days and will meet party officials and workers at Circuit House. Earlier in

the morning, Protocol secretary Ajay Rai welcomed him along with the workers.

The Union Minister of State for Health said that the trial of three vaccines in the country is in the final stage. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has already taken stock of the preparations of vaccine. In the first phase, one crore health workers will be vaccinated. Twenty-two million Corona warriors will be benefited by this, but all must compulsorily follow the COVID-19 protocol.

Pandey elected BBA president

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Vinod Kumar Pandey was elected as the new president of the Banaras Bar Association (BBA), while Vivek Singh became it's new general secretary.

In a tough contest, Vinod Kumar Pandey secured 1,041 votes and defeated his nearest rival Dhirendra Nath Sharma by a margin of 117 votes as he got 924 votes. The other candidates Arun Kumar Dubey, Awadhesh Kumar Singh, Meera Yadav, Nityanand Rai, Ram Pravesh Singh and Sajjan Lal Gupta got 44, 284, 162, 166, 566 and 52 votes respectively. The chairman of senior committee Ramanand Srivastava announced the results after the counting concluded late evening on

Wednesday. The polling had taken place on December 15 last.

On the other prestigious post of general secretary, Vivek Kumar Singh registered victory by bagging 1,141 votes. He defeated his nearest rival Ratnesh Kumar Pandey by a comfortable margin of 474 votes. Ratnesh got 667 votes. The other candidates Kamlesh Singh Yadav, Kaushik Kumar Pandey, Pradeep Kumar Rai and Rajiv Kumar Goswami got 368, 242, 572 and 235 votes respectively.

On the post of senior vice-president, Satyendra Kumar Srivastava was declared victorious as he secured 789 votes. He defeated nearest rival Jyoti Shankar Upadhyay with a margin of just 7 votes. Jyoti got 782

votes.

The other candidates Alok Kumar Srivastava, Anup Kumar Sinha and Om Prakash got 363, 571 and 612 votes respectively. On the two posts of vice-president (practice of more than 10 years) Ashok Kumar and Prashant Kumar Srivastava were elected as both secured 1,311 and 879 votes respectively. On the post of vice-president (practice less than 10 years) Ashish Kumar Singh was elected as he got 1,532 votes.

Shailendra Kumar Singh bagged 1,131 votes and was elected as treasurer. He defeated his nearest rival Rajesh Prajapati who got 1,099 votes. Radheshyam Sharma (1,550 votes) was elected as joint secretary (library), Surendra Kumar Seth (1443) was elect-

ed as joint secretary (publication) and Sunil Kumar Mishra (1,473) was elected as joint secretary (administration).

For the six members of management committee (practice less than 15 years), Dilip Kumar Srivastava, Dhananjay Kumar, Dhananjay Yadav, Anurag Baranwal, Shiv Kumar Sinha and Abhishek Kumar Pandey were elected by securing 1,885, 1,783, 1,722, 1,641, 1,566 and 1,551 votes respectively. Amit Kumar Jaiswal was elected as auditor.

For the members of management committee (practice more than 15 years) Anuj Gond, Manoj Tiwari, Prem Prakash and Satyendra Nath Rai were elected unopposed.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The devotees visiting Magh Mela would not have trouble while talking over phone. Arrangements are being made for this purpose. This time in the mela area, temporary mobile towers will be installed in every sector. Applications have been sought from the mobile tower installation agency. These towers will be installed before the fair starts.

The Magh Mela along the

confluence Ganga, Yamuna and mythical Saraswati will begin from January 14. Thereafter, there will be a gathering of lakhs of devotees here for about two months. For the Kalpavas of these devotees, the work of settling the city of tents in about 650 hectares is going on. The fair will be set up in five sectors. During this time, the devotees who come here and stay here, should not have trouble talking to their relatives over phone. Therefore, the mela administration will tem-

porarily install mobile towers in the entire fair area.

At least one tower will be installed in every sector. BSNL's tower is already installed on the parade ground. Apart from this, the fair administration has issued a tender to erect towers of private companies. Tenders will be filled by December 21. After that, the completion of the tender process will start the installation of mobile towers.

Mela Adhikari Vivek Chaturvedi said that at least

one mobile tower will be installed in every sector. Whereas two to three towers will be erected here when there is more crowd around Sangam Nose. All mobile towers will be installed before Makar Sankranti.

This time due to corona, the mela area is expected to reduce congestion. Nevertheless, parking of vehicles will be made on the parade ground. The mela administration has issued a tender for parking.

Youth brutally attacked

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

A youth was brutally attacked in Jari village, under the Kaundhiyara police station in the trans-Yamuna area of Prayagraj in late evening hours on Wednesday. Private part of the boy was chopped off and attempt was made to slit open his throat with sharp edged weapons. Love affair is stated to be the cause behind this savage attack. SP (trans-Yamuna) is monitoring the investigations and is hopeful that the mystery will be resolved within a day or two.

According to reports, the youth was a regular student of a coaching centre and used to come to Prayagraj on a regular basis. He had an affair with a girl of his village, and on Wednesday the family members of the girl caught them red-handed in an agricultural field. The boy was beaten up brutally and then he was attacked with sharp edged weapons. After chopping off his

private part, the attackers targeted his neck and then left him in the field. The boy was spotted by some passerby in later night hours in a pool of blood. They raised alarm and collected the villagers. The police were informed immediately and the youth was admitted immediately at SRN Hospital of MLN Medical College in a critical condition.

The police recovered some slippers from the crime spot, and are studying call details of the boy. Some suspects have been detained by the police in this connection.

150 POWER THIEVES CAUGHT: Power engineers in Prayagraj are in action. Within two days over 150 power thieves have been brought to books. Besides imposing heavy fine on them, FIR has also been lodged to ensure their arrest.

Action against power thieves had been postponed and almost no FIR had been lodged during the past couple

of months. But on the directions of the Power Minister, the department has geared up itself and is taking with them vigilance officers also along with camera teams. The minister has sent strong instructions to turn tough against the power thieves and ensure 24 hour uninterrupted power supply. With the arrival of winters, the power thieves are applying tricks to bypass meters for running heaters and water heaters. The power engineers had taken an initiative to raid suspected houses in late night or early morning hours to catch culprits red handed, otherwise they used to normalise things in day hours. In old city areas the power engineers caught 150 power theft cases within two days. The videographers and photographers are doing their work as a proof of power theft, which will help in sending the culprits to jail.

ACCIDENT: A man was killed, while his wife sustained grievous injuries when the

pucca house in which they were living in was damaged badly after the truck carrying the ballast went uncontrolled and entered the house on the side of the road under the the Bahria police station of the district on Wednesday night. The couple was asleep in the verandah outside the house and got injured by the truck in which the husband died a short time later, while the wife was undergoing treatment at a local hospital. Karnaipur market is in Bahria police station area of Prayagraj. A ballast laden truck was going from this market located on Sikandra-Dandapur road on Wednesday night. Around 11 o'clock in the night, the truck reached in front of the house of one Radheshyam Gupta (58), resident of Truck Bazaar, and went uncontrolled and entered his house. A large part of Radheshyam's two-storey house was damaged in this accident while the couple sleeping in the outer verandah of the house were injured.

CRPF continues cleanliness drive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Showing its determination, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel of 95th Battalion continued its drive for the sixth day here on Thursday to make historic Pushkar Kund (pond) near Assi clean. The drive was launched in association with Srijan Samajik Vikas Nyas, Nagar Nigam and National Disaster Response Force (NDRF). Apart from removing wastes from the pond, the CRPF personnel also continued their drive to sanitise the surrounding localities. Since the nationwide lockdown was imposed to prevent

the spread of global coronavirus pandemic on March 25 last, the local Battalion of CRPF has continuously launched its drive of sanitisation and cleanliness in different parts of the city. During the campaign, a programme was held at Pushkar Kund in which the chief guest was Commandant of CRPF Narendra Pal Singh, while the function was presided over by Srijan chief and brand ambassador of Environment department, UP, Anil Kumar Singh.

Addressing the function, CRPF Commandant said 'we all know that water gives life to us and all other living ani-

mals. Without water, life on the earth is impossible. Very little of the water available on the earth is potable. We have to conserve the drinking water. If the rain water is preserved in the ponds and water resources, then this water can be useful for our drinking purpose. He further said 'we have to keep our available ponds clean so they can not only store rainwater but also help in recharging the ground water. In this way, if we conserve these reservoirs, then surely we can conserve water further.'

According to him, in this direction, the 95th Battalion of

CRPF and Srijan are working together to conserve water and protect the environment so that they can give a beautiful healthy future to our coming generations.

During the drive, a team of local units of the NDRF Battalion also collaborated with their own boats and sailors. On the occasion, CRPF Assistant Commandant Parikshit Rahul and other personnel, Srijan member Anand Vijay, supervisor of Nagar Nigam Sarita Yadav, safai employees, leading entrepreneur and social workers Keshav Jalan, Abhishek Jalan and others were present.



Mehrotra Foundation, working on Bal Shraavan Yojana, for cochlear implant were invited by the Governor, Anandi Ben Patel at Raj Bhawan on Thursday.

Pioneer

Bring kids born with congenital defects into mainstream: Guv

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel expressed happiness on seeing several hearing and speech impaired children successfully talking after undergoing Cochlear implants under SN Mehrotra Foundation.

She had invited the SN Mehrotra Foundation and the children with their guardians to Raj Bhawan on Thursday.

The UP Governor said more people should follow suit so that children born with congenital defects could be brought into the mainstream of society.

She later gave gifts to the children and interacted with them.

Addressing press persons

later, Cochlear implant specialist Dr Roht Mehrotra said all this could be done under the scheme Bal Shraavan Yojana introduced by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

He said besides the Central scheme, ADIP, was providing immense support to ensure these children who were facing this disability were surgically operated upon and then with the implant they could lead a normal life.

Dr Mehrotra said the SN Mehrotra Foundation had been doing a yeoman's job and till date it had successfully placed Cochlear implants in over 500 children.

He said the objective of the SN Mehrotra Foundation was to ensure that by 2030, hearing and speech disability were

eradicated.

He said it was a matter of great concern that there was little awareness of hearing and speech disability and appealed to parents of such children to ensure they availed themselves of the facility.

He said Cochlear implant surgery was done in a hospital or clinic where the surgeon inserted the implant electrodes into the cochlea.

He said then the surgeon placed an electronic device called the receiver under the skin behind the ear, securing it to the skull in this area.

Dr Mehrotra said Cochlear implants were the world's most successful medical prostheses in that less than 0.2 per cent of the recipients rejected it or did

not use it and the failure rate needing re-implantation was around 0.5 per cent.

He said most individuals noted a significant growth in their awareness of sounds within days after their Cochlear implant was turned on, which was about four to six weeks after the surgery.

He said speech understanding improved more gradually, with most individuals experiencing the largest improvement within the first six months.

Prominent among those present at the Raj Bhawan were project manager Nagendra Mishra and children Dhruvi Bajpai, Riya Singh, Sakshi , Zaid Khan and Sakshi Yadav.

67 more test positive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Nagar reported 67 more coronavirus positive cases on Thursday evening. Chief Medical Officer Dr Anil K Mishra said that 67 more people had tested positive for coronavirus infection between Wednesday evening and Thursday evening taking the tally of confirmed cases to 31,705 cases. He said that 20 patients were discharged from hospital. He said one COVID-19 death in the city was reported till Thursday evening keeping the death toll to 804. The CMO said at present 720 active cases were undergoing treatment. Dr Mishra said 4148 samples were sent for testing in the city.

Prior permission needed for physical verification of tax payer: PITC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Principal Income Tax Commissioner, UP West, (Verification Unit) Jayant Mishra said that in faceless process a few IT issues would be hand-picked for physical verification of the tax payer.

He said this could be done only with prior permission of Principal Income Tax Commissioner.

He said the faceless assessment had already taken off and under it the tax payer remained ignorant of who comprised the assessment team and were assessing their return. He said the team of officials who were probing the assessment also remained ignorant as to who's assessment they were carrying out.

Mishra was speaking on the topic 'Inquiry and Verification under Faceless Assessment' at the IT Bar Association .

He said if the officials felt the need of a physical verification they would forward it to the Verification Unit. He said this could be done only after prior permission was sought from the PITC and then only the team could proceed to the particular assigned destination.

He said to seek permission, the officials would have to give genuine and potent reasons and at least two inspectors would go for the verification.

He sounded a caution that the ground which had been sought by the officials could only be probed into and not any other issue at that point of time.

He said the report had to be forwarded to the National e-Assessment Centre and they would have to place on the spot photographs. He said the centre would then forward the report to the assigned team.

He said the team, before taking a final decision, would send a draft order to the assessee as to how much tax had been worked out on him and on which sections so that the assessee could put up his version later.

He then cleared the doubts of the tax consultants.

Prominent among those who took part were DC Shukla, Atul Agarwal, Govind Krishna, Ajay Goyal, Sudhindra Jain, Rajesh Mehra, Himanshu Kapoor, consultant Shailendra Sachan, SK Gupta and Pradeep Mehrotra.

Corrugated box manufacturing unit catches fire

KANPUR (PNS): A corrugated box manufacturing unit caught fire in Dada Nagar Udyog Kunj in Govind Nagar police station area late Wednesday night. Powerful explosion of gas cylinders in the unit created panic among the residents and workers of the other factories there. Electric short-circuit was stated to be the cause of fire. As many as eight fire tenders reached the spot and extinguished the fire after three hours.

THEFT : Cash amounting to Rs 2.50 lakh was stolen from an iron rod agency in Mohamadpur village of Chaudharpur police area on Tuesday night. The thieves also took away CCTV cameras and DVR installed in the shop.

Benefits of banana farming highlighted

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

Uttar Pradesh Minister of State for Energy Rama Shankar Singh Patel said that it was the need of the hour that we adopt horticulture as an nessential part of farming to enhance earning. These views were expressed by him at a function organised by Horticulture department under Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission Programme at Government Ganga Nursery, Bisunderpur on Wednesday. Speaking on the occasion the minister exhorted the farmers to avail the facilities provided by the government and contribute to the nation. He said his government was committed to improving the condition of farmers and in very that direction the district was declared as banana hub. Making



plants. Majhawan MLA Shuchismita Maurya also expressed her views and underlined the medicinal qualities of aloe vera and dragon fruit. Chief Development Officer (CDO) Avinash Singh spoke about the benefits of banana farming and gave details that after declaring the district as a banana hub what facilities from the government were to be made available for its development.

Gkp-Yesvantpur spl to run as per revised timetable

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The railway administration is making changes in the timings and days of the run of the following special trains being run by for the convenience of passengers. As a result, the 05015/05016 Gorakhpur-Yesvantpur-Gorakhpur superfast special train will from April 12, 2021, be run from Gorakhpur on every Monday and from Yesvantpur on every Wednesday from April 14, 2021, until further notice. Apart from this the 02591/02592 Yesvantpur-Gorakhpur-Gorakhpur special train will from April 10, 2021, every Saturday be run from Gorakhpur and from Yesvantpur from April 12, 2021 every Monday until further notice. Therefore, the people are requested to know about the revised timetable of trains at the time of making reservation or before travelling in order to avoid inconvenience. All coaches in these trains will be of reserved category and passengers traveling in them will have to follow the Covid-19 guidelines, CPRO PK Singh said.

05015 GKP-YPR SPECIAL: The 05015 Gorakhpur-Yeshvantpur superfast weekly special as per the revised timetable, will from April 12, 2021, depart from Gorakhpur every Monday at 06.35 hrs, from Gonda at 9.05 hrs, from Barabanki at 10.27 hrs, from Badshahnagar at 11.04 hrs, from Aishbagh at 11.50 hrs, from Unnao at 12.42 hrs, from Kanpur Central at 13.22 hrs, from Pokhrayan at 14.15 hrs, from Orai at 14.52 hrs, from Jhansi at 16.45 hrs, from Bina at 19.10 hrs, from Bhopal at 21.00 hrs, from Itarsi at 22.50 hrs, second day from Nagpur at 4.00 hrs, from Chandrapur at 06.35 hrs, from Balharshah at 07.45 hrs, from Sirpur Kaghaznagar at 08.30 hrs, from Kазipet at 11.10 hrs, from Secunderabad at 13.45 hrs,

from Mantralayam Road at 18.55 hrs, Guntakal at 20.25 hrs, Dharmavaram at 23.00 hrs and reach Yesvantpur at 02.45 hrs on the third day. During the return journey the 05016 Yesvantpur-Gorakhpur superfast weekly special train will from April 14, 2021, depart from Yesvantpur every Wednesday at 23.40 hrs, from Hindupur on the second day at 01:00 hrs, from Dharmavaram 01.55 hrs, from Guntakal at 04.00 hrs, from Mantralayam Road at 05.25 hrs, from Secunderabad at 11.05 hrs, from Kазipet at 13.20 hrs, from Sirpur Kaghaznagar at 15.15 hrs, from Balharshah at 17.20 hrs, from Chandrapur at 17.40 hrs, from Nagpur at 21.00 hrs, from Itarsi on third day at 02.00 hrs , from Bhopal at 03.40 hrs, from Bina at 05.35 hrs, from Jhansi at 07.55 hrs, from Orai at 09.10 hrs, from Pokhrayan at 10.02 hrs, from Kanpur Central at 11.35 hrs, from Unnao at 12.07 hrs, from Aishbagh at 13.25 hrs, from Badshahnagar at 13.48 hrs, from Barabanki at 14.30 hrs, from Gonda at 15.55 hrs and reach Gorakhpur at 18.50 hrs. A total of 21 coaches, including two of generator-cum-luggage van, four of general second class, seven of sleeper class, six of AC third class and two of AC second class will be attached in this special train.

