

OPINION 8

UNITY IN
DIVERSITY

WORLD 11

OLI DEFENDS MOVE TO
DISSOLVE PARLIAMENT

SPORT 14

INJURED BABAR, IMAM
OUT OF 1ST NZ TEST

LUCKNOW, TUESDAY DECEMBER 22, 2020; PAGES 14 ₹3



the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

COMFORT
IS BORING:
AMIT SADH
13 VIVACITY

India stops flight of UK virus

Govt on alert, suspends flights to/from UK from Dec 23 to Dec 31

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid fears over the spread of a mutated strain of coronavirus — reportedly 70 per cent more infectious than the one that caused the Covid-19 — India has joined over two dozen countries in suspending all flights from and to the United Kingdom from December 23 to December 31.

Union Health Minister Dr Harshvardhan said the authorities are keeping a close watch and there is no need to panic as the Government is alert on the issue.

The ban will start from Wednesday and passengers arriving from the UK in flights that will land in India by 11.59 pm on Tuesday will undergo mandatory RT-PCR test at the airports concerned. Those who test positive will be sent to institutional quarantine while the rest will be asked to home-isolate for seven days.

Several major European countries including France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Austria, Ireland, Bulgaria, Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland, in addition to countries like Canada, Kuwait, Colombia, Morocco, Iran, Israel, Turkey were among those that shut off travel ties after Prime Minister Boris Johnson warned that a highly infectious new strain of the virus was a danger to the country. Saudi Arabia, notably, has suspended all international flights over the fear of the new strain of coronavirus.

According to the Ministry of Civil Aviation, the Government has decided that all flights originating from the UK to India will be suspended from 11.59 pm December 22 till 11.59 pm on December 31. Consequently, flights from India to the UK will also stand suspended during the period.

“As a measure of abundant precaution, passengers arriving from the UK in all transit flights (flights that have taken off or flights which are reaching India before December 22 at 23.59 hrs) should be subject to mandatory RT-PCR test on arrival at the airports concerned,” the Ministry said.

Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Twitter that those passengers who are found Covid positive would be sent for institutional quarantine set up by the States or Union Territories (UTs). “Those found negative should be advised to isolate at home for 7 days and will be medically monitored by the States/UTs,” Puri added.

Till date, the rules stated that if an international passenger had a Covid negative certificate from a test done 72 hours prior to the journey, s/he need not undergo Covid-19 test again on arrival at the Indian airport.

The decision followed an expert meeting of the Health Ministry’s joint monitoring group (JMG) on Covid-19 which reasoned for abundant caution as the new strain is under review.

The JMG met on Monday to study evidence from the UK which said the bee strain was out of the country and was 70 per cent more infectious than the original.

Continued on Page 11

Covid-19
IN INDIA

TOTAL

CASES: 1,00,75,079

DEATHS: 1,46,134

RECOVERED:

96,35,071

ACTIVE: 2,91,188



STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	18,99,352	48,801	17,89,958
Karnataka	9,10,241	12,016	8,84,205
Andhra Pradesh	8,78,937	7,078	8,67,867
Tamil Nadu	8,07,962	11,995	7,86,472
Kerala	7,05,870	2,817	6,41,285
Delhi	6,17,808	10,304	5,98,249
Uttar Pradesh	5,74,631	8,196	5,49,190
West Bengal	5,38,343	9,401	5,12,039
Odisha	3,26,596	1,892	3,21,647
Rajasthan	2,99,909	2,626	2,85,322
Telangana	2,81,730	1,515	2,73,625
Chhattisgarh	2,68,477	3,199	2,49,218
Haryana	2,58,197	2,832	2,49,840
Bihar	2,47,531	1,358	2,41,358
Gujarat	2,36,259	4,241	2,20,493
Madhya Pradesh	2,32,319	3,490	2,17,775

OK vaccine emergency use after trials on big sample: House Panel

Govt must keep check on pvt hospitals and black marketing of medicines

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A Parliamentary panel on Monday recommended to the Government that any vaccine against Covid-19 should be granted emergency use authorisation only after prop-

er consideration and conducting its trials on a sufficient sample size.

In a report submitted to Rajya Sabha chairman and Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs chaired by senior Congress leader Anand Sharma said there is a need for a comprehensive public health law to keep tabs on private hospitals and check black-marketing of medicines.

The report comes even as the Government considers applications of at least three firms seeking emergency approval to roll out their vaccines against the coronavirus in India.

The Centre on last Tuesday said the applications — by

Bharat Biotech, Serum Institute of India and Pfizer — filed with the Drugs Controller General of India are being examined by the Covid-19 subject expert committee of Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO).

The Parliamentary committee report noted that the CDSCO has given no emergency use authorisation in the past, and suggested that all necessary and mandatory requirements must be duly fulfilled and all trial phases completed.

“Trials on small animals, human trials should be mandatorily undertaken on a sufficient sample size population...if at all emergency authorisation would be given, it should be given by Government with proper consideration and caution and this provision should be used in rarest of the rare cases,” the report reads.

Continued on Page 11

Nothing new in Govt’s proposal, rue farmers

STAFF REPORTER ■
NEW DELHI

Farmers sitting on Delhi’s borders with Haryana and Uttar Pradesh began their day-long “relay” hunger strike at all protest sites on chilling Monday.

Meanwhile, the farmer leaders on Monday claimed that there is nothing new in the Centre’s latest letter to them seeking a date for the next round of talks and said they are ready for talks with the Government, if there is a clear solution.

Scores of farmers from Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan and Haryana continued to join the farmers protest sites at Singhu, Chilla, Tikri and Ghazipur borders across the national Capital.

The farmers started a day-long relay hunger strike on Monday morning at all sites of protest against the new agri laws and at Singhu border, which has become the epic centre site of the protest, a team of

Union leaders say they are ready for talk if concrete plan is submitted, start day-long relay hunger strike along Delhi’s borders

11 members sat on hunger strike in the first batch. Another batch of 11 members will sit on a hunger strike at 11 am on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, several farmers also contributed to the hunger strike and stayed without food for the entire day.

Reacting on the letter by Agriculture Ministry Joint Secretary Vivek Aggarwal, the farmers’ leaders said there is nothing new in the letter and the farmers have already rejected the Government’s proposal to amend the new farm laws.

“In its letter, the Government has asked us to discuss its proposal and convey a date to it for another round of talks. Don’t they know our demand? We just want a complete repeal of the new agriculture laws,” said Abhimanyu Kohar, the farmer leader.

Continued on Page 11

FB restores farmers’ stir page after social media outrage

New Delhi: A day after Facebook temporarily shut down a page on the ongoing farmers agitation against the Centre’s new farm laws, the protestors on Monday said social media was crucial for their movement as it allowed them to tell the “truth in their own words”. The social media giant had Sunday evening shut down the page of ‘Kisan Ekta Morcha’ that shares “official updates” on the agitation, only to restore it three hours later following social media outrage.