02591 GKP-YPR SPL: The 02591 Gorakhpur-Yesvantpur weekly special train will from April 10, 2021, every Saturday depart from Gorakhpur at 06.35 hrs, from Khalilabad at 7.15 hrs, from Basti at 7.44 hrs, from Mankapur at 8.28 hrs, from Gonda at 9.05 hrs, from Barabanki at 10.27 hrs, from Badshahnagar at 11.04 hrs, from Aishbagh at 11.50 hrs, from Unnao at 12.42 hrs, from Kanpur Central at 13.22 hrs, from Pokhrayan at 14.15 hrs, from Orai at 14.52 hrs, from Jhansi at 16.45 hrs, from Lalitpur at 17.50 hrs, from Bhopal at 21.00 hrs, from Itarsi at 22.50 hrs, from Ghoradongri at 23.50

hrs, on second day from Betul at 00.32 hrs, from Amla at 00.54 hrs, from Nagpur at 4.00 hrs , from Chandrapur at 06.35 hrs, from Balharshah at 07.45 hrs, from Belampalli at 09.00 hrs, from Manchiryal at 09.25 hrs, from Ramagundam at 09.43 hrs, from Kазipet at 11.10 hrs, from Secunderabad at 13.45 hrs, from Begumpet at 13.56 hrs, from Raichur at 18.31 hrs, from Mantralayam Road at 18.55 hrs, from Adoni at 19.30 hrs, from Guntakal at 20.25 hrs, from Anantapur at 21.35 hrs, from Dharmavaram at 23.00 hrs and reach Yesvantpur at 03.00 hrs. During the return journey the 02592 Yesvantpur-Gorakhpur weekly special will from April 12, 2021, every Monday depart from Yesvantpur at 17.20 hrs, from Hindupur at 18.40 hrs, from Dharmavaram at 20.50 hrs, from Anantapur at 21.33 hrs, from Guntakal at 22.50 hrs, from Adoni at 23.40 hrs, the second day Mantralayam Road at 00.10 hrs, from Raichur at 00.43 hrs, from Begumpet at 05.41 hrs, from Secunderabad at 06.15 hrs, from Kазipet at 08.35 hrs, from Ramagundam at 09.50 hrs, from Manchiryal at 10.10 hrs, from Belampalli at 10.35 hrs, from Chandrapur at 13.00 hrs, from Nagpur at 15.55 hrs, from Amla at 18.10 hrs, from Betul at 18.28 hrs, from Ghoradongri at 19.02 hrs, from Itarsi at 22.05 hrs, from Bhopal on third day at 00.05 hrs, from Lalitpur at 02.45 hrs, from Jhansi at 04.25 hrs, from Orai at 06.00 hrs, from Pokhrayan at 06.40 hrs, from Kanpur Central at 08.40 hrs, from Unnao at 09.07 hrs, from Aishbagh at 10.20 hrs, from Badshahnagar at 10.42 hrs, from Barabanki at 11.35 hrs, from Gonda at 12.55 hrs, from Mankapur at 13.21 hrs, from Basti at 14.08 hrs, from Khalilabad at 14.32 hrs and reach Gorakhpur at 15.40 hrs. A total of 22 coaches, including four of general second class, will be attached in it.

Three arrested

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The police on Wednesday arrested three members of a gang of thieves and recovered ₹2.17 lakh in cash and ornaments from them. The arrested accused were produced in the court from where they were sent to jail. They were identified as Ravi and Amit Sharma, residents of Paswan Dhala, and Sujit Kumar, a resident of Devahia Tola, Nausad under Gida police station. According to the police, the leader of this gang is Sarfaraz, a resident of Jail Road, Shahpur. The accused along with him had committed a theft in the house of Sultan Khan on night of November 24 in Turkmanpur locality.

Man killed in accident

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

One person was killed and 19 others sustained injuries when a bus overturned at Kuba turn on Chunar-Rajgarh road under Chunar police station on Wednesday. As per the reports, father of Jawahir, a resident of Nadihar village under Madihan police station, had died on Wednesday. For his cremation the villagers had gone at Chunar Ghat. While returning the driver of the bus lost control over it and it overturned. As a result Somaru (50) died on the spot and the 19 injured were sent to the hospital. Meanwhile another report said that Jagannath (45), a resident of Vishnupatti vilage under Chilh police station, was seriously injured on Monday when his motorcycle collided with another one. He was admitted to the district hospital where he succumbed to his injuries on Wednesday. His wife had died two years ago. He is survived by five children.

Suhasini Sangh gets cleanliness award

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

Under the Swachh Survekshan conducted by Nagar Palika Nigam, Singrauli, Madhya Pradesh, the voluntary organisation of NTPC Vindhychal, Suhasini Sangh, was awarded the Swachchhata Champion Award.

The Nagar Palika Nigam, Singrauli, certified that



Suhasini Sangh by showing alertness towards cleanliness participated as a 'swachchhta' champion. Accepting this

award at Bal Bhavan, Suhasini Sangh chairperson Mridula Johari said its members will always strive for cleanliness. On the occasion Suman Bhatia, adviser/Tiny Tots, Vinita Subedar, adviser/ Welfare, Anju Mishra, adviser/Adult Education, Richa Mangla, general secretary/Suhasini Sangh and senior members of Suhasini Sangh were also present.

Emphasis on conserving maximum energy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

At Technical Training Centre of the Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) a written competition for officers and staff was organised under the Energy Conservation Week-2020 on Wednesday on the topic, 'Suggestions for maximum energy conservation by BLW'. The aim of the competition is to explain the importance of conserving maximum energy to people. Many BLW personnel took part in



2020 at the Technical Training Centre of BLW. The topic of the essay competition was 'Energy saving, building the future'. Many BLW personnel participated in it.

Planned plant nutrition vital for better crop output: Expert

KANPUR (PNS): Plant nutrition deficiency reflects on the crop output in Uttar Pradesh, engendering the need for proper and planned plant nutrition.

This was stated by CSA University of Agriculture and Technology's Research Directorate Assistant Director (Research) Dr Manoj Mishra while addressing a session on 'Development of plants' at the university on Monday.

He said crops grown in most soils in India suffered from deficiencies of one or more micronutrients, even though the soils often contained apparently adequate total amounts of the respective elements.

He said the nature and extent of the deficiencies varied with soil type, crop genotype, management and agro-ecological situations.

Dr Mishra said plant nutrient development was highly essential in the current times

and analysis of soil and plant samples indicated that 49 per cent of the soils in India were potentially deficient in several nutrients.

He said plant nutrition was the study of the chemical elements and compounds necessary for plant growth, plant metabolism and their external supply. He said in its absence, the plant was unable to complete a normal life cycle, or the element was part of some essential plant constituent or metabolite.

He added that three macronutrients — nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium — were the most important for crops as they directly affected plant growth and practically created plant parts.

He said nitrogen was the most important element for crop growth and development, strongly influencing germination and vegetative growth. He added that the correct use

of plant nutrients played an important role in sustainable agricultural intensification. He said it was indeed important to ensure a maximum uptake of needed nutrients by plants so as to minimise losses to the environment, which can also be in the form of GHGs, while keeping in mind that zero losses was not an achievable goal given that one were dealing with biological processes.

Dr Mishra said there were more than a dozen nutrients that were essential to achieving optimal plant health. He said maximum crop yields were only possible if these nutrients were supplied to the crop at appropriate timing and in the amount each plant needed for healthy development.

He said even though many of these nutrients were naturally occurring in the soil, they were not all naturally available to the plant in a soluble form that benefited the plant.

He said nitrogen was an essential nutrient for plant growth, development and reproduction, and was part of every living cell and it was vital because it was an important component of chlorophyll.

He said as plants depended on chlorophyll to help them during photosynthesis, when they used the energy in sunlight to produce sugars from water and carbon dioxide. He said if the plant lacked nitrogen it would not be able to utilise sunlight as an energy source. He said the nitrogen cycle helped understand how nitrogen converted from inorganic or plant soluble forms to organic forms of nitrogen.

Dr Mishra said that different crops had different timing for their nitrogen requirements. He said corn took up much of its nitrogen midsummer while on the other hand, wheat used most its nitrogen in the spring to early summer.

Be wary while inking int'l pacts: CDS Rawat to Nepal



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As China is forging closer ties with countries neighbouring India, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat has advised Nepal to be cautious while inking international pacts. He, however, did not name China.

Asserting that ties between India and Nepal are as deep as the Indian Ocean and strong as the Himalayas, Rawat said India's goodwill towards its neighbour comes with no strings attached.

"...the canvas and spread of cooperation, friendship and people to people contact between India and Nepal are deep and extensive. But in the present age, Nepal is also opening to other nations including China based on its independent foreign policy," said Rawat at the second annual dialogue with the Nepal Institute for International Cooperation and

Rawat also called for the need to bolster the existing relationship for the peace and prosperity of both the nations

Engagement (NIICE) during the virtual meeting.

He said "India's goodwill comes with no strings attached. Nepal is free to act independently in international affairs but must be vigilant and learn from Sri Lanka and other nations which have also signed agreements with other countries in the region."

Rawat also called for the need to bolster the existing relationship further for the peace and prosperity for both countries who are already "inseparable in every way."

Incidentally, his observations come in the backdrop of recent souring of relations between India and Nepal after the inauguration of a road to

Mansarovar in Uttarakhand. It led to mass protests in the Himalayan nation.

In an effort to assuage the sentiments, several diplomatic visits later took place and Army Chief General M M Naravane also visited Kathmandu last month.

Meanwhile, Rawat also said India's economic relations with Nepal are quite unique although much more could be done. In 2019-2020 economic assistance has crossed ₹12 billion for development in the various sector of the economy such as agriculture, water resources, energy, infrastructure and the list can go on and on, he said.

India accounts for over 30 per cent of the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Nepal and over 150 Indian ventures are also operating in Nepal, in various fields, he said.

Noting that the balance of trade is in India's favour as Nepal has to import several essential items from India, Rawat said the Indian industries are working there in banking, insurance, telecom, power sector and tourism industry.

Javadekar raps Rahul for walking out of Parl panel talks on defence

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Asserting that standing committee meeting "is not a protest site," Union Minister Prakash Javadekar on Thursday lashed out at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for walking out of the Parliamentary standing committee discussion on defence.

Rahul has complained to the Speaker Om Birla that he was not allowed to speak in the meeting of standing committee on Defence on Wednesday.

BJP has hit-out at the Congress leader for his conduct. "Rahul Gandhi attended 2 of 14 meetings of Parliamentary standing committee on defence in the last year and a half. He's himself absent and the blames government and all procedures and walks out of meeting in protest. Standing committee isn't a protest site," said Javadekar, a day after Gandhi walked out of the committee's meet.

"Being absent, not discussing their desired agenda of discussion and then making insinuations of non-discussion

of important issues is an insult to all parliamentary procedures and constitutional institutions. We condemn this attitude," Javadekar further said.

On Wednesday, Rahul along with his colleagues, walked out of the meet after not being allowed to speak during a discussion on the armed forces' uniforms and ranks. The former Congress president reportedly said during the meet that such matters were best left for the forces themselves to discuss and suggested that the panel focus on "more substantive issues." On this, people said, Gandhi was told by the committee head and BJP MP, Jai Oram, to stick to the agenda of the day, which was "an introduction to the rank, structure of the defence forces including their uniforms, stars and badges, and review of working of cantonment boards."

Congress has been hitting out at the Government for allegedly not equipping armed forces following the stand-off with China at the Line of Actual Control on the eastern Ladakh borders.

Liquor association urges Nitish to lift prohibition gradually

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian liquor manufacturers Association has urged Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar to gradually withdraw prohibition in the State claiming that it has not only increased smuggling and sale of illicit liquor but has also caused major financial losses to the State exchequer.

It said that the prohibition has also adversely impacted potential investments, and job creation opportunities.

In its representation to the Chief Minister and leaders of NDA constituent parties, the Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC) has sought immediate withdrawal of prohibition which has led to creation of liquor mafia, and has caused major damage to state's economy.

In its letter, which has also been addressed to the Deputy Chief Minister, NDA allies Jitan Ram Manjhi and Mukesh Sahani, the CIABC has stated that an organised liquor cartel has come up in the state which was selling liquor at 400% premium.



"While people are forced to pay exorbitant prices for procuring liquor illegally, the government revenues are severely hit by the illegal sale. Revenue from liquor sale used to be a major source of revenue for the state exchequer. The state government is missing out on an annual revenue of ₹7,000-8000 crore, while the state is moving towards debt crisis due to major loss of revenue" said CIABC Director General Vinod Giri.

Giri said the need of the hour is that Bihar government should review its prohibition policy. "The State Government needs to gradually end prohibition and go for controlled and channelised opening of liquor trade in the state. We have sug-

gested that liquor sale should be allowed only in urban areas to begin with, and the government should fix a minimum price so that cheap liquor which is more harmful is not sold in the market. The government should also strictly tackle drinking in public places as is being done in states like Delhi," he added.

"We have also suggested that the Government should put a women welfare tax on liquor and additional money generated from it should be used for women empowerment. We have asked the government to make it mandatory for liquor producers that their workforce in factories should comprise 50% women for which the industry is ready to cooperate," Giri said.

Govt, health agencies to rope in 90L private security guards for vaccination campaign



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy on Thursday said as Indian awaits the launch of Covid vaccination drive, the Government and health agencies will take help of 90 lakh private security guards across India in the roll out of massive vaccination drive. "Private security industry will have a big role to play in the distribution of Coronavirus vaccine as it will be a big task for the government, police or officials to distribute and administer vaccine to 130 crore people across the country. With such a large workforce only security guards can ensure wider and faster distribution of vaccine and ensure that every household is covered in the vaccination programme," Reddy said while addressing the Annual Leadership Summit of the Central Association of Private Security Industry (CAPSI) in the national Capital.

Reddy praised the private security industry for its yeoman service during the Corona pandemic prompting the government to cover the industry under the "essential services". "Private security guards were everywhere - in hospitals,

banks, markets, institutions - and they worked as frontline warriors in the time of Corona pandemic. We consider the private security industry as an integral part of India's security paraphernalia and Home Ministry has been taking various steps to promote and strengthen it," he said.

He also ensured that the Home Ministry will take up with the Union Finance Ministry for relaxation in the GST regime for the private security industry. He said the Government was committed to make the private security industry meet global standards and promote ease of doing business in the industry.

Speaking at the event, Vivek Bhardwaj, Additional Secretary in the MHA, said the Home Ministry would write to the Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry to include private guards in the frontline workers list so that they could also be inoculated in the first phase of the vaccination programme. CAPSI Chairman Kunwar Vikram Singh said CAPSI has entered into tie ups and agreements with various global agencies to improve employability of private security guards globally.

3 'must to do' for Covid vaccine: Stop infection, progression, transmission



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In order to make the global Covid-19 vaccination programme successful, the available job must be able to achieve three goals - prevent infection becoming established in an individual; prevent disease progression; and prevent onward transmission.

"Whether all three of these goals will be met by 'first generation' vaccines is not known, but it is vital to the long-term success of the programme," a group of researchers said in their study published in the journal Anaesthesia.

"Preventing onward transmission - referred to as 'sterilising immunity' is particularly important as it is epidemic modifying," said the UK's influential Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) committee.

"It is possible that the first vaccines, including those being released now, maybe more effective in preventing disease progression and hospitalisation and less effective in preventing transmission," explained study senior author Jeremy Farrar from SAGE.

"Knowledge of their performance in pre-approval trials and in surveillance trials after licensure will enable further modifications such that improved second and third-generation vaccines may be available later in 2021 and beyond," Farrar added.

They also emphasised the importance of prioritising those most vulnerable and healthcare workers before the wider population.

The authors stated vaccination is a global rather than a national necessity. The World Health Organisation (WHO) ACT-accelerator and COVAX initiatives both emphasise the importance of vaccines reaching the most vulnerable and healthcare workers in all countries at a similar time.

Widespread vaccination of one or a few countries without addressing this need globally is in no one's interests and will not provide the protection we all need. "No country has mounted a whole population vaccination campaign in living memory, and it will need to be undertaken with local leadership and cultural sensitivity," the experts stressed.

They also discussed the implications of the widespread vaccination and the challenges for those who don't get vaccinated.

They asked: "Will a certificate of vaccination (a vaccine passport) be a requirement for patients and their families before elective surgery, or to work in the health or social care, to travel abroad, or to attend medical conferences, or even to participate in the Olympics?"

The authors make clear the vaccine is not a panacea, and that SARS-CoV-2 will only be brought fully under control by also continuing to adapt our behaviour, plus better access to diagnostics and treatments, but add: "safe and effective vaccines will undoubtedly change the trajectory of the pandemic, rebuild confidence and start to return the world to the 'pre-Covid' era."

"There is no merit or safety in creating high rates of vaccination and low rates of disease inside one country's borders if this is not replicated throughout the rest of the world. We really are all in this together," they concluded.

Bank fraud: CBI files two cases

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has registered two separate cases relating to bank fraud of about ₹452.62 crore (approx) and about ₹72.55 crore and conducted searches at nine places at premises of the accused in Gujarat and Mumbai in both the cases.

The first case was registered on a complaint from State Bank of India against a private firm based at Ahmedabad, Gujarat and others including its Directors and unknown public servants besides unknown others on the allegations of cheating the consortium of banks including State Bank of India to the tune of ₹452.62 crore (approximately) during the period 2013 to 2017.

"It was alleged that, during the period 2013 to 2017, the accused entered into a criminal conspiracy to defraud / cheat the consortium of banks comprising of State Bank of India, Bank of India, Bank of Baroda, Central Bank of India, Bank of Maharashtra, Punjab National Bank and Vijaya Bank in the matter of various credit facilities extended by them. In pursuance of the said conspiracy, the accused manipulated/falsified the books of accounts and diverted/siphoned off the funds of the banks, and thereby cheated the consortium of banks to the tune of ₹452.62 crore (approx)," the CBI said in a statement.

Searches were conducted today at four places including official and residential premises of private company/Directors at Ahmedabad which led to recovery of incriminating documents/articles, it said.

Govt recognises yogasana as competitive sport to enable it for funding



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a bid to encourage yoga, spread awareness about its benefits and to help improve physical and mental wellbeing of the people, the Government on Thursday formally recognised yogasana as a competitive sport, which will enable the ancient practice to avail Government funding.

Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju and Minister of AYUSH (Ayurveda Yoga and Naturopathy Unani Sidda Homoeopathy) Shripad Yesso Naik formally promoted yogasana as a competitive sport during an event here.

"Yogasana has been a competitive sport for a long time. But it has to be recognised by the Government of India so that it becomes an official and recognised competitive sport," Rijiju said.

"Today is a big day, we are launching it formally as a competitive sport and I am sure it will go a long way," he added.

An International Yogasana Sports Federation was formed under the presidency of yoga guru Baba Ramdev with DR HR Nagendra as secretary general in November last year.

It was recognised by the sports ministry as a National Sports Federation (NSF) last month.

Rijiju said the sports ministry will start by providing

financial support to the NYSFI so that the federation can chart out its plan for the coming year. "Till now it wasn't recognised but now that it has come under us, the Sports Ministry will start by providing the NYSF with financial support to make their annual training and calendar." The Sports Minister also said yogasana will be inducted in future Khelo India Games programme.

"It's popularity will not doubt increase in India and we will include it in the Khelo India School and University Games," Rijiju said.

For competitions, 51 medals have been proposed in four events and seven categories in the sport.

Events proposed include traditional yogasana, artistic yogasana (single and pair), rhythmic yogasana (pair, free flow/group yogasana), individual all round-championship and team championship.

A pilot championship—National Individual Yogasana Sport Championship—has also been proposed to be organised in February next year, followed by district, State, national and World Championships.

The two ministries have also developed an automated scoring system for competitions.

True nationalists won't oppose Kovind's visit to Goa, says CM

Panaji: No true nationalists would ever oppose the President of India's visit to Goa, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said on Thursday, two days ahead of Ram Nath Kovind's official visit to the coastal state to inaugurate the 60th anniversary celebrations of Goa's Liberation Day.

Sawant's comments made at a press conference here came days after Vijai Sardesai, the President of opposition party Goa Forward, wrote to Kovind, urging him to cancel his Goa visit, accusing the state government of splurging money on celebrations at a time when the state treasury is facing a cash crunch on account of the Covid-19 pandemic and the ensuing economic slowdown.

"This is the first time in the history of Goa that the President will be present for the Goa Liberation Day event. Those

Sawant's comments made at a press conference here came days after Vijai Sardesai, the President of opposition party Goa Forward, wrote to Kovind, urging him to cancel his Goa visit

who are true nationalists and love Goa will never urge the President to not come to Goa. We have to welcome the President," Sawant said.

"Those who are nationalists should not write such letters to the President of India. They should now write to the President again, urging him to come. We are people who love the country," Sawant said.

On December 15, Sardesai in a letter to Kovind had said: "Spending Rs 100 crore for the function really doesn't make any sense. We look to you to hold our plight, we look to you to hear our voice, and we look to you to be our representation. Therefore, we humbly request you to kindly turn down the government's invite and avoid visiting the state on December 19."

Sawant, however, said that Rs 100 crore has been earmarked for the year-long celebrations and not just for one event, saying the opposition has misunderstood the issue.

"Many believe that we are spending Rs 100 crore on a single event. This is not true. The amount is for celebrations throughout the year and for beautification and renovation of places linked to the freedom struggle and glory of Goa," Sawant said. **IANS**

Agencies spoiling ties with Centre: Vijayan to PM

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan in a hard-hitting letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi has warned about the deterioration of the Centre-State relations because of the highhanded attitude of the Central agencies probing the gold smuggling scam. Vijayan was upset that his additional special secretary C M Raveendran was summoned by the Enforcement Directorate for probing the nexus between the Chief Minister's Office and the kingpins of the gold smuggling through diplomatic channels which broke out in June 2020.

Though Raveendran was summoned thrice in the past

by the ED for questioning, the senior party activist hailing from Vijayan's village cited ailments live Covid-19 to avoid the grilling by the agency. But his luck ran out by Thursday as the Kerala High Court dismissed his petition seeking to quash the summons by the ED. Raveendran is being questioned by ED officials at Kochi at the time of going to the Press.

Vijayan reminded the Prime Minister that it was the former's letter dated July 8 seeking investigation by the Central agencies into the beneficiaries of gold smuggling which resulted in the National Investigation Agency being deputed by the Centre.

Antibodies depleting at a faster rate among Covid survivors above 50 yrs of age: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a study, doctors from a Lucknow hospital have found that the antibodies are depleting at a faster rate among the Covid-19 survivors above 50 years of age and with at such low immunity they could be at the higher risk of re-infection.

The study was conducted by the Transfusion Medicine Department of King George's Medical University (KGMU), Lucknow.

The studied samples of plasma showed that survivors in all the age groups, who were symptomatic for just one day, had stronger and more lasting antibodies in comparison to those who were symptomatic for more than a day.

These are the two interesting results thrown up for

further research on 800 Covid-19 survivors who came for plasma donation after recovering from the disease.

The results of the study also revealed that antibodies were not only in sufficient numbers but also strong when the plasma was donated within 12-53 days post-recovery.

According to the head of the Transfusion Medicine, Prof Tulika Chandra, the department conducted the study during collecting plasma from Covid-19 patients, post-recovery, for the blood and plasma bank.

Of 800 plasma donors, 400 were not found suitable for donation. While 50 of them were anaemic or underweight or HIV positive and had other complications, 70 had contact history but never tested positive through RT-PCR method. About 53 were

found unfit because they had come after the lapse of the three-month post-recovery period prescribed for donation.

However, the remaining 227 donors out of 400 'unfit' donors were such who fulfilled all the criteria -- they had confirmed positive, post-recovery period below three months and had no other disqualification but their plasma was not taken because antibodies were either not present or were in insufficient quantity.

"A majority of such donors, both male and females, were above 50 years of age. "We do not know yet whether antibodies were not formed at all or only short-acting antibodies were formed in these cases, but the result suggests that the threat of re-infection might be higher in people above 50 years," she said.

Stop blockades

Enough is enough: No matter how ‘worthy’ the cause, disturbing other citizens cannot be allowed to carry on



One can be allowed to have differing opinions on the validity of protests, whether it is the Punjabi farmers and middlemen at Singhu Border or the anti-Modi protestors at Shaheen Bagh, holding the Capital to ransom, often with the illogical support of some in power, but normal life in the city is getting out of hand. The Delhi-NCR is the economic heartbeat of the nation; the demand from Delhi and cities surrounding the Capital not only keeps the economy going but brings in the much-needed tax revenues to the Government. Sure, blockading the city might get your message heard but, as the farmers protesting all along Delhi’s periphery for over 21 days now are discovering, it is having rapidly diminishing returns as local citizens are upset at their lives and their economic prospects being ruined. As it is, barely had over eight months of inert and moribund public life seen the first flickers of physical and economic activity when it was suddenly forced to speed down again, this time by the growers from hinterland who had come over to the doors of power at the Centre to throw down the gauntlet, miffed as they were at the passage in Parliament of three farm laws without being consulted. We might celebrate the rural economy and the farmer in India, which unfortunately continues to fuel the fallacy that agricultural economy drives the nation, it does not; it is the urban economy that drives India. If farmers who are addicted to their Minimum Support Prices (MSP) want to continue to feed off the teat of the State, they need the economy to grow.

In addition, the longer these protests continue the more the hypocrisy of protestors, whether they are upper-caste landowners at Singhu Border or a largely-Muslim protest at Shaheen Bagh, becomes apparent. The fact of the matter is that these protestors cannot defeat Narendra Modi and Amit Shah and the BJP’s electoral machine at the hustings and the longer the protests continue, they end up solidifying the BJP’s votes, maybe not in Punjab or Delhi but definitely in the BJP’s core vote bank. The Supreme Court has waded into the farmer protests, although it need not have, and, like in Shaheen Bagh, albeit horribly *post-facto*, should ensure that the farmers lift their blockade. If we are all protesting about the mythical ‘common man’ who has been ‘wronged’ by the laws, we should bust that myth. The real ‘common man’ is actually the middle-class security guard or the taxi driver whose life has been ripped asunder by the pandemic who needs to get to work and for whom the blockade is actually ruining his/her economic prospects further. It is almost certain that the BJP, with its vote bank intact, will ride out these protests like it did Shaheen Bagh. Unseating the BJP from power in Uttar Pradesh and the northern States is a pipe dream and it is more likely that the BJP will further consolidate Hindu votes as well as seats in the heartland. There is another factor too. The protests are getting invaded by all sorts of elements inimical to India, whether they are Communists under instructions from Beijing or those who continue to worship Bhindranwale. Reforming India is not an easy task and many have despaired at how long it has taken Narendra Modi to make meaningful reforms, and while his methods have been almost brute-force not wanting to give the Opposition one chance to block laws in Parliament, although with an almost-majority in the Rajya Sabha the fate of most parliamentary discussions is now *fait accompli*. And if the Opposition believes that street protests instead of a rational economic policy are the way forward, it is sadly mistaken.

Calling Bangladesh!

The reopening of the Haldibari-Chilahati rail link is aimed at reducing the diplomatic distance between Delhi and Dhaka



Given the heaving presence of China in the region and its debt-trapping ways with our neighbours, it is important for India to strengthen bilateral relations and invest in mutually beneficial infrastructure than depend on a historicity of ties. While the Narendra Modi Government has been aggressively pursuing the “look East” policy, it has been aiming to make Bangladesh the arrowhead of its diplomacy. This has become all the more important considering that the Sheikh Hasina Government has been equally keen on Chinese investment and developing a transactional relationship with our eastern neighbour and counter-weighting that edge in its relationship with India. So New Delhi has been making efforts to further enhance transport and connectivity between India and Bangladesh and has revived the 55-year-old Haldibari-Chilahati rail link. The neighbours had earlier decided to resurrect the six pre-1965 rail links between the sides which the war had cut off. The other links that are set to be revived between West Bengal with Bangladesh are Petrapole (India)-Benapole (Bangladesh), Gede (India)-Darshana (Bangladesh), Singhabad (India)-Rohanpur (Bangladesh) and Radhikapur (India)-Birol (Bangladesh). Diplomatically, this eases the trade corridor with Bangladesh, boosting bilateral trade in the region. Strategically and politically, it eases India’s mainland connectivity to the Northeastern States, particularly Assam. The new rail link between Akhaura (Bangladesh) and Agartala, which is being funded by India, is likely to be operational by 2021 end. Both are the fastest growing economies in South Asia, and Bangladesh is expected to graduate from the LDC status to a developing country by 2024. The GDP per capita is also projected to rise there. The more India strides ahead in connectivity, the more it can keep Bangladesh as a buffer against China.

Why do we need Dhaka even more now? On the face of it, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina assured India of respecting the organic nature of historic ties and soothed anxieties over the National Register of Citizens (NRC) exercise in Assam. But by foregrounding economic cooperation — one that spans connectivity, investment, power and infrastructure projects in her home country — she has also redefined the rules of bilateral engagement. The new reality has put us in a competitive slot vis-à-vis China, which has become one of the top trading partners of Bangladesh over the past couple of years. And in a multilateral world, where each nation is negotiating deals most beneficial to it and will not just pay obeisance to history, we can no longer afford to touch a raw nerve. There is a need to further woo Bangladesh, considering its deep discomfort over repeated statements from our Ministers on infiltration, minorities and the NRC. Particularly the idea that all “infiltrators” were “Bangladeshis”, repeatedly uttered in political speeches, has not gone down well among the people there. While many understand the difference between the political necessity of posturing and the diplomatic value, the overtly aggressive Hindutva messaging hasn’t quite sat easy with Bangladesh. So it is incumbent upon India to make Dhaka feel wanted at this juncture. Besides, Bangladesh is a key pillar in Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s neighbourhood diplomacy, what with it being a littoral nation and crucial to our role in the Indian Ocean. China has been quick to tap into the acute shortage of power in Bangladesh and has already taken up two mega power projects, hoping to enhance its presence in the energy market there. And while India is also a player in the power sector, it is difficult for Bangladesh to overlook China given its energy demands. For its part, India is working on joint projects on ports and roadways. If the Modi Government wants to make a success of its ‘Act East’ policy, we must invest meaningfully in our neighbouring nation.



PRAFULL GORADIA

It is gratifying to find that the Maharashtra Government has decided to give free rations to sex workers during the pandemic. This section of the society is in a way unjustifiably ostracised and viewed with contempt. Hardly a day passes when the media does not report one rape case or another; yet few Indians, social scientists included, see a connection between frequent gender crimes and their alleviation, paid sex, but rather view it as a crime. With continual urbanisation, the number of families living apart must increase. When most people lived in villages or small towns, families lived together. With joint families, the young man’s income was not a pressing, urgent issue. Hence early marriages were more a rule and less an exception. The challenge of sex did not normally arise. Whatever few sex offences took place, were committed largely by perverse men.

Even in those easier times, the contempt towards sex outside marriage was largely confined to the middle classes. Among the upper rungs of society, whether land-based or industry supported, having a mistress was not looked down upon. On the contrary, a wealthy man without a *tawaif* was not usual. In many a society circle in Mumbai before Independence, the measure of a man’s status was the quality of his mistress’ singing and, possibly, dancing. A cousin of the writer’s grandfather Nathubhai Vora lived most of his life with a lady no less than the famous classical songstress Kesarbai Kelkar, who was a Padma Vibhushan awardee. An incidental blessing was that he was not married. If any relatives dropped in to call on him, Kesarbai would be around like any other friend.

On the other hand, the working classes did not particularly attach any stigma to extramarital sex. If the farm could not sustain the livelihood of a man, he had to go to a city for work. Not everyone could afford housing or even a room for his family there. The result was that he lived alone months on end. He then found release by payment which was altogether preferable to molestation or rape. This crime is only now being looked at as dastardly, especially since the Nirbhaya tragedy. Some have called it beastly, but the writer disagrees. Animals or beasts do not rape; the male follows a

female when she is in heat and not otherwise. Whether perpetrated in public or within family, rape is a barbaric act.

On the other hand, the world’s oldest profession is not fundamentally very different from a contractual — as distinct from a sacramental — marriage. Only the time span varies; some contracts require payment, called *mehr*, at the time of wedding. An eligible groom is universally an income drawing man. A marriage is sanctified by either a priest or a Government official whereas paid sex is a private mutual arrangement. At the same time, having a *tawaif* was not looked down upon, whereas anything confined to a short duration is deemed immoral.

Although one appears to not have questioned the Shia practice of *nikah-e-mut’ah*, which has no minimum time limit. Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan, who in pre-Independence days was the *divan* of the Kota princely state, was invited with his wife to a special birthday party of the Maharaja. As he did not wish his wife to be seen in public, he contracted a *nikah-e-mut’ah* with a lady apparently for going to the party. The Raja subsequently became an envoy of Pakistan to India. Sir Vidia Naipaul, a Nobel Prize winning author, is reported to have been visiting sex workers in London as reported by his

biographer Patrick French, a famous writer. This was despite him being married to Lady Patricia until her death.

The Vaishali-born Amrapali was beautiful and rose to become the *nagarvad-hu* or royal courtesan. She was a contemporary of Lord Buddha who, once in response to her invitation, visited her house and dined with her. This incident reflects the social attitude towards courtesans in those times; Buddha did not deem it degrading to dine with one. In any case, a number of Hindu temples did have *devadasis* who were sanctified by dancing for the ostensible entertainment of the deities. There are camp followers attached to most militaries, duly approved by the defence authorities.

The contempt perhaps developed after the entry of Christian influence in India. The religion looks upon sex as a sin and is to be avoided. Jesus Christ was therefore said to have been born of Immaculate Conception, free from original sin. The Church might be justified in its contention but if it has moulded our morality, it is unfortunate, especially for women in India. This has been unfortunate for both the girls who are victims of molestation as well as the poor women who give pleasure for payment. Incidentally, at one time,

Europe did recognise flawed saints. Mary Magdalene was one duly respected by Christianity. Or did the prejudice grow out of dread of contagious diseases?

No doubt, a system of licence should be introduced to give the profession due legitimacy. More importantly, the system would help protect the health of these women as well as their patrons. And, above all, the women would be freed from the frequent harassment they suffer at the hands of the law and order authorities. Strangely enough, it is invariably the women who are arrested and punished. One never hears of any patron being arrested. Why? Because if any law is violated, both parties must be held accountable. For long years there has been a locality in Kolkata, off the main arterial road Chittaranjan Avenue, called Sonagachi. There are many houses there that are rented by individual women professionals. There is no particular stigma attached to the locality or the practice. One does not hear or read in the papers about raids and arrests made in the area.

This writer grew up in Kolkata and spent 38 years there. He cannot remember any reports of either rape or molestation during those decades. Among the middle classes, there was respect for

females. The most affectionate way to address one, even a daughter, was to call her ‘Maa’. Was it because most Hindus worshipped Durga the most? In all, there are 13 Devi pujas in the year. Was the attitude towards women influenced by this worship of female deities? Some sociologists think so. There is no doubt that Hinduism is about the only faith which bows to so many female deities. It is eminently shameful, therefore, that there be so many rape cases so often.

Paid sex has widely been called the world’s oldest profession, which means it dates back centuries when collective human living began. It also means that there has been a universal, permanent need for it. Why the widespread contempt for it then? Amazingly, there has been no attempt in India to reform or reorganise in any way to improve its condition. After all, an overwhelming majority of women go into this profession out of sheer poverty. Where is our social conscience? Why not begin by giving it professional legal recognition and then making rules to ensure health, hygiene and fairness? A number of countries in Europe did so years ago.

(The writer is a well-known columnist and an author. The views expressed are personal.)

SOUNDBITE

I am writing to tender my resignation as a member of AITC as well as from all other positions held by me in the party and associate organs.

Former WB Minister
—Subhendu Adhikari



The victory of Bangladesh is also the victory of India. India helped us in the war of 1971 against Pakistan. Their soldiers sacrificed their lives.