The Kisan Ekta Morcha’s Instagram page was also temporarily suspended.

Farmers during their protest against the Center’s new farm laws at Ghazipur border in New Delhi on Monday
Ranjani Dimri | Pioneer

Feel the pain of patients, Prez to KGMU docs

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Emphasising that they have chosen a noble profession, which is not only for earning a livelihood or individual progress, President Ram Nath Kovind asked KGMU students to always remember that patients are not medical cases but sensitive human beings under pain, stress and fear, and should be treated with compassion and competence.

Delivering the 16th KGMU convocation address virtually, the president said a doctor is equated with God and the doctors win the faith of the patients which alone forms the basis of their treatment.

“In the 21st century, communication efforts are being made in the world for coordination of doctors’ capabilities and information technology for better results in medical services. Big data, robotics, artificial intelligence and biosciences

are collectively bringing revolutionary changes in the medical field. KGMU should also focus on high-end research projects and young doctors should be encouraged to have a mindset for research,” Kovind said.

Urging the new generation to take the glorious tradition of KGMU forward, the president said that a number of alumni from the medical university have been making contributions across the globe and they include one Padma Bhushan, six Padma Vibhushan, 28 Padma Shri and 45 BC Roy awardees. The prime responsibility of my own health and that of others at Rashtrapati Bhavan is being looked after by a KGMU alumnus,” he pointed out.

“It has been brought to my notice that 12,500 KGMU alumni are active across the world. These alumni should set up a portal for knowledge

sharing regarding the methodology of treatment, research, critical cases etc. This exchange of information will not only help the young doctors but also will be helpful in other ways,” he added.

The president said many serious patients come to India for treatment because of good services provided at cheaper rates. “According to a study, every seventh doctor in the USA is of Indian origin and American residents have great faith in Indian doctors. Similar is the case in many other countries,” he said.

He said he wants the healthcare sector to be developed in such a way that ‘Cure in India’ becomes a proverb.

Kovind said that in the area of professional education, the participation of women is symbolic of the development taking place in the country.

In the first batch of KGMU, there were only two

girls but I am happy to see that out of the 44 gold medalists today, 21 are girls. They will make a special contribution in the inclusive development of nation,” he said.

The president further said that in 2020, the entire world has been battling the coronavirus, which could have been more threatening for a country like India because of its large and dense population, but right steps taken at right time by the state and Central governments contained the pandemic to a great extent. In UP, KGMU made its special contribution in this area and over nine lakh samples were tested here.

As it is the market was looking for an excuse to correct since the Indian equities have outperformed global markets by a wide margin in recent months. All BSE sectoral indices also closed lower, with metal, oil and gas, utilities, realty, basic materials, industrials, power and bankex falling as much as 6.05 per cent. At the BSE,

Continued on Page 11

Shah lies about Bengal progress, will beat his ‘biggest’ rally: Didi

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

A day after Union Home Minister Amit Shah staged the “biggest roadshow in Bengal,” Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has promised to repeat the feat by the end of this year leading a counter rally at Bolpur along the same route. The rally is likely to be held on December 29, party leaders said.

Hitting out at the BJP leadership (read Shah) for delivering “a garbage of lies,” on Bengal’s development, the Chief Minister said, “Some people are coming from Delhi and discharging a garbage of lies in Bengal,” countering Shah’s claim that the State was lagging far behind in economic development, industrial growth and employment gen-

eration index.

“Contrary to what they said Bengal is number one in many fields,” she said speaking about the Kanyashree, Sabuuj Saathi and other projects for which the State had won international recognition.

Shah had on Sunday attacked the TMC Government for taking Bengal backwards in every respect.

“Why are they telling lies to the people of the State, what gain they will make by telling lies,” Mamata said adding her party was committed to unity and that it would not let people be divided for narrow political gains.

Saying the BJP was a “party of cheating baz (cheats)” Mamata said, “There is a nefarious design to spread communal hatred in Bengal to win elections which is not the culture of

this State. We have always remained united and will continue to do so in future.”

The Chief Minister earlier thanked her counterparts and Opposition leaders from other States saying how “the Central Government is interfering with my Government by transferring three IPS officers.”

Thanking the Chief Minister of Punjab, Delhi, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan for voicing solidarity with Bengal, Mamata said federal ideas were under attack in the present situation and needed to be preserved. She also thanked Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) president MK Stalin who described the “unilateral transfer” of senior Bengal cops by the Centre as “autocratic and anti-federal.”

Continued on Page 11

CAPSULE

‘FRAME CHARGES AGAINST ANDRABI’

New Delhi: A Delhi court on Monday ordered framing of charges against Kashmiri separatist Aasiya Andrabi and her two aides for allegedly waging war against India, sedition and conspiracy to commit acts of terror in the country.

WORLD’S OLDEST GIANT PANDA DIES

Beijing: Xinxing, the world’s oldest giant panda in captivity, has died of multiple organ failure at the age of 38 years and four months, a Chinese zoo announced on Monday.

GORAKHPUR 2007 SERIAL BLAST CONVICT GETS LIFE

Gorakhpur: An Azamgarh resident, convicted for his involvement in the 2007 serial terror blasts in Gorakhpur, was on Monday sentenced to life imprisonment by a court here.

UK virus strain wipes of Indian investors’ ₹6.59 lakh crore

Sensex sinks 1,407 pts to close at 45,553.96

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bears were back on the Dalal Street with renewed ferocity and left a trail of bloodbath that eroded the investors’ wealth by ₹6.59 lakh crore on Monday as equities tanked after the UK reported a new strain of the Covid-19 virus. The new strain of the coronavirus was up to 70 per cent more contagious.

The market gave no corner to hide as the 30-share BSE Sensex plunged 1,406.73 points or 3 per cent to close at 45,553.96 after hitting an all-time high of 47,055.69 during the session. There was a sense of déjà vu as the equities saw the same free for all as witnesses in March



when indices lost nearly 30 per cent in a matter of days.

Following the sharp selling, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms plummeted by ₹6,59,313.65 crore to ₹1,78,79,323.05 crore. In the broader market, the BSE mid-cap and small-cap indices tanked up to 4.57 per cent.

As it is the market was looking for an excuse to correct since the Indian equities have outperformed global markets by a wide margin in recent months. All BSE sectoral indices also closed lower, with metal, oil and gas, utilities, realty, basic materials, industrials, power and bankex falling as much as 6.05 per cent. At the BSE,

2,433 companies declined, while 592 advanced and 167 remained unchanged.

The brutal bloodbath came after the UK reported a new coronavirus strain on Sunday. The Dala street took a further cue from the European markets in the afternoon amid fear of fresh traveling lockdown restrictions across countries. The UK imposed a fresh lockdown in London and southeast England, warning that the potent new strain of the Covid-19 virus was “out of control”. All 30 Sensex companies closed the day with losses, with ONGC tanking the most by 9.15 percent, followed by IndusInd Bank, M&M, SBI, NTPC and ITC which shed up to 6.98 per cent.