B’desh Foreign Minister
—AK Abdul Momen



I think injustice is true all over the world. The rich have always had a tendency to have a more favourable view towards their way and the poor, unfavourable.

Hollywood actor
—Bryan Cranston



India should dream of qualifying for the 2026 FIFA World Cup as the tournament will be expanded to 48 teams. Eight teams will go from Asia. We have six years.

AIFF president
—Prafull Patel



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Need to work together

Sir — Keeping in mind that more than half of the Indian population depends on agriculture but its share in GDP is nowhere near expectation, then PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee had in 2002 asked MS Swaminathan, an agriculture expert, to file a report for the improvement of farmers’ condition. Swaminathan filed his report in 2006. His message to the farmers and the Government was: “It (the favourable recommendations) is not much for farmers; they have always been the sufferers.” The message for the other half of the population was: “If agriculture goes wrong, nothing else will go right!”

Food security is fundamental to national sovereignty. For the past three weeks, both the protesting farmers and the Government are adamant on their respective stands and no midway path is in sight. The impasse is affecting the nation’s economy which had already taken a hit owing to the COVID pandemic and the subsequent lockdown. The nation’s image is being tarnished globally due to the farmers’ agitation and even the UN Secretary General had recently expressed his concern on the issue.

Yash Pal Ralhan
Jalandhar

Pawar is the right man for UPA’s top job

Among the older political warhorses in Indian politics, three names readily come to mind: Mulayam Singh Yadav, Sharad Pawar and HD Deve Gowda. The common denominator in all three is that they are regional chieftains who single-handedly took their parties to positions of strength.

Pawar, who was a prime ministerial hopeful on one point and has come a long way, is always in the news, even at 80, because of his tremendous zeal. The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) is zero without the uncanny Pawar who loves to be in the thick of action, both in the regional and national politics. His extra-cautious approach towards men and matters is understandable because his flock swears by only one name: Sharad Pawar. The former Maharashtra Chief Minister has kept intact his old art of sniffing out dissonance.

The wily politician who has tasted success in almost every ministerial position held by him at the Centre, is friends with most, if not all, powerful political leaders of the country. There is no hope lost for any party till Pawar’s NCP is present to back it up. Some call it an absence of ideology, but many term it clever politics. Prime



Minister Narendra Modi has showered praises on Pawar despite taking potshots at him on more than one occasion. Sonia Gandhi has revealed how she and Pawar respect each other despite strong differences on some issues. That she, despite his rebellion against her, remains on excellent terms with him points to his inevitability to a strong Opposition front. Is it, therefore, a surprise that Pawar is strongly rumoured to “take over” from Sonia as the UPA’s chairperson sooner than later?

Ganapathi Bhat
Akola

Rahul has a point

Sir — I was happy to read that Congress MP Rahul Gandhi and his party colleagues walked out of the parliamentary standing committee on defence meeting for not being allowed to speak by chair Jai Oram during a discussion on the rank structure, uniforms, stars and badges of the defence forces.

The war of words broke out when Gandhi pointed out that the panel was wasting time discussing ranks and uniforms when Indian soldiers were facing a crisis on the borders. He opined that the committee should focus on discussing strategy and ways to better equip soldiers stationed at the borders.

The Indian forces had their own history and tradition on the

basis of which uniforms and ranks were decided, Gandhi said, adding that any decision to change uniforms or ranks should remain only with the service chiefs.

When he asked why the panel failed to discuss the LAC situation, Oram stopped him from speaking, which led to the walkout.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

Dragon at it again

Sir — China’s expansionist designs have asserted control over Hong Kong, intruded into Taiwan’s airspace, trained guns on the Philippine navy, harassed Malaysian vessels, sunk a Vietnamese fishing ship, rammed a Japanese coast guard vessel, reignited a deadly border conflict with India and conducted cyber attacks and economic coercion against Australia.

Its ill-conceived and provocative actions near the Line of Actual Control, which also violated previous deals between the two nuclear-armed rivals, have further soured relations between the countries and reached a tipping point.

China is engaged in a highly sophisticated campaign, which includes bribery, blackmail and covert deals, to malign India. The Government is utilising the services of a technology firm to collect personal data of Indian politicians and of 10,000 organisations. This surveillance is being seen as part of a hybrid warfare, which uses non-military means to gain domination.

Seetharam Basaani
Haramkonda

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Always be ready to ride a crisis

It is vital for firms to get capital budgeting right as their ability to survive, grow and stay ahead of the competition depends on it



HIMA BINDU KOTA

Capital is an important area in financial management, as is evident by the huge amount of research this field has attracted over the last eight decades. This has given the academic world many doctrines like the Markowitz Portfolio Theory and the Modigliani and Miller Code of Capital Structure, to name a few. Then there is the Fama French Capital Asset Pricing Model, the Sharpe Index Model, the Black Scholes Option Pricing Model and so on. However, things have changed drastically in the business world due to the advent of globalisation, rapid developments in technology and environmental degradation.

Hence, the applicability of the theories and models of the last century in today's fluid environment is questionable. Even Nobel Prize-winning models and theories, taught as a mandatory part of the curriculum, may not be practical to use in the real business scenarios created by the ongoing pandemic. Capital budgeting decisions, such as acquiring existing assets and investing in new ones, product and technology development and adoption of new business processes hold importance to finance managers as these decisions always involve huge investments for a long-term and are irreversible in nature.

So it is important for organisations to get capital budgeting decisions right as their ability to survive, sustain, grow and stay ahead of the competition, even in a crisis, depends on them. Capital budgeting choices are strategic in nature as they can have a role in long-term corporate performance. Overall, there are 12 capital budgeting techniques that are used in organisations based on their suitability: Net Present Value (NPV), Internal Rate of Return (IRR), Payback (PB), Discounted Payback (DPB), Accounting Rate of Return (ARR), Profitability Index (PI), Annuity, Price-Earnings Ratio (P/E), Sensitivity Analysis, Adjusted Present Value (APV), Value at Risk and Real Options.

However, the traditional capital budgeting techniques have come under criticism for not including the use of advance technology in the manufacturing process overlooking the competitiveness of organisations. Several researchers have pointed out the gaps in the Capital Budgeting Theory and its relevance. The current health emergency has further shown that uncertainty is something that will stay with us and for survival and long-term growth, this, along with other factors, has to be taken into account.

There are several sources of uncertainties ranging from routine issues like cash flow estimations, to more obscure ones like opportunity cost of capital. One of the most difficult issues facing researchers and businesses is the question of identifying and capturing uncertainties related to long-term projects. Therefore, over the years, the traditional capital budgeting decision techniques are being supported by risk analysis and management science techniques, like the Monte Carlo simulations, Game Theory, Decision Trees, Capital Asset Pricing Model, scenario analysis and so on.

The inclusion of managers in a capital budgeting decision is imperative. Therefore, they are taken at a higher level such as president, controller, finance director or treasurer. In addition, several psychological characteristics like age, gender, schooling, technical expertise, experience and manager personality play an important role in decision-making.

So which capital techniques do Indian companies use? Since liberalisation, the country's economic environment has become integrated with the world economy and Indian organisations are subject to business turbulences, like a slowdown, competition and risks such as interest rate, inflation risk, business exposure, exchange rate hazard and so on. In such conditions, only firms with effective decision-making and sound financial management practices can survive and grow. Therefore, corporate investment decision-making is important for any organisation.

Batra and Verma in their research paper published in the *IIMB Management Review* have found that in 85 per cent organisations, capital budgeting decisions are taken by the senior management and the mid-level management is involved in just nine per cent of the firms. Indian businesses have become sophisticated in the use of capital budgeting decisions. A majority of companies adopt superior Discounted Cash Flow (DCF) techniques like NPV, IRR with advanced techniques like Real Options and simulations. However, the easier and non-DCF technique of Payback is still regarded as the second best option. Some firms also use both, DCF and non-DCF techniques, to evaluate their projects.

Companies have to change their decision-making tools to face the growing ambiguities in today's world. They must do this in order to meet the challenges that will be thrown up by a post-COVID world too, as economies around the world strive to recover from the bashing that they have taken due to the pandemic. Use of sophisticated capital budgeting tools and factoring in uncertainty will help Indian companies tide through volatility and thrive in the long run.

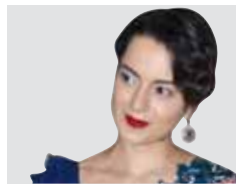
(The writer is Associate Professor, Amity University, Noida. The views expressed are personal)

DILJIT DOSANJH AND PRIYANKA CHOPRA HAVE DISAPPEARED AFTER PROVOKING THE FARMERS. LOOK AT THE STATE THEY (FARMERS) ARE IN NOW.

—ACTOR

KANGANA RANAUT

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



FORGET ABOUT DISAPPEARING. WHO IS A PATRIOT AND WHO IS NOT, WHO GAVE YOU THE RIGHT TO DECIDE THIS? WHAT IS YOUR AUTHORITY ON THIS?

—ACTOR AND SINGER

DILJIT DOSANJH

Heal the broken health system

Understanding the fundamental problem of fragmentation in India's disintegrating healthcare system would be an important step towards universal health coverage



SURAVI SHARMA KUMAR

There are more than 460 million people in India with insufficient access to basic healthcare. When this is combined with increased life expectancy and high chronic disease prevalence, there is a need for long-term comprehensive care and interventions. Though the Ayushman Bharat scheme and initiatives like the National Medical Commission Act and the National Digital Health Blueprint have created a foundation for health integration, the issue of a fragmented healthcare system needs to be addressed urgently. This can be done through better profiling of patients, better organisation of healthcare delivery, besides creating a seamless, interoperable and integrated digital health landscape. With the 154th position in global rankings in quality and accessibility, the sub-par performance of the Indian healthcare sector — in comparison to countries with equally mature economies and democracies — is a critical yet underappreciated problem of a disunited healthcare system. The delivery system focusses and acts on various parts in silos without adequately appreciating their interrelation and position in the larger picture.

This imbalance is at the root of the more obvious healthcare crises of poor quality service, inequality as well as inequity. This divide is at the heart of the ineffectiveness of our increasing efforts to nurture improvement.

As Sir William Osler, the world-renowned physician and author, said, "It is more important to know what sort of person has a disease than to know what sort of disease a person has." The experience of healthcare in our country, however, is often one of not being known as a person. This experience affects the poor, who have difficulty getting access to basic medical care until their problems become emergencies. It is also experienced by the rich and the middle class, who receive as much (and often more) of the sometimes dangerous commodities of healthcare but feel abandoned when they need help putting together the pieces of their illness-shattered lives.

For instance, a working mother of two from a middle class family in Delhi went from doctor to doctor trying to find the reason for her fatigue and decreasing energy levels. Each specialist examined her and prescribed the latest drugs and tests. However, they were unable to help her and the patient got worse each passing day. In the end her problem remained and she went into a depression.

The above experience of a patient is what is exactly the opposite of healing. Because, healing requires relationships, which in turn build trust and hope. They also provide a sense of being known to the care provider and thereby feeling secure that s/he will get the best treatment. The emotional connection between the healer and the sick is unique and priceless and imparts health benefits to the patient.

The country's current healthcare system doesn't contemplate on this aspect of treatment. It doesn't deliver empathy and give a patient hearing to a person's health issues. Increasingly, it delivers care/commodities that can be quantified, incentivised and sold or bought while the person, the whole system and communities get worse in spite of massive investment of time, effort and money.

Focussed research is must to understand the behaviour needed for discrete treatments of different diseases. But improving health is fostered by a different science, one that considers the behaviour of multiple interacting factors which advance the health of people.

It is a poor healthcare professional who considers only the disease and not the person. It is a

VIEWING HEALTHCARE AS AN EVOLVING 'WHOLE' INSTEAD OF AS FRAGMENTED PARTS CAN HELP US INSTILL HOPE WHERE NOW THERE IS CYNICISM. IT WILL LEAD TO PERSONALISATION OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIP WITH THE HEALER WHERE NOW THERE IS DETACHMENT AND ISOLATION. THERE WILL BE PROFESSIONAL AND CORPORATE SHARED RESPONSIBILITY WHERE NOW THERE IS NARROW SELF-INTEREST



poor policymaker who designs healthcare systems that deal only with discrete diseases and fails to create environments that support interaction among different parts of the system.

Fragmentation at times renders well-intentioned actions into the unintended consequence of making things worse. This results in an inefficient, ineffective and unequal care delivery that is commoditised. A cacophony of narrowly-focussed programmes and services may be a good strategy for expanding revenues for service in the private sector but definitely not a strategy for efficient public healthcare delivery. Efficient healthcare requires an ability to personalise and prioritise problems based on "an acquaintance with the particulars," seen in the context of a person as a whole or whole people, communities and systems.

Today the efforts of public health, healthcare systems and philanthropists are directed at narrow programmes with insufficient focus on the larger picture. The lack of an integrative way of making sense of the world and the need to control and understand narrowly replace the greater promise of whole-system approaches.

Doctors treat whoever comes through the door, often oblivious to the many barriers to entry. Manufacturers make their products based on the economic niche more than public good. Hospitals and healthcare systems strive to attract "the right case mix" to maximise profits, or just to stay in business.

Knowledge generation is narrowly partitioned in disease-specific institutes and initiatives without sufficient balancing research that crosses these boundaries. Specialists, drug and device makers, hospitals and service agencies focus on delivering their well-reimbursed services without a way to consider their effect on the whole person or system, or the opportunity costs on the social determinants of health, such as education and employment.

The promise of healthcare is reduced when it is treated as a commodity. When patients become customers, citizens become consumers and healers become providers. By focussing their role narrowly on a technical skill, procedure, or body part, healthcare professionals have completed one part of their contract with society. But in focussing just on expertise without also attending to their responsibility to the whole person and to society, most of the healthcare providers have not acted responsibly towards society. In our system, we definitely can't settle for technicians in place of compassionate healers. We have to remember that higher levels of healing are possible by balancing the biotechnical with the biographical.

Patients appear to be dissatisfied with healthcare in more fragmented systems. Indeed, the failure of repeated attempts to fix the problems can result in a kind of shared hopelessness. When we see only parts, disconnected from the whole, we lose our ability to find incremental actions that are connected to a larger evolutionary improvement.

The search for single sustainable solutions gets in the way of fostering development toward equitable, integrated, personalised, prioritised healthcare. Furthermore, the fragmentation of healthcare leads to a get-what-you-can mentality among all involved. Developing shared goals requires continuous attention but discernment of how each person's health and healthcare affects the others can provide a platform for seeking a better way together.

With rapidly aging populations and an increasing burden of patients with chronic conditions and their complex needs, there's a pressing need for a comprehensive healthcare delivery system in our country. In an effort to cope with this growth, public health spending has been raised consistently since 2014, with an increasing share of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) being

distributed towards public healthcare. An estimated ₹1.6 trillion were spent on public healthcare in 2018. The total per capita Government spending on healthcare has nearly doubled from ₹1,008 per person in the financial year (FY) 2015 to ₹1,944 in FY20, but is still low. The total expenditure by the Centre and States for the FY20 was ₹2.6 trillion or 1.29 per cent of the GDP, including establishment expenditure comprising salaries, gross budgetary support to various institutions and hospitals and transfers to States under centrally-sponsored schemes such as Ayushman Bharat. Of the total public expenditure, the Centre's share is 25 per cent.

In a fragmented healthcare system, spending more on some parts does not improve the whole system. Similar criticisms of fragmented disease-by-disease efforts by the World Health Organisation have been raised on the 30th anniversary of the Alma Ata plan for "providing a comprehensive, universal, equitable and affordable healthcare service for all."

The benefits of integrated care have been widely acknowledged and it has been adapted extensively in North America and Europe, especially for the management of patients with chronic diseases. Understanding the fundamental problem of fragmentation in our disintegrating healthcare system would be an important step forward towards universal health coverage. Viewing healthcare as an evolving "whole" instead of as fragmented parts can help us instill hope where now there is cynicism. It will lead to personalisation of care and relationship with the healer where now there is detachment and isolation. There will be professional and corporate shared responsibility where now there is narrow self-interest. High-value healthcare where now there is ineffectiveness, waste and inequality as well as inequity.

(The writer is an author and a doctor by profession. The views expressed are personal)

A smart testing plan must to unlock education

Studies show that screening students using rapid tests, coupled with strict behavioural interventions, helps control COVID-19 infections



MAYUKH BISWAS

The socio-economic distress triggered by the lockdown necessitated by the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic has been a cause of anxiety for many in India and globally, too. According to the United Nations International Labour Organisation (ILO), more than 400 million workers from India's informal sector will be pushed deeper into poverty due to the effects of COVID-19.

India's underpreparedness and failure to have a smart testing and tracing strategy to counter the spread of the

virus is proving disastrous not only for the economy but also for its underprivileged and marginalised citizens. As a result, education, especially that of vulnerable communities, has taken a huge hit.

More than 320 million students have been hit by the COVID-19 lockdown and shifting of classes online. The 75th report of the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) for 2017-18 highlights the digital divide in the country. Only 23.8 per cent of India has access to the internet, with urban areas leading with 42 per cent and rural availability languishing at 14.9 per cent. Amid such a digital divide, frustrated students have been pushed to take extreme steps like self-harm. The recent suicide by a LSR student highlights the financial hardships faced by them.

Many scholars were forced to drop out due to the unavailability of digital tools to access online education and started working on farms to augment



the income of the family. In particular, the education of the girl child has suffered the most, with 42 per cent of the girls surveyed reporting a decline in their family's income during the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in lack of access to digital education. Consequently, one in two girls surveyed was at risk of dropping out. The spillover effect of girls dropping out of schools and colleges will be massive,

amounting to \$30 trillion in lost lifetime productivity and earnings. As the unlocking of the economy, as well as schools, colleges and universities, takes place, there is a need for a concrete plan to address the challenges that are set to arise. This is because the resumption of classes increases the exposure and vulnerability of students, teachers, and staff to COVID-19. Therefore, it is vital to ensure that COVID-19 testing is made

accessible and affordable to all in order to ensure the maximum safety of all stakeholders and students. This will prevent any long-lasting impact on the economy and society.

The Government needs to focus on scientific measures to control the spread of the virus. Opening up of schools and colleges without an effective testing and tracing strategy will be catastrophic as children are considered to be spreaders of the virus. The healthcare systems are overburdened currently and, in such a situation, access to health to the most vulnerable suffers the most. And so, it is crucial not to lose sight of the effectiveness of targeted testing and rigorous contact tracing across the country.

There are global studies which have noted that screening students every two or three days using rapid tests, coupled with strict behavioural interventions, is helpful to maintain a controllable number of COVID-19 infections. It permits the safe return of students to

campuses. This will also allow governments to take a more comprehensive view of the situation on the ground and allow them to make practical decisions on opening colleges and schools, and not just be based on an ad-hoc policy.

The economic downturn has taken a huge toll on students and education in India. While a robust testing and tracing strategy will effectively manage the spread of the Coronavirus, we also need to undertake other initiatives to support students from vulnerable communities through the disbursement of scholarships, a special stimulus package for students, sector-focussed upskilling and reskilling and accessibility to proper internet facilities and laptops. School fees should also not be increased in this situation to stem the exclusion of marginalised students of the country from their right to education.

(The writer is the All-India General Secretary of SFI. The views expressed are personal.)



FOREIGN EYE



WHAT HAPPENED TO THE BIG PLANS?

While Prime Minister Imran Khan's 'Digital Pakistan' was intended to be a long-term project, a year after its launch there is a little evidence that the Government is following a time-bound plan to realise its objectives. Disappointing as this delay may be, it presents a valuable opportunity for exploring its implications for a developing country.

(Dawn editorial)

Indian GDP to contract 7.8 pc in FY2021: Iera

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Domestic rating agency Iera Ratings expects the technical recession in the country's economy to end in the fourth quarter of the current fiscal, limiting the contraction in the GDP to 7.8 per cent in the financial year 2021.

In the second quarter of financial year 2021, GDP contracted 7.5 per cent as against a decline of 23.9 per cent in the April-June quarter.

With a steady performance of the agricultural sector and a lagged recovery in the contact-intensive parts of the services sector, the agency forecasts a small contraction of one per cent in the Indian GDP in the third quarter of financial year 2021.

The rating agency's Principal economist Aditi Nayar said healthy procurement and a favourable outlook

for the rabi season, as well as greater visibility of an approaching COVID-19 vaccine rollout, will strengthen demand and economic activity in the fourth quarter of financial year 2021.

"The technical recession is likely to end in that quarter (Q4), with a muted 1.3 per cent growth benefiting from a real recovery as well as the low base effect.

This is expected to limit the contraction in Indian GDP in real terms to 7.8 per cent in FY2021," Nayar said in a report.

After the NSO had released the GDP data for the second quarter in financial year 2021, the rating agency had projected the GDP contraction in financial year 21 to range between 7-9 per cent.

With the updated projections for Q3 and Q4 financial year 2021, it has now pegged

GDP contraction in financial year 2021 at 7.8 per cent.

Nayar further said the spending seen during the festive season was driven by pent-up demand, and consumption is yet to fully stabilise in various sectors.

"While many indicators have displayed growth in the ongoing quarter relative to a weak performance in the same period in FY2020, volumes still remain below FY2019 levels in a number of sectors, highlighting that a full recovery remains somewhat distant," she said.

The rating agency said that supply-side and logistical disruptions have re-emerged in some states.

Further, the tailwinds of low commodity prices are turning into headwinds, as the visibility of vaccine availability is now pushing up global commodity prices, it said.

Earnings to recover sharply in FY22 on economic revival: Report

IANs ■ MUMBAI

Corporate earnings are likely to witness a sharp revival in the next financial year backed by economic recovery, said a report by Kotak Institutional Equities.

"We expect 28 per cent and 19 per cent growth in net profits of the Nifty-50 Index in FY2022 and FY2023 following 11 per cent growth in FY2021," it said.

The report noted that the growth in FY2021 reflects low base in a few sectors in FY2020 such as oil, gas and consumable fuels reflecting large adventitious or inventory losses in 4QFY20 and telecom reflecting low ARPU and profits.

There is a possibility of moderate earnings upgrade

over the next few months and the extent of earnings upgrades would be one of the key drivers of the market, it added.

Nonetheless, a few sectors may disappoint if consumption, especially discretionary consumption, was to decelerate on sustained Covid-19 impact on household incomes, said the report.

It has projected a strong recovery in the economy in FY2022 (9.3 per cent real GDP growth) following the likely large contraction of (-8.6 per cent in FY2021.



Global cues unleash bulls in equity market, pharma stocks rally

New Delhi: Bullish global cues after the US FOMC meet lifted the key Indian equity indices to reach new record intraday highs on Thursday. Accordingly, the market had a "gap up" opening at their respective high levels. In terms of sectors, most of the indices traded in the green. Among them, Pharma, Realty and Financial Services indices were the major gainers. At 2.30 p.m., Sensex was trading at 46,868.59, higher by 202.13 points or 0.43% from the previous close. The Nifty50 was trading at 13,738.65, higher by 55.95 points or 0.41 per cent from the previous close. "Considering current chart structure and derivatives data, we are expecting continuation in ongoing up move of Nifty towards 13,900 levels in coming week. IANS

Time for India to come up with data protection model: IT Secretary

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

IT secretary Ajay Prakash Sawhney on Thursday said the new decade is of India and it is time for the country to come up with a data protection model that the world follows.

The data protection model for both personal and non-personal is at an infancy stage and there is learning that is coming from various countries as of now, he added.

"We have actually practised for the past several decades where we look at models which have emerged somewhere else and then sort of improve on that. This is 2020 and decade of India.

"I truly believe it's India's decade and it's India's time to come up with a model that the world looks at and does some cut and paste, and some improvisation of what comes out of India," Sawhney said at a virtual

panel discussion organised by Vidhi Legal. He said that the idea of creating data trusts is going to be very significant for both personal and non-personal data. The Personal Data Protection Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha in February and has been referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee of both the Houses, headed by BJP MP Meenakshi Lekhi, for examination and report.

"Our framework is something that the world is looking very carefully and I believe this to be recognised as the best thinking at the current level. These are of course subjects that are there at the infancy stage. There is learning already from GDPR implementation and from other countries as well, but as we move not only to personal data protection but also into various aspects of non-personal data," Sawhney said.

Govt extends relaxed norms for onion imports till January 31

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Govt on Thursday extended relaxed norms for onion imports for one and a half months till January 31 next year, to boost domestic supply and check the retail prices of the key kitchen staple. To facilitate import of onion, the government had on

October 21 relaxed the conditions for fumigation and additional declaration on the Phytosanitary Certificate under the Plant Quarantine Order, 2003 for import up to December 15, 2020. In an official statement, the Agriculture Ministry said it has decided to extend the relaxation for imports up to January

31, 2021, in the light of public concern over high prices of onion in the market. The ministry said the consignments of imported onions, which arrive in Indian port without fumigation and such endorsement on the PSC, would be fumigated in India by the importer through an accredited treatment provider.

Advance corporate tax mop-up jumps 49% to ₹1.09 lakh crore in Q3: CBDT source

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Further adding to the recovery signals, advance tax payment by companies has shown a massive 49 per cent growth to ₹1,09,506 crore in

the third quarter this fiscal, a CBDT source has said.

The increase can primarily be attributed to the low-base last fiscal when the Government had slashed corporation tax rates to a record

low of 25 per cent in the Q3, leading to lower tax payout by companies. During the same quarter last fiscal, corporate advance tax stood at ₹73,126 crore. The gross tax collection stood at ₹7,33,715 crore, while

net mop-up was ₹5,87,605 crore in the quarter, the source told PTI on Thursday.

During the quarter, the department has refunded ₹1,46,109 crore, which is less than 8.1 per cent from ₹

1,58,988 crore in Q3 of FY20.

Overall advance corporate tax stood at ₹2,39,125 crore so far this year, down 4.9 per cent from ₹2,51,382 crore as the first two quarters bore the brunt of the lockdown.

NIFTY 50						
SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE	
NIFTY 50	13713.55	13773.25	13673.55	13740.70	58.00	
DIVISLAB	3711.30	3854.20	3711.30	3830.00	112.10	
HDFC	2434.90	2509.00	2412.15	2490.10	65.45	
BAJFINANCE	5139.85	5303.15	5100.65	5270.00	123.40	
HDFCBANK	1418.60	1445.00	1404.50	1440.00	29.30	
INDUSINDBK	914.00	949.00	914.00	937.95	16.15	
SHERCEM	24383.70	24899.00	24150.00	24599.00	340.80	
TCS	2811.00	2853.70	2805.00	2848.70	34.50	
POWERGRID	193.30	195.40	191.60	193.40	2.20	
ULTRACELC	5153.70	5219.00	5126.60	5170.20	57.20	
HDFCLIFE	651.00	661.20	650.25	653.85	5.15	
DREDDY	5090.00	5134.50	5030.00	5074.45	35.50	
IT	1270.00	1284.00	1254.00	1277.00	8.75	
KOTAKBANK	1965.00	1969.00	1942.55	1964.00	11.45	
TECHM	921.55	932.75	912.40	926.70	5.15	
RELIANCE	1984.50	2005.00	1977.15	1985.50	8.95	
BAJAJFINSV	9257.70	9399.90	9208.00	9281.00	23.30	
AXISBANK	609.25	611.00	603.20	606.00	-0.10	
TITAN	147.15	152.00	149.20	150.90	-0.55	
NESTLEIND	1838.00	1839.15	1813.60	1830.35	-15.10	
HEROMOTOCO	3135.00	3157.50	3101.05	3115.00	-2.50	
GRASIM	915.90	924.00	912.00	914.00	-0.80	
ASIANPAINT	2569.00	2603.35	2557.00	2580.00	-2.45	
SRLIFE	587.50	865.90	851.60	856.00	-1.50	
ICICIBANK	514.00	516.50	509.10	513.00	-1.15	
GAIL	125.25	125.70	123.50	124.00	-0.40	
BRITANNIA	3740.10	3767.00	3721.00	3739.00	-13.60	
NTPC	105.65	105.65	104.00	104.50	-0.40	
BHARTIARTL	510.75	522.50	512.00	514.00	-2.20	
CIPLA	797.70	794.85	781.10	781.50	-3.65	
ITC	214.20	215.10	211.25	212.65	-1.15	
WIPRO	358.40	359.25	355.50	356.45	-1.95	
M&M	715.10	718.45	715.30	727.90	-4.05	
INFY	1163.90	1168.00	1152.10	1158.60	-7.10	
TATAMOTORS	184.00	184.00	180.65	181.30	-1.25	
EICHMOTORS	2471.70	2495.00	2440.00	2465.25	-16.85	
SBIN	287.00	272.15	266.70	267.35	-2.05	
HCLTECH	880.70	887.00	877.00	886.00	-7.05	
SUNPHARMA	579.50	586.30	569.70	571.15	-5.45	
UPL	461.50	466.40	453.20	455.00	-4.65	
IOC	96.50	97.00	95.00	95.30	-1.05	
HINDUNILVR	2342.00	2342.00	2310.00	2316.95	-27.00	
BAJAJ-AUTO	3307.10	3330.00	3258.00	3294.85	-38.65	
BPCL	402.10	402.55	394.30	394.90	-4.70	
JSWSTEEL	369.35	373.35	364.05	365.55	-5.05	
ONGC	105.10	105.60	100.70	101.45	-1.45	
TATASTEEL	643.40	646.00	631.45	634.25	-9.15	
ADANIPORTS	478.00	478.00	465.55	468.75	-6.80	
MARUTI	7799.90	7831.90	7625.00	7600.00	-132.35	
COALINDIA	145.25	145.25	142.50	142.90	-2.60	
HINDALCO	251.90	254.90	244.45	246.00	-5.45	

NIFTY NEXT 50						
SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE	
NIFTY NEXT 50	32211.05	32303.90	31953.50	32031.75	-112.10	
BERGPAINT	688.50	722.00	688.50	711.00	21.25	
GICRE	141.95	145.40	141.10	145.40	4.10	
ADANIGREEN	1023.90	1059.40	1013.75	1043.10	23.70	
SBICARD	829.00	842.50	824.15	841.70	14.50	
CADILAHC	469.00	481.00	468.10	475.40	6.40	
LUPIN	966.00	984.90	960.00	971.00	10.65	
ALKEM	2912.00	2941.70	2900.00	2928.00	31.90	
NMDC	114.60	117.90	114.40	115.65	1.05	
MOTHERSUNI	157.55	162.50	157.40	158.00	1.25	
HAVELLS	898.00	929.00	891.00	907.60	6.45	
OFSS	3134.90	3159.00	3120.50	3130.40	18.25	
PIDILITIND	1630.00	1652.00	1626.35	1634.00	8.05	
BIOCIN	461.80	466.00	458.95	461.75	1.75	
ACC	1639.40	1659.85	1643.00	1636.60	5.50	
BOSCHLTD	13350.00	13450.00	13300.00	13361.00	36.85	
LTI	3305.00	3319.00	3280.20	3295.05	6.10	
MUTHOOTFIN	1217.00	1234.05	1213.20	1218.00	0.45	
MARICO	413.00	414.90	409.05	413.25	0.10	
GODREJCP	720.65	732.80	714.90	720.00	-0.65	
CONCOR	410.85	417.50	405.10	407.40	-0.45	
AMBUJACEM	248.50	251.00	246.20	246.50	-0.75	
AUROPHARMA	880.00	889.60	868.60	873.00	-2.70	
ICICI	1490.00	1490.00	1464.00	1473.90	-5.45	
HINDZINC	242.70	245.95	240.00	241.00	-1.15	
PGHL	11156.00	11368.45	11055.30	11150.00	-55.55	
DABUR	515.20	517.40	510.50	511.00	-2.65	
COALP	1615.00	1623.20	1600.00	1602.55	-8.95	
BAJAJHLDNG	3147.95	3163.00	3105.00	3125.00	-23.95	
HDFCAMC	2862.00	2862.70	2822.05	2839.00	-23.70	
ADANTRAN	432.00	441.90	424.15	427.95	-3.70	
ICICIRPL	488.00	489.40	479.25	482.00	-4.25	
NAUKRI	4601.15	4665.00	4530.80	4555.90	-45.25	
PEL	1450.00	1483.00	1435.65	1443.00	-14.60	
TATACONSUM	584.95	593.40	575.55	577.65	-5.95	
BANDHANBNK	408.20	414.00	405.00	405.85	-4.35	
ABBOTINDIA	1632.00	1635.00	1605.00	1610.00	-17.60	
INDIGO	1654.00	1654.00	1625.45	1636.90	-18.95	
TORNENT	2785.00	2795.00	2750.00	2757.00	-31.95	
SIEMENS	1541.00	1563.00	1518.15	1522.10	-19.85	
INFRATEL	244.30	247.40	240.20	241.90	-3.40	
PETRONET	264.00	264.75	258.00	260.30	-3.80	
DLF	1164.00	1173.80	1132.95	1140.20	-16.95	
UPL	235.30	237.00	231.00	231.60	-3.80	
PFC	120.00	120.00	118.00	118.25	-2.00	
ONGC	490.00	490.00	478.00	479.00	-8.55	
DMART	2645.00	2650.00	2503.00	2500.00	-47.05	
PNB	38.15	38.35	36.75	37.20	-0.75	
MCDOWELLN	598.00	599.70	582.20	582.80	-12.05	
HINDPETRO	232.70	232.70	224.65	225.40	-5.20	
BANKBARODA	66.40	67.15	63.35	63.65	-2.75	

BSE 500

Script	Open	High	Low	LTP
SBIN	270.40	272.10	266.80	267.60
INDUSINDBK	913.00	948.00	913.00	935.90
BAJFINANCE	5143.50	5300.00	5103.35	5284.25
HDFCBANK	1415.00	1444.00	1404.50	1441.40
HDFC	2431.15	2509.00	2425.00	2494.90
IDEA	9.95	10.23	9.85	9.93
INFUFOOD	2704.90	2927.50	2700.00	2825.00
RELIANCE	1980.90	2005.00	1977.10	1985.05
ICICIBANK	514.00	516.45	509.05	511.50
ZEEL	230.70	238.10	223.95	225.95
LUPIN	965.00	984.60	961.40	970.40
ITC	214.50	214.75	211.30	213.00
TATAMOTORS	183.60	184.15	180.65	181.65
IBULHSGFIN	208.00	208.75	203.50	205.15
TATASTEEL	645.00	645.70	631.75	634.65
BSOF	202.00	205.25	200.00	200.50
DREDDY	5040.00	5132.35	5033.60	5074.95
INFY	1166.35	1168.50	1156.50	1159.10
ASHOKLEY	101.00	102.05	99.00	99.55
SAIL	60.00	60.35	57.10	57.60
BAJAJFINSV	9319.00	9398.95	9211.40	9282.95
VOLTA	838.35	844.95	820.25	823.05
ONGC	105.00	105.65	100.65	101.50
MPSL	648.60	671.25	644.80	653.00
UF	461.50	466.40	453.10	455.25
BHARTIARTL	518.10	522.60	512.00	514.00
BANKBARODA	66.40	67.15	63.35	63.75
CANBK	121.65	125.60	120.10	124.10
LT	1267.60	1283.70	1254.05	1277.80
HAVELLS	899.65	926.20	890.45	910.75
DISVLB	3719.00	3847.90	3716.80	3830.00
HLCTECH	886.00	887.95	876.65	879.45
IRCTC	1428.05	1441.00	1415.00	1424.80
MOTHERSUMI	157.00	162.45	157.00	158.30
TCS	2813.95	2849.00	2805.55	2837.90
PAEIND	26050.00	27921.80	25907.60	2727.45
HINDUNILVR	2344.00	2434.00	2310.05	2315.45
MARUTI	7813.00	7829.35	7631.55	7686.20
SUNPHARMA	578.00	586.40	570.00	571.35
KOTAKBANK	1965.20	1968.80	1942.65	1965.50
DLF	235.90	237.55	231.25	234.35

DURING MILITARY STANDOFF WITH CHINA

US stood with India: WH official

Washington: Expressing concern over China's increasing aggression across the globe from Hong Kong, Taiwan, South China Sea and along the India-China border, a senior White House official said the US has stood with New Delhi during its military standoff with Beijing.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, the official asserted that US President Donald Trump, during his presidency, has really strengthened all aspects of the US-India security and defence cooperation to build a comprehensive, enduring and mutually beneficial defence partnership.