Congress veteran Motilal dies day after celebrating his 93rd birthday

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Veteran Congress leader V Motilal Vora passed on Monday, a day after he celebrated his 93rd birthday. Vora, who had recovered from Covid-19 in October, was admitted to Delhi’s Escorts Hospital after he complained of breathlessness on December 19.

Having held one of the most important organisational post of the All India Congress Committee (AICC) treasurer for nearly two decades, Vora was appointed as the general secretary in charge of administration in 2018.

Vora’s successor Ahmed Patel held the post till his death on November 25 this year. He died of post-Covid complications in a Gurugram

MOTILAL VORA
Dec 20, 1927 — Dec 21, 2020

hospital.

A former Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh and a former Governor of Uttar Pradesh, Vora, a Gandhi family loyalist, was known for his relations across political spectrum.

In a party reshuffle carried out by Congress president Sonia Gandhi in September

this year, Vora was not given any party responsibility in view of his advancing age.

A journalist by profession, he worked with Navbharat Times as its correspondent in Bombay (now Mumbai), then served with Navbharat in Nagpur and Raipur and later with Nagpur Times in Nagpur.

NOTICE

I, Sanjay Kumar Singh R/O-2/408, Vivek Khand, Gomti Nagar Lucknow 226010. Have Changed my son's name from Aarayavart Singh/ Aaryavarta Singh to Anyavart Singh. For all future purposes.

NOTICE

I have changed my from Safikun Begum to Safikun Nisha in all future purpose. Safikun Nisha W/o late Murad Bux R/o H.N. 68 Brigadier Saharan Nagar COD Colony, Koyla Nagar Kanpur UP

NOTICE

I Mohd Ahsan S/o Mohd Islam R/o vill basoudhi post KNI thana Gosaiganj Sultanpur hereby declare that my mother's name in my academic records of high school (2006) is incorrectly mentioned as Atiqun Nishan which should read and written as Atikun Nisa.

NOTICE

I, Amisha Rawat, D/o Sanjay Rawat, residing at MM-26, Sector D1, LDA Colony, Kanpur road, Lucknow-226012, have changed my name to Ameesha Rawt vide affidavit dated 15.12.2020 Sworn before Notary R.C.Verma Lucknow.

NOTICE

I swear that due to error in my husband's service record mine name has been wrongly mentioned as Sangeeta Chauhan but the correct name should be Sangeeta Kumari W/O Rajeev Chauhan, vill- Muhammad pur, post- pali, district- Ghazipur, UP, Pin- 275201,

NOTICE

This is to inform that name of ASTITVA BAJPAI S/O BRI-JESH BAJPAI has been wrong marked in my document- Which have to changed ASTITV BAJPAI S/O BRA-JESH KUMAR BAJPAI in all future me & my father name known as same for all purpose.

सूचना

मेरे पिता के सर्विस रिकॉर्ड में मेरा नाम भूलवश मंगल मौर्या हो गया है जिसका अंग्रेजी अक्षर Mangal Mourya है जबकि सही नाम मंगल मोर्य है जिसका अंग्रेजी अक्षर Mangal Maurya है इसे सुधार कर मंगल मोर्य अंग्रेजी अक्षर Mangal Maurya पढ़ा जाए मंगल मोर्य Mangal Maurya पुत्र भरत सिंह ग्राम व पोस्ट असदड़ थाना कंदवा जनपद चंदौली उत्तर प्रदेश।

REQUIRED

Karamat Husain Muslim Girls' P.G. College, Lucknow
Minority Institution
www.karamatgirlspgcollege.org
Mob.8960000429,8960000428

REQUIRED
One Stenographer in Degree Section.
Post is Permanent.
Scale:- Pay Band-1 Rs. 5200-20200 grade Pay Rs. 2800/- and other allowances as admissible by the State Govt. from time to time.
Qualification:- As per qualification laid down in Uttar Pradesh Government Department Stenographer Cadre Service Rules, 2010 or as prescribed by the State Govt. from time to time.
Preference:- Knowledge of Urdu.
Application on prescribed form which can be had from the college on payment of Rs. 500-00 in cash along with latest photograph and attested copies of testimonials, should reach the Office **within three weeks** of First insertion of this advertisement. Candidates already working in any organization should send their application through their employer.
Syed Naved Ahmad Manager

CM Yogi inspects work at Kashi Vishwanath Corridor

PNS ■ VARANASI

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, during his one-day visit to Varanasi on Monday evening, inspected the construction work of Kashi Vishwanath Corridor, a dream project of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, after offering prayer at Kashi Vishwanath Temple.

He directed the officials concerned to complete the work within the scheduled time.

Later, the chief minister distributed blankets to the poor people living in a shelter home built in the Town Hall near Maidagin and sought information from them about the arrangements.

He directed the officials to ensure that no one slept in the open and shift such people to night shelters.

Yogi Adityanath also made a surprise inspection of the under-construction underground parking at Town Hall under the Smart City Scheme at a cost of Rs 2,331.00 lakh. The officials informed him that about 40 per cent work had been completed. The chief minister directed the officials to complete the work by September next year.

Yogi landed at the Police Lines helipad after addressing a meeting at Mau and from there he reached Circuit House where he reviewed the development works.

Earlier, in Mau, the chief minister launched several development projects worth Rs 136.35 crore.

Addressing the gathering, Yogi Adityanath defended the three farm laws, saying that they were for the best interests of the farmers. He said some opposition parties were misleading the farmers for their political gains.

He said that development was the



CM Yogi Adityanath seeing blueprint of under-construction Kashi Vishwanath Corridor in Varanasi on Monday

top priority of the government and after assuming the charge as Prime Minister, Narendra Modi had promised that the benefits of development works would reach every poor.

“For the first time since independence, the benefits of development works have reached the people without any discrimination because for Modi ji, all the 135 crore people of the

“FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE INDEPENDENCE, THE BENEFITS OF DEVELOPMENT WORKS HAVE REACHED THE PEOPLE WITHOUT ANY DISCRIMINATION BECAUSE FOR MODIJI, ALL THE 135 CRORE PEOPLE OF THE COUNTRY ARE HIS FAMILY”

Two sisters die from asphyxiation in bid to keep room warm

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Tragedy hit a family when two sisters died while the eldest of the three was fighting for her life after they suffocated due to a fire lit in the room to beat the cold in Gorakhpur.

The incident took place on Sunday night.

Reports said that Awadhesh Prasad was living with his wife and three daughters —Pratima, Antima and Nidhi — in Majhwaliya hamlet of Barhalganj in Gorakhpur. On Sunday night, while the couple slept in one room, the three sisters slept in another room in which they kept the fire burning to fight the cold.

As the room had no ventilation, due to shortage of oxygen, all the three asphyxiated and fell unconscious.

When the incident was noticed in the wee hours of Monday, the family rushed them to hospital where Antima (18) and Nidhi (17) were pronounced dead while the condition of 22-year-old Pratima was still serious.

A case was registered in this regard and investigations were on.

In a separate incident in Sitapur district, a woman allegedly committed suicide by consuming some poisonous substance after feeding it to her three minor children, two of whom died, police said Monday.

The woman, Neetu, 34, and her children Nitin, 12, Shubh (6) and Lovely (4) were taken to a hospital. Shubh and Lovely died while Neetu and her eldest son were critical and were referred to a hospital in Lucknow.

The incident took place in Ghura

Mau locality of the city on Sunday.

Police are probing the incident and trying to ascertain the cause behind the extreme step.

In another incident in Muzaffarnagar, a woman died while her husband is undergoing treatment at a hospital after they consumed poison on Sunday at Suheli village.

It is suspected to be a case of suicide and police are trying to ascertain the reason for the newlywed couple taking the extreme step, Station House Officer of Purkazi, Jitendra Yadav said.

Hira (26), whose condition is serious, is undergoing treatment at the hospital while Amandeep Kaur (24) was pronounced dead, he said.

The couple were married a month ago.

SP demands action against DM, ADG in Hathras rape case

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Days after the CBI filed a chargesheet against the four accused in the Dalit girl's gang-rape and murder case in Hathras, the Samajwadi Party demanded that action be taken against District Magistrate Praveen Kumar and ADG (Law and Order) Prashant Kumar for giving a clean chit to the accused by claiming that the medical report had not confirmed rape.

SP spokesperson Rajendra Chaudhary said on Monday that the CBI had exposed the lies of the UP government in the Hathras incident and it was now clear how the ruling dispensation could go all out to save the culprits.

He said that it was established now that the district magistrate cremated the victim's body at midnight against the wishes of the family.

“Let's wait for the response of Chief Minister Yogi

Adityanath. He has always been talking about justice and hence it is to be seen whether he sends the ADG and the DM to jail. Will he order an FIR against those BJP leaders who were saying that there was no rape?,” the SP leader said.

Despite previous claims of UP Police brass that the victim had not been gang-raped, the CBI confirmed in the chargesheet that the victim was gang-raped by the four accused on September 14, leading to her death in a Delhi hospital on September 29.

After the girl's death, the Hathras district administration had cremated her body in the dead of the night outside her native village on September 30.

The Yogi government had faced a lot of flak for the case and its handling and the probe was later handed over to the CBI. The CBI set up a team and its Ghaziabad unit carried out the probe.

MSDE skill development programme underway in Varanasi, Chandauli

Lucknow (PNS): Aiming to promote better planning and implementation of skill development programmes, the Union Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) has been conducting a special recognition of prior learning (RPL) programme for workers with the Department of Panchayati Raj (DoPR) in Chandauli and Varanasi.

The programme, implemented under the Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion (SANKALP) Programme of the MSDE, has been rolled out across 167 gram panchayats of Sevapuri and Baragaon blocks of Varanasi and 160 gram panchayats in Niyamatabad and Sahabganj blocks of Chandauli.

The implementing agency, National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), started the training in the first week of October 2020. Since then, considerable progress has been made and nearly 2,250 candidates have been enrolled for training

On Monday, during a virtual event, Union Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Minister Mahendra Nath Pandey felicitated over 900 workers for successfully completing their training with skill certificates and announced the launch of phase II of the programme.

The event was also attended by UP Panchayati Raj Minister Bhupendra Singh Chaudhary and Minister of State for Vocational Education & Skill Development (Independent Charge) Kapil Dev Agarwal.

PGV advises Yogi to emulate Chhattisgarh cow protection

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra wrote to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath expressing concern over bovine deaths and termed pictures of carcasses from Lalitpur's Saujana area on the internet as disturbing.

She advised the chief minister to follow the model of neighbouring Chhattisgarh where Congress was in power.

In a two-page letter, the Congress leader said that details were yet unknown as to under what circumstances the bovines died, but pictures suggested that it might have been due to lack of fodder and water.

Priyanka said that it was sad as these were not the only pictures of its kind and earlier too such pictures had surfaced from various parts of UP. She men-

tioned that incidents like these were discussed for some time but no substantial steps were taken for taking care of the bovines.

“The question then is who is responsible for this?” she asked

The Congress leader said that after coming to power, the chief minister had stressed on protecting cows and making cowsheds but despite announcements, the government efforts had been unsuccessful.

Priyanka reminded the chief minister that the Congress regime in Chhattisgarh had launched ‘Go-dhan Nyay Yojana’ to resolve the problem and the UP government could emulate it.

“The scheme in Chhattisgarh makes way for the purchase of cow dung which is converted into fertiliser and then sold. This makes ‘gaushalas’ self-reliant,” she stated.

100 gram panchayats in Gorakhpur to be made model villages

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Around one hundred gram panchayats in Gorakhpur district administration will be developed as model villages and made self-sufficient so that they become examples for other panchayats.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has asked the Gorakhpur district administration to use performance grants and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds in gram panchayats to develop them as model villages.

The chief minister said that ponds, drainage, construction of roads as well as open gym, reading room, sports ground, water harvesting for conservation would be the key features of these model villages.

Besides, construction of drains, RO water plant, primary schools, smart class, Anganwadi centres, health centres, community building, procession and renovation work would also be done.

“Funds received under performance grant and CSR funds should be used in these villages so that it could generate income, making the locals self-sufficient,” Yogi said. Gorakhpur's District Magistrate Vijayendra Pandian said that a DPR (detailed project report) had been prepared for setting up the model villages.

“Performance grants have been given to 37 gram panchayats. By providing administrative and financial approval for these works worth Rs 30.82 crore, the gram panchayats have been instructed to start work,” he said.

In gram panchayats, all works, including RO plant, street light, open gym, sports ground, smart classes, were being done so that they come up as ‘Adarsh Gram Panchayats’.

SP MLA’s grandson arrested for rape

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Tailed Samajwadi Party legislator from Bhadohi, Vijay Mishra's grandson Vikas Mishra was arrested near Kaulapur railway crossing of Bhadohi on Monday on charges of gang-raping a female singer from Varanasi on October 18.

A female singer from Varanasi's Jaitpura area had accused Gyanpur MLA Vijay Mishra, his son and his nephew's son Vikas of gang-raping her and a case was registered at Gopiganj police station on October 18.

Vijay Mishra was arrested by the UP Police from Agar Malwa district of Madhya Pradesh in a case relating to a property dispute with a relative and is presently lodged in Agra jail.

His son and grandson Vikas were also named in the above case but were on the lam.