"We have been very concerned with China's increasing aggression really across the globe, whether it be Hong Kong, Taiwan, South China Sea and of course along the India-China border," the senior administration official from the White House told PTI in an exclusive interview.

"We have stood with India



as it faced this aggression along its border over the last six-seven months. We provided equipment. We have been engaged with India, shown our moral support for India to be able to stand up to the Chinese and make sure that there's a peaceful resolution and de-escalation of the situation," said the official.

The armies of India and China are locked in a tense border standoff in eastern Ladakh since early May. Both sides have held multiple rounds of military and diplomatic talks. However, no breakthrough has been achieved yet.

During the Trump admin-

istration, the United States has become the second largest arms supplier to India, growing from virtually no sales a decade ago to more than \$20 billion today, the official said.

Earlier this year, the US and India concluded \$3 billion in defence sales for naval and attack helicopters. To bolster India's role as a net provider of security in the Indo-Pacific, the Trump administration has lifted restrictions on provision of sensitive defence technology, enabling India to become the first country that's not a treaty ally of the United States to be offered armed MQ-9 Reaper drones.

In support of India during its border standoff with China, the United States has leased two MQ-9s to India while the sale of MQ-9s is being finalised, said the official.

The US also expedited delivery of cold weather gear to support the deployment of Indian military along the Line of Actual Control (LAC)

through the winter, said the senior administration official.

"In addition, we have concluded the basic exchange and cooperation agreement, which is the last of the so-called key defence enabling agreements. I think this is really a historic achievement that clearly demonstrates progress in defence partnership," said the official.

Responding to a question, the senior administration official said that the US cut security aid and reimbursements to Pakistan in January 2018. There have been some exceptions, such as for things that are in the US interest.

"Some minor exceptions. But the suspension remains in effect. We continue to look to Pakistan to crack down on terrorists and militants on its territory. We've seen some progress on that front. But we certainly need to see more. We need to see a decisive crackdown, and sustained measures to rein in these terrorists and militant groups," said the official. **PTI**

India is our true friend: Hasina

Dhaka: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Thursday said that India is Bangladesh's true friend as she expressed her gratitude to the country and the Indian Army for their support during the 1971 liberation war.

Addressing a virtual summit with her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi, Hasina said that she is happy to meet him again, "particularly on this month of victory".

"December evokes in all Bangladeshis the spirit of joy, freedom and celebration as we recall with deep gratitude our 'Father of the Nation' Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Under whose dynamic leadership we earned our great independence," she said.

"India is our true friend," the Bangladesh Prime Minister said.

"I pay deep homage to the three million martyrs who laid down their lives. I pay tribute to the members of the Indian armed forces martyred in the war and to their families. I pay

my gratitude to the government and the people of India who extended their wholehearted support for the cause of our nation," she said.

The war in 1971 broke after the sudden crackdown at midnight past on March 25, 1971 in the erstwhile East Pakistan by the Pakistani troops and ended on December 16. The same year Pakistan conceded defeat and unconditionally surrendered in Dhaka to the allied forces comprising the freedom fighters and the Indian soldiers.

Officially three million people were killed during the nine-month long war.

Modi and Hasina jointly inaugurated a digital exhibition on Mujibur Rahman and Mahatma Gandhi in an effort to celebrate the life and legacies of the iconic leaders. Hasina and Modi also relaunched a trans-border rail route between Chilahati and West Bengal's Haldibari which has been inoperative for almost 55 years. **PTI**

US Joint Chiefs chairman meets with Taliban on peace talks

Kabul: The top US general held unannounced talks with Taliban peace negotiators in the Persian Gulf to urge a reduction in violence across Afghanistan, even as senior American officials in Kabul warned that stepped-up Taliban attacks endanger the militant group's nascent peace negotiations with the Afghan Government.

Army Gen. Mark A Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, met for about two hours with Taliban negotiators in Doha, Qatar, on Tuesday and flew Wednesday to Kabul to discuss the peace process with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani.

Milley's meetings came amid a new drawdown of US troops, although under current US policy a complete pullout hinges on the Taliban reducing attacks nationwide.

"The most important part of the discussions that



I had with both the Taliban and the government of Afghanistan was the need for an immediate reduction in violence," Milley told three reporters, including one from The Associated Press, who accompanied him to Qatar and Afghanistan. "Everything else hinges on that."

Under ground rules set by Milley for security reasons, the journalists travelling with him agreed not to report on either set of talks until he had departed the region. It was Milley's second unannounced meeting with the Taliban's negotiating team; the first, in June, also in Doha, had not been reported until now. **AP**

Around the Globe

Cairo: More than 120 European migrants, including eight women and 28 children, were intercepted in the Mediterranean Sea by Libya's coast guard, the U.N. Migration agency said Thursday.

Suva (Fiji): Fiji imposed a nationwide curfew on Thursday after urging people near the coast to move to higher ground as the island nation prepared for a major cyclone to hit. Cyclone Yasa was expected to hit the two main islands of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu later Thursday or early Friday.

Ramallah (West Bank): Israel will begin rolling out a major coronavirus vaccination campaign next week after the prime minister reached out personally to the head of a major drug company. Millions of Palestinians living under Israeli control will have to wait much longer. Worldwide, rich nations are snatching up scarce supplies of new vaccines as poor countries largely rely on a World Health Organisation program that has yet to get off the ground.

Rio De Janeiro: Brazil's number of confirmed Covid-19 cases surged past 7 million on Wednesday, with an all-time high of more than 70,000 cases, according to the health ministry's daily bulletin.

Biden, Pence set to get vaccine soon

AP ■ WASHINGTON

President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President Mike Pence are set to receive the Covid-19 vaccine soon.

According to two transition officials familiar with the matter, Biden will receive the vaccine publicly as early as next week. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorised to discuss it publicly.

The White House says Pence and his wife, Karen, will receive the vaccine publicly on Friday.

Biden said on Tuesday that Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious-disease expert, advised him to get the vaccine "sooner than later." Biden has said that he wants to keep front-line health care workers and vulnerable people as the top priority as the vaccine is rolled out throughout the country.

But he's also noted the importance of him getting the vaccine publicly to build confidence among Americans to get vaccinated.

Prez Macron tests positive for Covid-19

Paris: French President Emmanuel Macron has tested positive for Covid-19, the presidential Elysee Palace announced on Thursday.

It said the president took a test "as soon as the first symptoms appeared." The brief statement did not say what symptoms Macron experienced.

It said he would isolate himself for seven days. "He will continue to work and take care of his activities at a distance," it added.

It was not immediately clear what contact tracing efforts were in progress. Macron attended a European Union summit at the end of last week, where he notably had a bilateral meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel. He met Wednesday with the prime minister of Portugal. There was no immediate comment from Portuguese officials.

Macron on Wednesday also held the Government's weekly Cabinet meeting in the presence of Prime Minister Jean Castex and other ministers. **AP**

Putin denies involvement in Navalny's poisoning

Moscow: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday rejected allegations that the Kremlin was behind the poisoning of his top political foe, opposition leader Alexei Navalny, and accused US intelligence agencies of fomenting the claims.

Speaking via video call during an annual marathon news conference, the Russian leader countered the accusations by saying that if the Kremlin wanted to poison Navalny it would have pressed the attack home.

"If there was such a desire, it would have been done," Putin said with a chuckle.

Navalny fell sick on Aug 20 during a domestic flight in Russia, and was flown while he was in a coma to Germany for treatment two days later. Labs in Germany, France and Sweden, and tests by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, established that he was exposed to a Soviet-era Novichok nerve agent.

Russian authorities have vehemently rejected the accusations of involvement in the poi-

soning.

On Monday, the investigative group Bellingcat and Russian outlet The Insider released a report alleging that operatives from the FSB, Russia's domestic security agency, which is a top KGB successor, followed Navalny during his trips since 2017, had "specialized training in chemical weapons, chemistry and medicine" and "were in the vicinity of the opposition activist in the days and hours of the time-range during which he was poisoned."

The investigation, conducted by Bellingcat and The Insider in cooperation with CNN and Der Spiegel, identified the supposed FSB operatives and laboratories where poisons like Novichok were made after analyzing telephone metadata and flight information.

It mentioned two instances in 2019 and 2020, in which Navalny or his wife Yulia suffered from unexplained symptoms. Navalny said the investigation has proven beyond doubt that FSB operatives tried to kill him on Putin's orders. **AP**

Turkey won't step back on S-400s despite US sanctions

AP ■ ANKARA

Turkey won't step back from its decision to deploy Russian air defence systems despite US sanctions imposed on the country over the purchase, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on Thursday.

In an interview with Turkey's 24 TV television, Cavusoglu also said Turkey was mulling steps it would take to reciprocate against the US sanctions, but did not say what the steps could entail.

The US announced sanctions earlier this week over Turkey's procurement of Russia's advanced S-400 system, under a US law known as CAATSA, aimed at pushing back on Russian influence. The sanctions target Turkey's Presidency of Defence Industries, the head of the presidency and three other

senior officials.

The penalties block any assets the four officials may have in US jurisdictions and bar their entry into the US. They also include a ban on most export licenses, loans and credits to the agency.

It is the first time that CAATSA has been used to penalise a US ally.

"If we were to step back we would have done so before now," Cavusoglu said in response to a question on whether Turkey would cancel the S-400 deal with Russia.

Cavusoglu added: "Now we are assessing the impact of these sanctions in great detail...And will take steps accordingly." The Minister also described the sanctions as "wrong both legally and politically," arguing that Turkey's purchase of the Russian system in 2017 predated the CAATSA law.

Turkey, Iraq agree to cooperate against extremist groups

Ankara: Turkey and Iraq have agreed to continue their cooperation in fighting extremist organisations, including the Islamic State group and Kurdish rebels, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Thursday.

Speaking to reporters following meetings with visiting Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, Erdogan also said he hoped that an Iraqi-Turkish oil pipeline that was damaged by the IS during the conflict against the

militant group would soon be repaired and would resume oil transfers to world markets.

Turkey has carried out numerous ground and aerial cross-border offensives into neighbouring northern Iraq to attack militants of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, who maintain bases in the region. The latest offensive in June, dubbed Operation Claw Tiger, saw Turkish commandos being airlifted into Iraqi territory. **AP**

TOMAR'S LETTER TO KISAN TRIES TO DISPEL MSP, MANDI FEARS

"Contractors will not be allowed to make any changes on farmers' lands and contractors will not be permitted any loan to make any developments of farmers' lands," the letter stated.

"Some farmer groups have spread rumours and misinformation. It is my job to dispel them come from a farming family. Those sitting on railway tracks who stopped rations reaching our soldiers protecting our borders, can't be farmers," the letter stated.

He said farmers from several States have hailed the farm reforms and new laws while some unions misleading the farmers over the laws.

Tomar claimed most of the farmers are happy with the farm bills but some confusion has been created by a certain section as part of a conspiracy to create tensions based on falsehood.

"I belong to a farmer's family and since childhood, I have experienced the tough life of farmers. It is very satisfactory that after implementation of the law, MSP procurement has set a new record this time," Tomar went on to add.

He also pointed out that to ensure better infrastructure for the benefit of farmers, the Centre has created an "Agricultural Infrastructure Fund" of Rs 1 lakh crore.

Repeating the Centre's attack on the Congress' hypocrisy over the farm laws, Tomar has mentioned that the previous Governments were also a proponent of the reforms announced in the agriculture sector.

Besides letter, the Government has also issued an e-booklet highlighting the success stories of farmers who have benefited from contract farming after enactment of these legislations. In the 100-page e-booklet "Putting Farmers First", the Government said it has made clear the "truth" about the farm reforms and has mentioned "what will happen" and "what will not happen" for farmers.

Highlighting briefly the success stories of farmers who have benefited from the new laws, the Government said, "There are many success stories already for such market access across various States."

"Nearly 1,300 farmers in the Aligarh district of Uttar Pradesh recently entered into an agreement with Fortune Rice to produce export quality paddy and are earning 15-20 per cent higher income," it said.

More than 2,500 potato farmers across

north Gujarat are earning nearly Rs 40,000 more per acre under agreement with potato processing company HyFun Foods, it said. Over 1,000 seed potato farmers across Punjab, northern Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh are earning guaranteed 35 per cent margin above cost under the agreement with Technico Agri Sciences Ltd, the Government said.

PUT FARM LAWS ON HOLD, SC ADVISES GOVT

"Court cannot guarantee this. Court does not have the wherewithal to prevent any such violence. It has to be the police and other authorities who will protect the right of others," the bench said, adding that right to protest cannot mean blockade of the entire city. It said that even police and authorities should not incite the protesting farmers to indulge in any kind of violence.

The court referred to the 1988 Boat Club protest by farmers in Delhi and said the farmers' organisations had then brought the entire city to a standstill.

The top court told Bharatiya Kisan Union (Bhau) group, which was the only farmer organisation represented before the court today through lawyer AP Singh, that they cannot keep on protesting without talking to the Government.

"You cannot sit in protest for years and years and don't talk to the Government. We have already said that we recognise your right to protest but the protest has to have some motive. You need to talk to the Government," the Bench said.

During the hearing, the Bench said it would set up the committee which may include experts like P Sainath and representatives of the Government and farmers' bodies to look for the resolution of the deadlock over the statutes.

"We acknowledge the right of farmers to protest but it has to be non-violent," it said.

The top court said the purpose of staging protest can be achieved if the farmers and the government will hold talks and "we wish to facilitate that".

"We will not decide the validity of law today. The only thing which we will decide is the tch of petitions seeking removal of farmers protesting at several roads along Delhi's borders.

The apex court had on Wednesday indicated that it may form a committee having representatives of the Government and farmer unions across the country to resolve the deadlock over farmers protesting at several roads near Delhi borders

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against the three new farm laws, saying "it may become a national issue".

The top court had told the Centre that, "Your negotiations have not worked apparently." Multiple pleas have been filed in the top court seeking a direction to the authorities to immediately remove the farmers, saying commuters are facing hardships due to the road blockades and the gatherings might lead to an increase in the number of Covid-19 cases.

LOCAL DEFENCE BUY WORTH ₹28K CRORE CLEARED BY RAJNATH

The ultra modern radars will enable the Services to have latest and real time information about any hostile movement. The radars will have the 360 degrees capability for surveillance.

At present, the IAF has four Israeli manufactured Phalcon AWACS. The electronic systems of these AWACS are fitted on Russian made IL-76 planes. These airborne radars can remain in the air for more than 10 hours and pick up any movement in Pakistan up to a distance of more than 400 km.

The Defence Ministry in a tweet also said out of the total amount Rs 25,000 crore were approved under the indigenous design and development.

Officials also said this was the first meeting of the DAC under the new regime of Defence Acquisition Procedure 2020 and these are the first set of Acceptance of Necessity (AoNs) accorded with majority AoNs being accorded in the highest categorisation of Buy Indian (IDDM). Six of seven proposals, that is, Rs 27,000 crore out of Rs 28,000 crore for which AoNs were granted will be sourced from the Indian industry to give a boost to the "Make in India" and "Atmanirbhar Bharat" initiatives.

The latest decision to go in for Indian products comes months after the Defence Ministry listed nearly 100 items which will now be manufactured by the local industry. Earlier, the forces were importing these items.

SUVENDU, JITENDRA QUIT TMC, TO JOIN BJP IN SHAH PRESENCE

"As I have quit all my posts and the party an attack was mounted on my office, there can be future attack on my followers too. I apprehend threat to my life and so have asked for police protection,"

he said.

Referring to the two leaders' quitting the party Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh said, "This is the beginning of the end of the Trinamool Congress and one would see more people leaving the party in the coming days." On Adhikari and Tiwari's joining the saffron outfit he said, "They are welcome in the BJP if they want because they are able leaders and our party will accord them adequate respect."

Meanwhile, Adhikari had written to Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar seeking protection and alleging that he and his supporters were facing threat, sources close to him said adding the Governor had forwarded that letter to Chief Minister recommending action.

Elsewhere the BJP Government had prepared a list of 25 leaders --- who were likely to quit the Trinamool Congress --- for providing them Y-plus, Y and X category security, sources said.

INDIA MAY NEED \$1.8 BILLION FOR 1ST PHASE COVID-19 VACCINATION

The vaccines to be used are AstraZeneca, Russia's Sputnik, Zydus Cadila and Bharat Biotech.

At least 600 million shots will be required in the first phase alone for critical workers and people most at risk from Covid-19, a list of whom has already been prepared, as per the plan submitted by India at the international forum.

If India got 190-250 million shots of the vaccine under the Covax facility - a best case scenario - then the Government would need to line up about \$1.4 billion to make up for the shortfall, according to a news agency which quoted an unpublished report prepared for GAVI's three-day board meeting that began on Tuesday.

On the other hand, if India received a lower allocation of 95-125 million doses, then the cost to the government of procuring additional shots would go up to USD1.8 billion.

By comparison, India's 2020-21 Union Budget allocated just under \$10 billion to healthcare. The Covax plan, co-led by the World Health Organization and GAVI, aims to provide poor and middle-income countries with diagnostic tests, drugs and vaccines through a fund known as the Access to Covid-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, set up last April.

GAVI, an alliance of Governments, drug companies, charities and interna-

tional organisations, said it was in discussions with the Government over a support package.