On Monday, the Bhadohi police received a tip- off about Vikas Mishra's presence near Kaulapur railway crossing after which he was arrested and sent to jail.

Meanwhile in Rampur, a case has been registered against a quack (fake doctor) for allegedly raping a minor girl in Milak area over a period of time on the pretext of treating her for seizures.

“A woman has given a complaint at Milak police station stating that her minor daughter was raped by a quack who also performs ‘tantra kriya’ and also kept her as his wife. A case has been registered based on her complaint and action is being taken,” Circle Officer Srikant Prajapati said on Monday.

The girl's parents took her to

the man after she complained of seizures.

The quack has also sent a notice to the girl's parents claiming her as his wife. The police are investigating the case.

In another case in Pratapgarh, two men were arrested for allegedly gang-raping a 40-year-old woman, police said.

The arrests were made on Saturday.

Superintendent of Police Anurag Arya said the police received information on Saturday that two men had raped the woman and threatened to kill her on December 13.

After this, the two accused were arrested, he said.

The woman was sent for a medical examination.

Meanwhile, two brothers were on Monday arrested for allegedly killing their parents in Sarjapur Gulal village in Budaun district last week to get ownership of their property.

The accused, Sumit and Vikram, had killed their parents Rajendra (60) and Rajvati (55) on December 15 night by allegedly strangulating them to death and later setting them afire by putting plastic and other items over them, Superintendent of Police at Budaun, Sankalp Sharma, said.

At the time of the incident, the neighbours heard cries and rushed to the house to find Rajendra and Rajvati severely burnt, the police said, adding that the couple died before they could be taken to a hospital.

Prima facie it appeared to be a case of suicide but during probe police suspected foul play and later arrested the sons of the deceased.

CENTRAL ORGANISATION FOR RAILWAY ELECTRIFICATION
1, Nawab Yusuf Road, Civil Lines, Prayagraj-211001
Website: www.core.indianrailways.gov.in
Fax No.-0532-2408826, Email: dycseohe2@gmail.com

CORRIGENDUM No.-2

Corrigendum Publish Date: 18.12.2020, 18:29
Tender No.: ELCORE-OHE-EPC-09A-Mod-I (Open Tender)
Closing Date/Time: 12.01.2021, 15:00
Name of Work: EPC Tender: Request for Proposal For Electrification of Railway Lines in Birur (Excl.)-Talaguppa (Incl.), Chikbanevar (Excl.)-Hassan (Excl.), Chikmagalur (Incl.)-Kaddur (Incl.) and Hospet (Excl.)-Swamihalli (Incl.) Sections of South Western Railway On Engineering, Procurement & Construction (EPC) Mode. [Bid/Package No. EPC-09A-Mod-I].
NIT Header: Items Modified

Field Name	Existing Value	Modified Value
Tender Closing Date Time	05.01.2021 15.00	12.01.2021 15.00
Bidding Start Date	22.12.2020	29.12.2020

The complete information of above Tender are seen on website www.ireps.gov.in.
No. PR/618/2020
R.D. Adv

"Serving Customers with a Smile"

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY, PRAYAGRAJ
E-Tender Notice No.: 146-Med./San./TA & RRC office/16/2020 Date: 17.12.2020
Notice Inviting Tender (E-Tendering)
Chief Medical Superintendent, North Central Railway, Prayagraj, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites the following E-Tender in Single Two packet system on prescribed form the details of the tenders are under :-

Tender No.	Name of work	Approx. Cost of Work (₹)	Earnest Money (₹)
TA & RRC office/ 16/2020	Complete Sanitation work of Traffic Account office, RRC building, ADEN's office at Prayagraj.	₹ 46,53,523.70	₹ 93,100.00

Cost of Tender Form (₹) : ₹3,000.00; **Type of Tender :** Single packet System; **Definition of Similar work for 35% Minimum eligibility criteria :** Complete sanitation work of Railway colonies other residential colonies, service building, Hospital etc.; **Completion period :** 730 days from the date of issue of LOA; **Date & Time of Tender opening : 15.01.2021 after 13:30 hours; Note:-** 1. The complete information along with tender document of above E-Tenders in Single packet system will be available on website www.ireps.gov.in, from 01.01.2021 on 00.01 hrs. up to 13:30 hrs. on 15.01.2021 due date of tender opening. 2. Bids other than in the form of E-Bids shall not be accepted against above tenders. For this purpose, Vendors/Bidders are required to get themselves registered with IREPS website along with Digital Signature Certificates issued by CCA under IT Act-2000. 3. Rates entered into financial rate page and duly signed digitally shall be considered. Rates and any other financial entry in any other form/letter head if attached by Vendors/Bidders shall be straightway ignored and shall not be considered. 4. Documents being attached should be sign by the tenderer on its body. 5. This tender notice has also been uploaded on website www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in. 6. Payment of Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) and Tender Document Cost (TDC) in respect of e-Tendering shall be accepted through net banking or payment gateway only. 7. In case of any difficulty helpdesk available on the website of IREPS may be approached. 8. Tenderer online can be submitted upto 13:30 hrs. on 15.01.2021. **1398/2020 V**

f North Central Railways @CPRNCR

ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES
ANSARI NAGAR, NEW DELHI - 110 608
EXAMINATION SECTION
Advertisement No. 200/2020

No.F.AIIMS/Exam.Sec./Adv./4-11(SR/SD-JAN-21)/2020 Date: 18.12.2020

Competitive Examination (Stage-I) for Recruitment to the post of Senior Residents / Senior Demonstrators for the January 2021 session at AIIMS, New Delhi

Online applications are invited from Indian Citizens as per Govt. of India Residency Scheme, for the tenure posts of Senior Residents/Senior Demonstrators for a maximum period upto 3 years. These posts include existing vacant posts, backlog vacancies of SC, ST, OBC and the posts which are likely to fall vacant (Stage-I) between **01.01.2021 to 30.06.2021**. Details of posts can be seen on website. The Examination will be conducted in online (CBT) mode only followed by Interview (Stage-II) of eligible candidate.