"Providing a low range of support would exacerbate the country's ability to allocate enough resources to mitigate the risks of continued transmission of Covid-19," the GAVI report said.

The GAVI report identified India's economic burden due to the pandemic as "disproportionate" and suggested a donor-funded plan of USD1.3 billion to secure 190-250 million doses. The plan needs to be approved by the GAVI alliance board.

According to a vaccination plan shared with international donors, the Union Health Ministry targets to inoculate 10 million frontline health workers by February, 20 million essential workers by the following month and then 270 million people by August, mostly people above the age of 50 and those with other health issues that make them more vulnerable. India also needed USD30 million to USD80 million for the infrastructure to transport and store vaccines that must be kept at very low temperatures, the GAVI report said.

CENTRE KILLING FEDERALISM, CRIES DIDI AS 3 IPS OFFICERS SHUNTED

The MHA had earlier asked the West Bengal Government to immediately release the three IPS officers for Central deputation.

The three IPS officers include IFP, South Rajeev Kumar, DIG Presidency Range Praveen Tripathy and SP South 24 Parganas Bholanath Pandey. The officers have been deputed on ITBP and SSB duties, sources said.

Soon after the attack took place on December 10, the stated officers were asked to report for Central deputation. But when the State Government refused to release them the Centre used its special powers to seek them back.

The Centre had summoned Bengal's Chief Secretary and the Director General of Police (DGP) reportedly to explain the law and order situation in the State. The duo, however, would not respond to the Central order saying the attack was being investigated.

Incidentally Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar had prepared a lengthy list of "partisan" bureaucrats and had sent their names to the Centre, sources said.

Work of panel on Delhi-NCR air quality not satisfactory: SC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday said it is "not satisfied" with the work done by the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) in the Delhi-NCR and adjoining areas, which has been constituted by the Centre to tackle air pollution.

A bench headed by Chief Justice SA Bobde said that even people in Delhi are not satisfied with the work done by the

"We don't know what your commission is doing. People in Delhi are not satisfied with your work. We are also not satisfied"

Commission on the issue of pollution.

"We don't know what your commission is doing. People in Delhi are not satisfied with your work. We are also not satisfied," said the bench, also comprising Justices AS Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, said the Commission is working on "war footing".

Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, also appearing for the Centre, apprised the bench that they have already filed a comprehensive affidavit as directed by the court earlier.

The apex court said it would hear in second week of January the petition filed by Aditya Dubey who has raised the issue of pollution caused due to stubble burning in neighbouring states of Delhi.

The top court had on Monday asked the Centre to apprise it about the steps taken so far by the Commission to tackle the problem of air pollution.

The Centre had informed the bench that the government was readying a comprehensive affidavit which would be filed in the apex court in the matter.

On November 6, the apex court had asked the Centre to ensure there is no smog in Delhi as it was informed that the Commission has started functioning from that day.

Trend Slazer

I feel lucky and privileged: Sara

Actor **SARA ALI KHAN** is happy with the way her career is going. Ever since her debut in the 2018 release *Kedarnath*, she has worked with bigwigs such as Abhishek Kapoor, Rohit Shetty and Imtiaz Ali, and she is all set to end the year 2020 with the David Dhawan directorial *Coolie No. 1* opposite Varun Dhawan. The film is a remake of 1995 hit of the same name starring Govinda and Karisma Kapoor.

"I feel lucky and privileged. I think films are a director's medium and you are as good as your director, and I have luckily had the opportunity to work with extremely versatile and amazing directors. I hope I keep getting opportunities to work with creative people like I have," said Sara.



'Most of my scenes in my forthcoming crime drama web series *Criminal Justice: Behind Closed Doors* are with Pankaj Tripathi. He is very simple and easy to work with and be around. He did his thing and I did mine, and it all went very smooth. There were other wonderful actors too and it was a treat to work with all of them.'

—Kirti Kulhari

Actor BHUMI PEDNEKAR is a climate warrior and she has now engaged in a new effort to work at spreading awareness about carbon footprint.



The actor has joined hands with the global citizen initiative named Count Us In. She will work closely to inspire and educate Indians towards reducing carbon footprint.

Says she, "Protecting the environment has become my mission and I'm thrilled to raise awareness towards climate change in India. Christiana Figueres is an inspirational human and I look forward to work with her on this issue."

'Don't have a mobile or a computer'

Oscar-winning actor **CHRISTOPHER WALKEN** is not big on technology and he says he does not own a cellphone or a computer.

During an interview on *The Late Show*, Walken told the host, "Somebody had to come and set this up because I don't have a cellphone or a computer."

The host asked if Walken had a moral reason for avoiding technology. "No, no. I just got to it too late. And I never got involved in it because it would be strange to have any 10-year-old be much better at it than I am," the 77-year-old replied.



As the year comes to an end, organisations are evaluating their return to work strategies, concentrating on employee safety and comfort. Here are a few workplace trends that may emerge in 2021

BLENDING BOTH THE WORLDS

This has been a landmark year in more ways than one bringing about a new normal in all aspects. It has disrupted both personal and professional lives and accelerated the work from home culture, blending both worlds. We got comfortable with status quo, even in the form of adorning a casual attire instead of dressing up for work.

While this new trend felt like a welcome change from the earlier working style, it also brought about several setbacks for employees. With increased work hours; people were spending more time indoors, which coupled with social isolation has caused a lot of stress. This is a critical issue that needs to be addressed in the coming months. Many professionals also found work from home a challenge due to lack of a dedicated home office setup, lagging internet connectivity, lack of proper ergonomic furniture, issues in collaborating with colleagues, unwanted distractions, acoustics and privacy issues.

Going forward, the focus will largely be on enabling a smoother transition to from home and on-premise environments with technology as a key catalyst. The latter has brought with it some positive changes and made us acknowledge the things that we will need in the future for a smooth and comfortable working scenario. The underlying message here is for workplace design that catalyses the drive to return to work, feeling safe and worry free. In this light, here are a few workplace trends that may emerge in 2021.

Employee-centric policies

This has been the most stressful year for employees across various professions. Companies are now trying to address the critical aspect of employee mental health through regular counseling and well-being sessions and seminars. It will most likely continue as a major trend in the coming year. Companies can no longer just be in business to make profit. They must now make a difference to the society, especially during these times of hardship and political and social polarisation. Employees are also



asking companies to give them flexible work schedules, safe office facilities, paid leave, childcare, training and mental health support. Several organisations have declared work from home as a permanent working option to its employees allowing them to feel safer and more in control in these unforeseen times.

Safety first

Employees are now choosing safety of the work environment over opportunities for professional growth. They expect companies to keep their facilities clean, communicate regularly about their reopening status, and maintain safe working conditions. However, several companies are integrating technology to ensure workers safety. For instance, some have an automated temperature elevation detection solution to spot COVID-19 infections in buildings. Whereas, some companies have an automated contact tracing tool that notifies employees who have been in contact with another worker who tested positive for the virus.

A hybrid workplace and workforce

Instead of taking extreme approaches to work environments, many companies have a hybrid approach. In such a scenario, employees come into the office for a few days, while working remotely for the rest. They also try to plan the schedules in such a way that every person comes into the office on specified days which also allows the company to maintain the overall occupancy. The hybrid workplace model allows for structure and sociability (at an office) while offering independence and flexibility (at home).

Growing demand for retraining and reskilling

COVID-19 has disrupted the global



economy, widening the skills gap. An increase in job automation catalyses the demand for retraining. With a shift in businesses and economic demands, the skills required to do the new jobs are also created. Retraining and up-skilling workers will become even more of a need heading into 2021 because of shifting markets and growing investments in new technology. Both of these can be attributed to the impact of the pandemic. The larger skills gap has also made it imperative to pro-

vide more training for employees to support the digital transformation needs and speed of change. Many of these technologies, like contact tracing, collaborative tools, and AI-driven software, have been widely adopted to support employee mental health and increase productivity while allowing for flexibility and safety.

The current situation has put to test many of our ideas and thought processes about ourselves and the world around us. This includes the purpose and design

of the workplace. The pandemic has not yet run its course but organisations are already creating and evaluating their return to work strategies to breathe new life into the workplace concentrating on employee safety and comfort. As we move into the new year, workplace design will be a combination of collaboration, aesthetics, and experience, allowing the employees to feel safe and cared for.

(The writer Swaviman Das is Design Director, Space Matrix.)

THE ROAD RUNNER

With each passing year, auto experts put their heads together to determine the very best new vehicles on sale. Here are the four first-time winners for 2021 along with a returning champion from last year's awards



storage bins and cubbies than you'll find in some rival SUVs.

TOP-RATED LUXURY EV: 2021 FORD MUSTANG MACH-E

Starting MSRP: \$43,995

What Edmunds' experts say: "In some cases, a non-luxury brand enters luxury territory with an EV offering, and so it is with the all-new Ford Mustang Mach-E. An electric SUV with Mustang-influenced styling, the Mach-E stands out with its premium cabin and easy-to-use controls. It lives up to its Mustang namesake, too, with approximately 300 miles or so between charges, depending on configuration, plus a projected 0-60 mph time of less than four seconds in the forthcoming GT version."

Counterpoint: The Mach-E's front seats can be somewhat uncomfortable for taller drivers.

TOP-RATED LUXURY SEDAN: 2021 MERCEDES-BENZ E-CLASS

Starting MSRP: \$55,300

What Edmunds' experts say: "A true luxury experience is the main focus of this award, but value is also taken strongly into account. The Mercedes-Benz E-Class delivers on both fronts, with a refresh for 2021 helping it move into the No. 1 spot for this category. A particular highlight is the car's new infotainment system that allows you to operate most of the car's systems with voice commands. On top of that is the E-Class' peerless combination of a premium interior, a smooth ride, top-notch construction and excellent advanced driver safety aids."

Counterpoint: The E-Class sedan's trunk capacity is small by segment standards, although the available E-Class wagon solves that problem.

—AP



Ram's.

TOP-RATED SUV: 2021 KIA TELLURIDE

Starting MSRP: \$33,160

What Edmunds' experts say: "It seems like Kia went for a 'baby Land Rover' look and nailed it. Inside and out, the three-row midsize Telluride

has a more premium look and feel than the competition. It also boasts an impressively smooth ride, a third-row seat roomy enough for adults, and plenty of features for the money. It was Edmunds Top Rated SUV last year, and it's back in the winner's circle for 2021."

Counterpoint: There are fewer



Vir on why *Outside In* was 'tough'

Stand-up star Vir Das has dropped a new comedy special, *Outside In*. He says he did not plan to make this into a show and that getting it to a point where it felt like he wanted to put it out was tough for him.

The comedy special is created out of 30 virtual shows he did during lockdown and features audience joining in from all over the world. The special captures the mundane aspect of being stuck at home, besides heartwarming stories about everything that lockdown put us through.

The show primarily unfolds through conversations Vir Das has with the audience. Working from home, he said, "wasn't difficult at all," adding, "I had such minimal equipment so it was quite easy to shoot. I put a camera on a stack of books and started to shoot. So, in that sense it was not very difficult at all because the entire show was conversation with people across the world, that was a little bit tough because you ended up with having a lot of footage at the end of it."

He added, "Editing was definitely a little hard. I didn't even plan to put out the special. There were zero plans to make this into a show. I think just getting it to the point where it felt like I wanted to put it out that was tough."

He had earlier shared that the show is dedicated to each one of us who has survived this year. It premieres on Netflix.



Nutrition and health are going to be the key drivers of food trends as strengthening immunity would be the primary consumer focus at least for the next few years as we approach the dawn of 2021.

Food safety in terms of safe and hygienic cooking processes and the kind of food is consumed will be the main emphasis. Health will largely overrule taste because consumers are gradually realising that delicious food but cooked in unhygienic and unsanitary conditions could be extremely damaging to their health and can create problems beyond the joy of consuming delicious food. In India, it is often assumed that salads are most healthy, it is not necessarily true because the water is also unsafe. Therefore, it would be advisable for people to consume cooked/boiled food rather than uncooked/raw food.

GO GREEN

There will be an increased consumption of greens and vegetables which are easy to digest such as millets, wheat and rice and lower intake of fried foods and meats because they are perceived to be less healthy, though it is not always the case.

There will be a spike in the consumption of foods like avocados, fruits and cereal-based options.

IMPORTANCE OF HYGIENE

Due to safety concerns, food from roadside eateries and unregulated food stalls within and around corporate hubs are going to see a significant dip.

Conscious eating

Consumers will be more aware of the risks associated with consumption of outside meals and hence, make the right food choices. For example, eggs have the highest consumption risks, about which, unfortunately, most

HEALTH OVER TASTE

Focus on immunity, nutrition and hygiene will be the primary concerns of the food industry in 2021, says SANJAY KUMAR



people are not aware. It is because of the contamination in eggs and the infection they can potentially carry. Most food service providers do not focus adequately on sanitisation of eggs and this is a cause for concern,

especially in India. Also, an inclination towards vegetarianism is on the rise given the concern around consumption of chicken, the most-widely consumed non-vegetarian food item in India.

TECH-DRIVEN CAFES

Technology will be a key driver of innovation in the food industry and will enable true analysis of consumption patterns, enforcing safety, social distancing norms and monitoring them on digital platforms.

SMARTER USE OF FOOD WASTE

Apart from this, food waste is an increasing and alarming concern at ends, including the food system and the climate. Studies have shown that between 30 to 40 per cent of the food supply gets wasted on a yearly basis. The impact further becomes graver when we look at the water, energy, and land resources which were utilised for producing food that never even gets consumed.

The awareness of food waste is increasing and has already started to take roots in India. As a result, many manufacturers and producers are now making an effort to use ingredients that would normally be wasted. This concept is promising as it promotes good health and reduction of food wastage simultaneously. Hence, the upcycled food is going to be a trend. It is similar to the agenda of upcycled furniture — using a discarded material and turning it into something useable, which means edible when it comes to food.

Companies across the world are innovating and we can today see a yoghurt company using surplus fruit and whey, a bi-product of yoghurt production process, to make probiotic tonics and frozen probiotic pops. Another such brand is using leftover fruits and vegetables to make chips without the use of preservatives and so on. Chefs too are innovating and making optimum use of the peels of vegetables and fruits in dishes as this part of the nature's produce is largely ignored or neglected or used inefficiently by many.

We can't have the luxury of being able to casually toss the scraps. Rather, the businesses that pull ahead are those that make smarter use of 'waste' products. Consumers care about the environment just as much as they care about their food sources. Upcycling combines the two and gives you a powerful messaging tool. And it's only going to get better as more and more consumers understand what goes into upcycling. As there is increasing awareness about upcycled food, people do not want to waste food.

As the food production industry continues to feel the economic and environmental implications of food waste, more companies are creating channels and partnerships to source upcycled ingredients, thus helping to curb the amount of food that goes to waste globally per annum.

Well, consumers in 2021 are expected to make healthier food choices and focus on boosting their immunity to be better equipped for the challenges in the post-pandemic world.

(The writer is CEO & MD, Elixir India.)



Apple of my garden

If you're thinking about growing the fruit, take some time to test the varieties

If you're thinking about growing apples, take some time to test the varieties and talk with the local growers.

I grow an apple called Hudson's Golden Gem and I do so for one reason. Yes, this apple's russeted, golden skin is beautiful. But it's the flavour that puts it above the rest.

When you buy apples at the store or orchard, your choice is limited to the dozen or so varieties that have been chosen because they look pretty, ship well, store well and have flavour with broad appeal.

We gardeners, on the other hand, can plant any of more than 5,000 apple varieties that strike our fancy. And we can plant and harvest without regard to a variety's appearance, shelf-life or other commercial attributes.

What the doyen of horticulture, Liberty Hyde Bailey, said early in the last century about apples applies equally well today — "Why do we need so many kinds? Because there are so many folks. A person has the right to gratify his legitimate tastes (and) should be accorded that privilege."

We can also harvest at each variety's peak of perfection. My Macoun apples, for instance, taste different — and much better — than any Macoun apples I can buy. One reason is because I don't harvest mine until they are so ripe, they are about to or have fallen from the branches.

Here are some other flavourful apples I've planted. They may have other shortcomings, but they all taste great.

Ashmead's Kernel originated more than 200 years ago in a Dr Ashmead's garden in Gloucester in England. The fruit is a russeted golden brown with a reddish-bronze cheek when struck by sunlight. Inside, a delicious, crisp, yellow flesh.

Cox's Orange Pippin is another old variety that originated in England, thanks to a retired brewer named Richard Cox, in 1825. The colour, orange and red, washed with carmine over a yellow background, limits its market. Prized strictly for its flavour, Cox is still grown by British farmers despite some commercial flaws.

Ellison's Orange is a British apple, a relative youngster, that originated in Lincolnshire in 1911. It's a late summer or early fall apple, golden yellow with carmine stripes, with juicy flesh and a vinous flavour that hints of anise. Cox Orange

Pippin is one of its parents.

Not all the good apples come from England. Macoun, for instance, originated in New York, in 1923, with McIntosh as one of its parents. Hudson's Golden Gem originated in an Oregon fencerow in 1931.

Another American apple that I've grown is Newtown Pippin, which originated in New York City (Queens) about 300 years ago. The light yellow fruit, tart with a hint of tangerine, rounds out the apple season by not developing its best flavour until it's been in storage until after Christmas. As testimonial to its good flavour, Newtown Pippins were shipped to England in colonial times.

And superior flavour isn't limited to old apple varieties, British or American. Mutsu (Crispin) came from Japan in 1948. This large, round, yellow apple has a delicate, spicy flavour and a pleasantly coarse texture that is reminiscent of biting into a snowball.

Jonagold was introduced only 40 years ago from the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station. It combines the flavours of its parents, the sprightly Jonathan and the aromatic Golden Delicious. The large fruits are yellow with a splash of light scarlet. Jonagold also has a nice "cracking" flavour — the crisp fruits explode in your mouth with juice and a delicious taste.

I round out my present collection with the variety Liberty, also from New York, dating to 1978. Besides an excellent flavour, not surprising with Macoun as one of its parents, Liberty is resistant to the major apple diseases.