Online Registration for applications		
Opens on	Closes on	
18 th December, 2020 (Friday)	07 th January, 2021 at 5:00 pm (Thursday)	
Date of Entrance Examination		
Date of Exam	Duration of Exam.	Exam City
Date of Exam will be declared later	10:00 AM to 11:30 AM	4 Metro cities in India (Delhi/NCR, Mumbai, Kolkata & Chennai)

Admit cards of eligible candidates will only be uploaded on the website. If the status of Registration Form or Admit Card is not available on website, applicant should immediately write an email **through Registered email** to the Assistant Controller (Examinations), AIIMS, New Delhi-110608 on aiims_srsdexams@gmail.com along with candidate name, exam/test, subject applied, candidate ID and specific query/clarification.
Important : For Prospectus, number of post, eligibility criteria, detailed information etc. please visit the website www.aiimsexams.org. All applicants are required to visit the website regularly since all subsequent Corrigendum/Addendum/Updates will be uploaded in the website only.
[davp 17/112/11/0023/2021] **ASSISTANT CONTROLLER (EXAMS.)**

People alerted in wake of mutated coronavirus strand

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government has alerted the people of the state in the wake of the rapid spread of a mutated strand of novel coronavirus in the United Kingdom. Talking to mediapersons in Lucknow on Monday, Additional Chief Secretary (Information) Navneet Sehgal said that the government was closely monitoring the situation after reports of a new mutated strand of novel coronavirus in the UK. “As a precautionary measure, the Union government has already stopped all flights from the UK, while the UP government is also monitoring the situation. I urge the people not to let their guard down against the viral infection at this juncture,” Sehgal said.

Meanwhile, the number of active COVID-19 cases further dipped in the state and on Sunday. With 1,018 new cases, the tally of positive cases in Uttar Pradesh went up to 5.74 lakh on Monday evening.

“There are 16,822 active cases out of which 7,192 are in home isolation, 1,792 in private hospitals while the rest are undergoing treatment at government-run Covid hospitals. The recovery rate has also gone up to 95.65 per cent with 1,397 people recovering during the past 24 hours,” said Additional Chief Secretary (Health) Amit Mohan Prasad. He said that labs across the state tested 1.25 Covid samples on Sunday. On the surveillance front, around 4.91 lakh teams visited 1.76 lakh areas and covered 3.05 crore houses to check the health of over 14.92 crore people. On Monday, 190 persons tested positive for coronavirus in Lucknow, taking the city tally to 76,697. Besides, 251 patients recovered as the recov-

ery figures climbed to 72,831. With five more deaths, Lucknow’s death toll stands at 1087 while there are 2,779 active cases in the district.

A senior official from the CMO office informed that amongst those who tested positive included 28 from Gomtinagar, 24 from Indiranagar, 15 from Rae Bareilly road, 14 from Jankipuram, 12 from Ashiyana, 10 each from Aliganj and Chowk.

Meanwhile, with the COVID-19 vaccine in sight, the Uttar Pradesh government has stepped up preparations to combat the infection by setting up 35,000 vaccine stores and carrying out the exercise by a special force comprising police, health workers, voluntary organisations and government employees. Training programmes have also been started at the district level so that people could be made aware of every information related to the COVID-19 vaccine. A vaccination team accompanied by a police constable and home guard will administer 100 people daily and the incumbents will be informed about the time, place and date over the phone. After vaccination, each recipient will have to stay at the vaccination centre for 30 minutes. As many as 35,000 centres will be set up for storage of COVID-19 vaccine across the state. Over six crore syringes would be required for the vaccination exercise and out of this, 4.5 crore syringes have been allocated.

A senior official said that ice lined refrigerators and deep freezers were being provided by the Government of India for storage of the vaccine. “The storage capacity for 2.5 lakh litres of vaccine has been created in the state,” he said.

Guv for ideal environment with no discrimination

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Calling for an ideal environment where no discrimination of any kind prevails, Governor Anandiben Patel, while addressing the students and faculty members of KGMU at the 16th convocation on Monday, said education means creating sensitivity. Stressing on the importance of coordination, she said there should be no groupism or casteism in the educational institutes as it has led to several problems in the country.

The governor said it was a historic moment because the students were receiving medals after five years of hard work.

“Getting a gold medal or not is not important; what is important is to imbibe what has been taught to you all these years,” she said. Patel said that teachers, technicians and people working anywhere in KGMU need to be congratulated because of their efforts.

“There are four medical universities in the state — KGMU, SGPGI, Atal Bihari Vajpayee Medical University and RMLIMS — and they can come together to work for the welfare of women by setting up medical camps at PHCs and CHCs. There are a number of women suffering from breast and cervical cancers, and doctors from these universities should set up camps so that treatment can be given accordingly as many of these women are not aware of the diseases and tend to ignore the symptoms. With these camps, we can identify their problems and treat them accordingly because if a woman is saved, the family is saved. It would be a big service and would also get you the blessings,” she said.

Urging the students to carry out a study on the differently-abled children, she said it would help prevent disabilities.

“Ensure that there should be 100 percent institutional delivery and decrease in maternal mortality rate. Women are hesitant about sharing their problems and nobody talks about them in their families,” she said.



“The state government is spending to the tune of Rs 50 lakh per student, and this comes from the hard earned money of the general public paying their taxes. This increases the duties of those who become doctors and nurses. The society gives you great respect and people treat you as God. You should also know how to behave with them. Patients come from all places to hospitals without money but with faith that doctors would find a solution,” she said. The governor said teachers remove such bad traditions and this

KGMU CONVOCATION

courage to take up a fight comes from education,” she added. About the history of KGMU, the governor said that in 1870, Maharaja Vijay Nagran dreamt to setting up a medical college in Lucknow. “It shows that our country had such people with vision even 200 years ago. He also donated Rs 3 lakh in those times although he could not construct the college during his lifetime. In 1905, Prince Wales got the building constructed at the cost of Rs 11 lakh, but could not inaugurate it,” she pointed out.

where she came from, the governor said people have to be made aware and they should resist bad traditions.

“Life is not easy and when we make efforts to come out of a problem, we will make progress. There will be problems in your life but you have to learn to take a stand,” she told the students. “Say no to dowry and ask your parents not to take or offer dowry. Only then you will be doctors in true sense. Have the courage to say how can we

remove such bad traditions and this

courage to take up a fight comes from education,” she added. About the history of KGMU, the governor said that in 1870, Maharaja Vijay Nagran dreamt to setting up a medical college in Lucknow. “It shows that our country had such people with vision even 200 years ago. He also donated Rs 3 lakh in those times although he could not construct the college during his lifetime. In 1905, Prince Wales got the building constructed at the cost of Rs 11 lakh, but could not inaugurate it,” she pointed out.

Toppers keen on taking up specialised courses

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The toppers, who were awarded medals at the 16th convocation of KGMU on Monday, showed eagerness to take up specialised courses in the light of the global Covid pandemic.

Nitin Bharti, who received 11 gold medals, including the prestigious Hewett medal, also got a standing ovation. He said he could not describe the feeling in words.

“Specialisation is a necessity and I want to take up some courses which can help in the battle against diseases like Covid-19. A lot of research is taking place and one needs to be updated,” he said. He said people have started showing more respect to doctors in these times.

Regarding working in rural areas, he said he was

keen on helping the poor. “I am thinking of opening free-of-cost clinics for the poor for giving free consultations,” he said. On whether the current generation is keen on serving the people, he said all the students want to serve the society to begin with but changes take place along the way, but it varies from person to person and cannot be generalised.

Akanksha, who got seven medals, said she was looking forward to bigger things ahead. She said she is keen on taking up specialised courses in the aftermath of the Covid pandemic. “New challenges are important in life and this pandemic has been a great challenge. These times have made me realise that no field of medical is lesser. Look at the microbiology lab, which has become so important,” she

said. She said she wanted to serve her alma mater because she was in love with it. “I have always been focused on doing my job to the best of my ability and leaving the rest to God. I simply recalled and recollected whatever my teachers taught me in the class. We have great teachers at KGMU,” she said while talking about her success mantra.

Anjali Mall, who came up trumps in the BDS course and won seven medals, said she is opting for prosthodontics to bring a smile on the faces of senior citizens. Regarding the pandemic situation, she said that under the Public Health department, they were posted in rural areas, coming in contact with Covid-19 patients and treating them. “I would like to take up specialised courses for battling such diseases,” she said.



The Met department has forecast severe cold day conditions in Lucknow on Tuesday. On Monday, the city recorded the minimum temperature at 4.4 degree Celsius, which was 4.3 degrees below normal. The coldest in the state was Churk at 3.1 degree Celsius. There was thick fog cover in the city in the morning and night

Track patrolling intensified

Lucknow (PNS): The Lucknow division of Northern Railways has intensified track patrolling in the chilling weather these days. According to a spokesman, a total of 486 patrolmen are conducting inspection and doing track maintenance work, wherever required. He said rail tracks develop changes, including rail fracture, during the winter season due to the dip in temperature.

“These trained patrolmen conduct inspection during this foggy weather from 11 pm to 7 am. They are provided with retro-reflective tapes and laced with high-quality jackets so that they can be identified from a certain distance. They are also equipped with GPS and are monitored by the control room,” the spokesman said.

DRM, Lucknow Dipathi said the LN, Sanjay Trivathi is taking all the measures to ensure safe train operations during the ongoing winter season. “The patrolmen have been provided with high-quality jackets and other items they need for inspection and maintenance work,” he added.

Time to celebrate Xmas, new year in style

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Christmas and new year festivities have been organised with all Covid-19 precautions at the Taj Mahal Hotel for people who want to ring in the new year in style.

Spokesperson Shabhat Husain said people can celebrate at Sahib Café, Alfresco and Oudhyana depending on their choice. He said that apart from a well-crafted menu by chefs, visitors can also enjoy the music in the background.

“On Christmas eve, we will have carol singing and piano music in the lobby and a four-piece band will regale the guests at the Alfresco. Live ghazal singing will be arranged at the Oudhyana. On new year eve, it will be a five-piece band at the Alfresco accompanied by both Indian and western singing” he said. Husain said they have been using only 45 percent of their present capacity after reopening of the hotels and will stick to the same. “All Covid protocols will be followed and it will be on the first-come-first-served basis and no entry thereafter. There will be no dance floor or DJs,” he said.

The hotel has planned a fes-

tive buffet dinner for Christmas eve and new year eve at the ‘All-day dining’ complete with roast turkey with cranberry sauce, yule log and plum puddings.

The other yummy delights will include pesto grilled chicken, pan-fried salmon, green Thai curry, pan-seared sole, tortilla crusted chicken with a number of delicious appetisers such as prawns & beans quesadillas & angara chicken tikka, honey chilly water chestnuts &

cheese croquettes and exotic salads such as creamy farfalle and asparagus salad, fusilli in tomato olive dressing and couscous mint with vegetables. The desserts include a delicious array of cakes such as carrot cakes, coffee cashewnut cakes, raspberry baked cheesecakes, exotic fruit tart and salted caramel pie. The Oudhyana will be serving ‘a la carte’ on Christmas eve but will have elaborate buffet on the new year eve for guests.



UCO BANK

ZONAL OFFICE : DHANSHREE COMPLEX, 1st FLOOR, D-63/8-1M, TULSIPUR, MAHMOORGANJ, VARANASI

PUBLIC NOTICE FOR E-AUCTION FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES
LAST DATE & TIME OF SUBMISSION OF EMD (THROUGH NEFT/RTGS) AND DOCUMENTS 04/01/2021 UPTO 5:00 PM

Sr. No.	Name of Branch Borrower (s) Guarantor(s)	Details of Immovable Properties	Possession or Date/ Status of Possession (Physical or Symbolic)	Demand Notice Date & Outstanding Amount	Reserve Price	Detail of Officer Concerned	Date & Time Of E-Auction
					EMD Bid Increase Amount		
1.	Allahabad	Part of Arazi N o . 1 0 , measuring an area of 245.94 sq Mtr. with building thereon situated at mauza chak Satal Mishra, Pargana- Arai, Tehsil- Karchhana, Allahabad. Standing in the name of Mrs. Savitri Devi Shukla W/o Lalji Shukla registered vide document no. 1529/1995, Dated 26.07.1995, Sub registrar Office- Karchhna, Allahabad Boundaries : North : Part of Arazi No., South : Aam Rasta, East : Aam Rasta, West : Plot of Shiv Prasad.	11.03.2019 (Symbolic)	14.12.2018 Rs. 51,15,963.72/- Interest with future incidental charges w.e.f 1.12.2018 together with other charges	₹ 88.27 Lacs ₹ 8.82 Lacs Rs. 0.10 Lacs	Niraj Sachan (M) 9452858854 E-mail: allaha@ucobank.co.in	08.01.2021 11.00 AM to 02.00 PM.
2.	Civil Lines	All part and parcel of M/s O G Power System Private Limite, Mr. om Prakash Kesharwani (Director M/s O G Power System Private Ltd.) and Mrs. Vijay Laxmi Devi (Director M/s O G Power System Private Limited) R/o 9-A HIG, ADA Colony, Naini, Allahabad.	15.05.2019 (Symbolic)	14.12.2018 Rs. 97,67,991.50	Rs. 47.00 Lacs Rs. 4.70 Lacs Rs. 0.10 Lacs	Niraj Sachan (M) 9452858854 E-mail: allaha@ucobank.co.in	08.01.2021 11.00 AM to 02.00 PM.

For detailed terms & conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in UCO Bank secured website i.e. <https://ucobank.com> and <https://ibapi.in>
Date : 21-12-2020 Place : Varanasi

Authorised Officer- UCO Bank



DM KR Sharma distributing blankets among Divyangs in Varanasi on Monday

Pioneer

DC inspects shelter homes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

After facing criticisms from different corners, the local administration has now intensified its activities to provide relief to the poor as the mercury continued declining due to heavy snowfall in the parts of northern India. In this direction, the District Magistrate (DM) Kaushal Raj Sharma distributed blankets to some Divyangs (physically challenged) and other poor at a brief function held at Rifle Club on Monday, while Divisional Commissioner (DC) Deepak Agrawal, along with DM and Municipal Commissioner (MC) Gaurang Rathi on Sunday night inspected the shelter homes at Shivdaspur, Lahartara, Maidagin and Machaudari.