The above is only a sampling of the many great-tasting apple varieties. Take a little time to taste a lot of varieties and speak to locals in your area and you might find other varieties that tickle your tastebuds and are well-suited locally.

Before you get too enthusiastic about planting apples, a word of caution — apples are not an easy fruit to grow in many regions. The plants require annual pruning and pest control. (Even Liberty, although disease-resistant, still gets attacked by insects.)

But if you're willing to learn about pests and make the efforts to thwart them, a few trees of apple varieties selected for excellence in flavour will reward you with years of delectable eating.

—AP

R E C I P E S



CIRRUS CUCUMBER COCKTAIL

WHAT YOU NEED

- Cirrus Vodka
- Lime, squeezed: 1
- Juice of two cucumber wheels, blended with water and strained
- Agave nectar

METHOD

- Muddle all ingredients.
- Shake them with ice.
- Add a splash of soda and serve over ice.
- Garnish with thinly sliced cucumber wheels.

Courtesy: Virginia Cocktails.

MOONG DAL HALWA

WHAT YOU NEED

- Moong dal: 120 gm
- Desi ghee: 125 gm
- Sugar: 100 gm
- Full cream milk: 500 ml
- Saffron strands
- Green cardamom powder: 5 gm
- Sliced assorted nuts: 20 gm
- Water: 50 ml
- Chandi ka vark (optional) for garnish

METHOD

- Wash and soak the moong dal overnight. Drain the water and set aside. If you can't soak the dal overnight, soak for at least four hours.
- Using your blender or food processor, grind the dal using very little water. You can use around three tbsp, start with one tbsp and add more as required to grind.



- Meanwhile, heat ghee in a pan on medium heat. Once the ghee is hot add

the grind dal to the pan.

- Keep stirring and cooking the halwa on low heat. Keep

mashing with a spatula so that there aren't any lumps.

- Heat two cups and two

tbsp milk. Once the milk is warm, take out two tbsp from it in a bowl and add saffron strands to it. Set aside.

- You have to cook on low flame till the raw smell goes away and color changes a bit. This will take around 20 minutes and at 20 minutes you will also notice ghee oozing out of the sides.
- Once the dal is roasted, add the two cups warm milk to it. Cook for three to four minutes. Stir constantly.
- Now add the sugar, soaked saffron milk, crushed cardamom and chopped nuts.

- Cook on low heat, keep stirring. It will be in liquid form as the sugar melts.
- Keep stirring till halwa leaves sides of the pan, around 15-20 minutes.
- Remove heat from pan, transfer halwa to serving bowl, garnish with some nuts and serve immediately.

Courtesy: Vaibhav Bhargava, Band Baja Barati.



BROCCOLI & CORN CUTLET

WHAT YOU NEED

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

METHOD

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

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

Courtesy: Chef Charles Jayakumar.

SMOKED ALMOND RAITA

WHAT YOU NEED

- Almond flakes: ¼ cup
- Yoghurt: 1cup
- Dry roasted jeera powder: ¼ tsp
- Black pepper powder: ¼ tsp
- Salt to taste
- Black salt: ¼ tsp
- Chopped garlic: 2 tsp
- Chopped coriander leaves: 1 tsp
- Sunflower oil: 2 tsp
- Hot coal: 2-3 pieces
- Ghee: 1 tbsp

METHOD

- In a heavy bottom pan, heat the oil. Roast the chopped garlic until golden.



- In a bowl, add the yoghurt and whisk it well.
- Add the jeera powder, black pepper powder, salt, black salt, roasted garlic. Mix gently.
- Take the almond flakes in a bowl.
- Make a small bowl like structure out of the aluminum foil, and place it in the center of the bowl with almond flakes.
- Place 2-3 small pieces of hot coal in the aluminum foil. And pour some ghee on top

of it.

- Cover the almond bowl immediately with aluminum foil and keep it covered for 10-15 minutes. The almonds are smoked.

- Remove the foil and the coal from the almonds and add these smoked almonds to the raita and mix gently.
- Serve the raita topped with chopped fresh coriander leaves and smoked almond flakes.

Courtesy: Ajay Chamoli at Connaught ClubHouse.

Aussies shine under lights

Virat's run out triggers collapse as hosts take advantage with 3 late wickets

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

Virat Kohli's enduring love affair with Adelaide Oval resulted in a classy 74 but his untimely run-out triggered a batting collapse as India ended the opening day at 233 for 6 against Australia in the first Day/Night Test here on Thursday.

Kohli, who looked in complete command, was run out when his deputy Ajinkya Rahane backed out after calling for a single and it happened just before the second new ball was taken.

From a comfortable 188 for 3, India slumped to 206 for 6 as Rahane and Hanuma Vihari (16) found the pace and swing generated by the pink ball under lights too hot to handle.

Ravichandran Ashwin (15 batting) and Wriddhiman Saha (9 batting) saw off the final few overs and also got a few runs.

In conditions, which can't exactly be called batting friendly, Kohli blended the right amount of caution and aggression in his 180-ball innings, showing one and all that he is a few lightyears ahead of his peers when it comes to quality batsmanship.

If Cheteshwar Pujara (43 off 160 balls) let bowlers dictate terms with an ultra-defensive approach, his skipper gave opposition the respect it deserved but also from time to time, played those shots to drive home a point.

His 88-run partnership with Rahane (42 off 91 balls) during the final session nearly put India on even keel but fortunes tilted once Kohli was back in the pavilion. Rahane was soon snapped with the second new ball by Mitchell Starc (2/49), easily the best bowler in action.

Earlier, Pujara's ultra-defensive approach became his own undoing as India literally crawled during the first two



Australia's Nathan Lyon, center, celebrates with teammates after running-out India's Virat Kohli, left, on 1st day of 1st Test AP

Kohli's run out was massive: Lyon

ADELAIDE: The run out of India skipper Virat Kohli was "massive" and it turned to be a momentum-shifting moment, says Nathan Lyon as the hosts snared quick wickets towards the end of the opening day of the first Test to walk off the field smiling on Thursday.

India looked pretty settled at 188 for three when a terrible mix-up between Ajinkya

Rahane and Kohli resulted in run out of the Indian captain, who made 74. When the day's proceedings ended, India were 233 for six.

"It was massive. A wicket like that, run out, specially of Virat is massive. It was good to be back on board after the Ashes. He was batting pretty well, so happy with that," Lyon said after the day's play.

Lyon said the Australian dressing room was happy with the way things panned out for them on Thursday. "Definitely satisfying, but we can get a lot better. We are very happy with where we are at but can keep pushing the boundaries and keep getting better as a bowling unit. We are happy, but still lot of work to do," Lyon, who dismissed Pujara, said.

PTI

No regrets about strategy in first two sessions: Pujara

ADELAIDE: It took Cheteshwar Pujara 148 balls to get his first boundary but not for once did the senior India batsman feel that he batted too slowly during the opening day's play in the first Pink ball Test on Thursday.

Pujara, who scored a sedate 43 off 160 balls, feels that a first innings total of 350 would be very handy for the visitors.

Asked if he felt that he could have paced his innings better, the Saurashtra man had an emphatic no for an answer.

"Not at all. We were in a very good position in the first two sessions," said Pujara, defending the 41 scored by the team in the first session and 66 runs that were scored in the second. "We needed to make sure that we don't lose wickets when the ball is swinging. It was a great day of Test cricket and there are no regrets at all about the strategy. We couldn't have lost more wickets playing shots and getting bowled in a day," said Pujara.

PTI

Ahmedabad to host Mushtaq Ali knock-outs

Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai among venues

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The refurbished Sardar Patel stadium in Ahmedabad will host the knock-out matches of the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 championship, from January 20-31.

As per the letter shared by BCCI secretary Jay Shah to all the secretaries of the state associations, the teams have been divided into six Groups — five Elite Groups and one Plate Group with Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Indore, Chennai and Vadodara being the venues for league games.

Chennai will be hosting the matches of the Plate Group, which comprises eight teams, while the other 30 teams have been divided into five Elite Groups, with each Group, having six teams.

The knock-outs are scheduled to start on January 26, with the quarter-finals to be played on January 26 and 27, while the two semi-finals will be played on January 29 and the final on January 31 in Ahmedabad.

The players will have to undergo three Covid-19 tests on January 2, 4 and 6, the results of which will be declared on the subsequent day.

Even before the knock-outs, the players will be undergoing two Covid-

19 tests, one on January 20 and the other on January 22.

Karnataka, who are the defending champions, have been placed in Elite Group A, and will be playing their matches in Bengaluru. Domestic giants Mumbai have been placed in Elite Group E and will play their matches in Mumbai, while Bengal have been placed in Elite Group B and will play their matches in Kolkata.

GROUPS

Elite Group A: Karnataka, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Railways, Tripura, Jammu & Kashmir (Venue — Bengaluru)

Elite Group B: Odisha, Bengal, Jharkhand, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Hyderabad (Venue — Kolkata)

Elite Group C: Gujarat, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Baroda, Uttarakhand (Venue — Vadodara)

Elite Group D: Services, Saurashtra, Vidarbha, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Goa (Venue — Indore)

Elite Group E: Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Mumbai, Kerala, Puducherry (Venue — Mumbai)

Plate Group: Chandigarh, Meghalaya, Bihar, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh (Venue — Chennai)

Warner targets Boxing Day Test return

AFP ■ MELBOURNE

Star Australian batsman David Warner on Thursday said he was aiming to play the Boxing Day Test against India in Melbourne, calling his injury-enforced absence from the opening clash in Adelaide "devastating."

Warner limped out of Australia's second one-day international against the tourists last month in agony after straining his groin.

"I am (hopeful), that's one that I never want to miss out on," Warner told Australian sports radio network



SEN about the Melbourne Test.

"(Adelaide's) my first missed Test through injury so I'm obviously very disappointed with that. With the big series that it is, it's devastating to miss a Test but I know that the guys who are walking out there are going to put their best foot forward."

With only nine days until the Melbourne Test, Warner said that he planned to increase the intensity of his rehab work.

"Hopefully I can get up and about and start running at a higher tempo," he said. "I managed to get up to 14 kilometres an hour (8.7mph) so I've got to work towards a max of 26 to 30 kilometres an hour by next week. If I can run between wickets and move laterally and do some ground fielding by the end of next week, I should be ready to go. Fingers are crossed."

SINGLES

AUS OPEN 2021 SET TO BEGIN ON FEB 8

MELBOURNE: The Australian Open was pushed back to February 8 on Thursday after weeks of negotiations as coronavirus disruption hits a second Grand Slam tennis season. Men's qualifiers will be held in Doha but Australia will host a series of build-up events including the flagship ATP Cup, the men's ATP Tour said, announcing its early 2021 schedule. Fans are expected to be allowed at Melbourne Park, but players will need to undergo 14 days of quarantine.

AMIR ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT

KARACHI: Pakistan fast bowler Mohammed Amir on Thursday announced a dramatic end to his international cricket career, alleging that he has been "mentally tortured" by the management of his national board, which called the move a personal decision. "I am quitting cricket this time because I have been mentally tortured. I can't bear this torture. I had faced torture from 2010 to 2015, I remained outside cricket for whatever the reason. I served the punishment and did everything," Amir said referring to the ban he served for his involvement in spot-fixing. "But I feel tortured by this continuous talk that PCB has invested (on me). I can't play under this current management."

RUSSIA BANNED FROM USING NAME, FLAG

GENEVA: Russia was banned on Thursday from using its name, flag and anthem at the next two Olympics or at any world championships for the next two years. The Court of Arbitration for Sport's ruling also blocked Russia from bidding to host major sporting events for two years. Russian athletes and teams will still be allowed to compete at Tokyo Olympics and the 2022 Beijing Winter Games, as well as world championships including the 2022 FIFA World Cup, if they are not implicated in doping or covering up positive tests.

4 MEDALS ASSURED AT BOXING WORLD CUP

NEW DELHI: Amit Panghal (52kg) stormed into the final after three other Indian boxers were assured of medals at the World Cup in Cologne on Thursday even as a positive Covid-19 case among the support staff caused some anxiety in the contingent. Asian Games champion Panghal defeated Frenchman Billal Bennama, a Bronze-medallist from the world championship 5-0 in the clash. Earlier, three Indian women (Pooja Rani (75kg), Manisha (57kg) and Simranjeet Kaur (60kg)) were also assured of medals after finding themselves in semifinals when draws were unveiled.

BRASIL F1 GP AT INTERLAGOS UNTIL 2025

PARIS: The Brazilian Grand Prix will remain at its traditional Interlagos circuit in Sao Paulo after promoters signed a five-year deal, Formula One said. F1 said in a statement on Wednesday that the race will take place on Nov 14 next year. The announcement scuppers any plans to move to a new circuit in Rio de Janeiro.

LIVERPOOL BEAT SPURS 2-1 TO TOP EPL

LIVERPOOL: Roberto Firmino scored with a 90th-minute header as Liverpool beat Tottenham 2-1 to climb above its opponent to the top of the Premier League. In a victory reminiscent of so many which carried the Reds to their first title in 30 years last season, Liverpool's relentlessness was rewarded when the Brazil striker powered home a header from Andy Robertson's corner with the clock ticking toward stoppage time on Wednesday.

Agencies



Abhay Sharma makes no bones about the fact that he loves cricket and, if life had worked out according to his plans, he would have wielded the willow. But, by his own admission, he wasn't really good at the game and his father decided to buy him a flute. From that flute, today, Abhay wields brass as he delights audiences with his saxophone. Playing the sax with Delhi-based band, The Revisit Project, Sharma is brutally honest about his younger years and has no qualms about admitting that he started doing it to support his family and himself while he was still in school.

Playing in malls, restaurants and hotels, Sharma says, "I performed at the 1911 Bar at The Imperial Hotel for three years right through college." But then he was discovered by legendary Indian composer trio Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy because his father happened to send them a video of his performance over Facebook. That fortuitous discovery also led to his band where Sharma finds himself now as one of India's top wind instrument artistes.

Playing with some of Bollywood's top composers, Sharma recently accompanied Vishal Bhardwaj for the song *Dhoop Aane Do* that speaks about hope following the pandemic, but says that his main role is to add a 'jazz flavour' to Bollywood sets. But when Bollywood musicians went on foreign tours to ensure that the huge Indian diaspora could also shake a leg once in a while Abhay, now a part of the touring party, got the green light to go all out. "Shankar (Mahadevan) Sir asked me to fill in during a sequence of *Dil Chahta Hai* where there is a solo space."

Writing and arranging his own music is what gives Sharma the most joy these days. "When you perform so many gigs, either as an independent or professional musician, it all gets mixed up eventually," but he does recall one particular experience. In 2013, soon after than man who introduced him to the musical instrument passed away, he found himself playing alongside Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy in Dallas, Texas. "We played this Hemant Kumar classic *Tum Pukaar Lo* and there was a huge jazz element to that as well." More

I PLAYED AT THE 1911 BAR AT THE IMPERIAL HOTEL FOR THREE YEARS RIGHT THROUGH COLLEGE [...] SHANKAR (MAHADEVAN) SIR ASKED ME TO FILL IN DURING A SEQUENCE OF *DIL CHAHTA HAI* WHERE THERE IS A SOLO SPACE

recently, during The Revisit Project at Ashoka University, he says, "To see the crowd enjoy our music is amazing. But the ultimate joy is when I'm writing and composing my own songs."

Driving around Chanakyapuri Sharma points out the Delhi School of Music, where he used to come as a young teenager to learn music, and says, "But then I learned that it is about personal growth and not putting money into grades and stuff." As we begin to play The Revisit Project's *Did You Just Assume My Fender* on the Kia Sonet's seven-speaker BOSE system, Sharma tells us the humorous story behind the song title. "Well, it is a take on the phrase 'Did you just assume my gender?' and we always made fun of our guitarist and what guitar he had, so this is a riff on that", he smirks. The Revisit Project's songs are available on Apple CarPlay,

THE SAX STAR

ABHAY SHARMA wanted to be a cricketer but was no good at it. However, he can create magic with a saxophone



Abhay plays alongside Shankar Mahadevan

Amazon Prime Music and YouTube Music, all of which are compatible through a smartphone connectivity on the Kia Sonet.

"This is the song I make people listen to when they get into our music for the first time," Abhay says but adds that there are far deeper layers to the band's music. "Heck, I even wrote a song about my favourite cricketer Rahul Dravid just called *Sir Dravid*," he says as he suddenly remembers that the next T20 International between India and Australia is going to start shortly.

As for 2020 and the lack of live playing opportunities for musicians, Sharma is oddly pragmatic about it. "Well, one should have been a doomsday prepper but, yes, the

lifeblood of all musicians right now is live performances at corporate events, weddings and stuff like that. Club gigs barely pay and festivals are few and far between." But here, he credits his attitude this year to the fact that he has come from financial problems in the past. "*Pata tha ki ek din koyi siyapa padega* (I knew that there would be trouble one day). So I took this time to practice and record new music. And frankly if you are an independent musician, you've been out of work at times in the past," he shrugs.

Coming back to the Kia Sonet and the BOSE audio system, Sharma's praise is effusive. "Frankly, this is one of the best audio systems I have heard in a car. It is well-balanced and you hear the song the way you want it to sound like. I could not ever have thought that a decade ago a car would have such good inbuilt speakers. And in this price range too." But Sharma admits that his dedication to music has made him less focussed on cars of late. "I used to love cars when I was 18-19, but now it is all music, music, music," he says while trying to come to grips with the Kia Sonet's Intelligent Manual Transmission and adds, "I guess I am a bit of a traditionalist when it comes to a clutch, but this is an innovative system."

Sharma is one of Delhi's top musicians, his music has been heard and loved by fans across the world, and you can hear The Revisit Project at college festivals as well as on online streaming platforms and possibly even Podcasts on various platforms. The Kia Sonet has been India's most popular new vehicle of 2020 setting new records in terms of bookings and pleasing tens of thousands of families with its stellar performance both inside and on the road. ■