Meanwhile, dense foggy

conditions continued to affect the normal life badly, slowing down the speed of trains and road transportation apart from delaying the arrivals of several flights, scheduled to land especially during the morning hours.

Three flights coming from Delhi (6E-671), Bengaluru (6E-224) and Kolkota (6E-428) have been cancelled while about a dozen others arrived here late.

According to information received from Lal Bahadur Shastri International Airport, Babatpur, the flights scheduled to arrive here during morning hours which were delayed included UK-621, UA-7688, SG-704, 6E-6829, AI-695, G8-349 (all from Mumbai), GE-2136 from Delhi, G8-767, SG-2971 from Ahmedabad, 6E-897 from

Bengaluru, 6E-216 from Hyderabad and 6E-513 from Chennai.

Earlier, while inspecting the shelter houses at different places in the city, the DC directed the Nagar Nigam officers to ensure all the necessary arrangements for the people staying there during the night hours and to burn adequate numbers of bonfires to help the poor and vendors get relief from chilly weather conditions. He also said that no person should be found sleeping in the open on the roadsides and all such persons should be immediately shifted to the shelter houses where proper arrangements for laying and covering should be ensured. No laxity will be tolerated in this direction, he said, asking the concerned officers that the shelter homes should also have

clean toilets.

Meanwhile, due to foggy conditions, road mishaps took place at many places and a major such accident was seen at National Highway near Mirza Murad when about a dozen vehicles dashed against each other due to very low visibility in foggy conditions a day ago. In the accident, several persons sustained serious injuries.

The dense fog has also slowed down the speed of trains and buses. Several night buses were delayed by hours to reach their destinations. The foggy conditions and cold wave also affected the life of internationally famous Ganga ghats here. According to the Met department, the foggy conditions will continue to grip the region for at least two more days.

45 new Covid cases in Varanasi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

As many as 45 new patients have been detected in the district on Monday, increasing the total number to 20,688. The day also saw one more death, increasing the toll to 344. During the day, the follow-up negative reports included 66 and all of them have been recovered from home isolation, increasing the number to 17,052. As no patient has been discharged from any hospital, the number of recovered patients from the hospitals remained at 2,898 respectively. The total number of patients who have been recovered so far is 19,950, leaving 394 active cases. The recovery rate is 96.43 per cent, while the mor-

tality rate is 1.66 per cent.

Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr VB Singh has informed that in the first report of the day, 24 positive patients were found out of 2,045 reports received.

Till then, the total test reports received were 4,89,752 and the results of 2,768 are awaited. Out of them, 4,69,085 were negative, while 20,667 positive.

The total number of samples collected was 5,15,317. Earlier, a female aged 65 and a male (40) from Meerapur Basahi and DLW respectively succumbed to COVID-19 at Sir Sundarlal Hospital, Banaras Hindu University (SSH BHU). With the addition of eight new red zones, the total number of

hotspots has increased to 2,611 including 204 red zones. There are 2,407 green zones with eight new ones.

Meanwhile, with a view to increase the acceptance of family planning services under the new initiative of Health department, 'Happy Family Day' was started on the 21st of last month. In continuation of this sequence, on Monday, the day was celebrated at all the eight rural primary and community health centres (PHCs/CHCs), 24 urban primary health centres (UPHCs) and District Women's Hospital at Kabirchaura and Lal Bahadur Shastri Hospital at Ramnagar here on Monday. CMO inspected the Chowkaghat PHC. On this occasion, bene-

ficiaries were informed about the means of family planning by Dr Rashmi.

Dr Rajesh Prasad, Nodal Officer and ACO of Family Welfare Programme, said that on the occasion, every health unit of the district will have complex pregnancy maternities, qualified couples with three or more children and newly married couples after 1st January 2020. Counselling is being done in a phased manner by ASHA workers. District Programme Manager (DPM) Santosh Singh and District Family Planning Specialist inspected the day being celebrated at the District Women's Hospital, CHC Cholaapur, PHC Chiragaon and Family Service Centre, Maldahia.

No Christmas Mela this year

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Famous Christmas Mela at St Mary's Cathedral, which attracts huge gathering of visitors during three days, will not be held this year due to prevailing global coronavirus pandemic, informed the Bishop of Varanasi Diocese Eugene Joseph while talking to the reporters here on Monday. 'We have to follow standard operating procedures (SPO) given by the government to protect ourselves and others. Thus, the liturgical services (Mass) will be held at mid-night on December 24, instead it will be held after the dusk and conclude before 9 pm in all the churches of our Diocese,' said the Bishop.

'Throughout this holy season, Christians will pray in a special way for our country, and Varanasi in particular. All pray that the motherland may be blessed with lasting peace, that harmony and brotherhood may reign supreme in our nation and that all of us specially our young people may look forward to life with hope,' he said, adding that during the Christmas days, the Catholic community involves in various works of mercy towards the most needy in the neighbour-



Bishop of Varanasi Diocese Eugene Joseph addressing a press conference on Monday

Pioneer

hood, in slums, prisons, orphanages etc providing food and clothing.

According to him, in concrete action of solidarity with the weakest people, the Diocese will hold a festival celebration for a limited number not more than 100 people representing the various communities and NGOs on January 2 next year at St Mary's Cathedral from 9 am to 1 pm keeping social distance in mind.

DIESEL-RUN BOATS TO BE CONVERTED INTO CNG: In an effort to make the holy river Ganga free from pollution and make the pollution-free air at the ghats, the boats run by diesel will be converted into CNG in phases.

The efforts to make Ganga pollution-free are going on and in this order; the boats run by diesel are to be converted into CNG.

There are 1,800 diesel based boats being run by boatmen in Ganga at various ghats in the city and out of them, 500 boats will be converted into CNG under the first phase in the two-three months to come, the District Magistrate Kaushal Raj Sharma informed adding, these boats will be named as 'Green Boats'.

The rest of boats will be converted into CNG under the next phases and to fill the CNG gas, the filling station will also be established by GAIL at a ghat, the DM informed fur-

ther.

The boats leak diesel and thus, it is harming the ecosystem of the holy river, the DM said adding, the smoke emitting from these boats also causes air pollution at ghats besides causing hazardous for the health of tourists and pilgrims that turn up at the ghats as the smoke remains at low level in the cold.

There is one-year plan of the development of the Khidkiya Ghat and the CNG station will start functioning in three-four months to come and thereafter, the work to convert the boats into CNG will also begin, the DM informed saying, it will also benefit the boatmen besides those who come to ghats to have a glance of the beauty of nature and the entire city too.

WEBINAR HELD: One-day webinar on 'Data Science, Artificial Intelligence and Applications' was held at DST-Centre for Interdisciplinary Mathematical Sciences (CIMS), Banaras Hindu University (BHU) on Sunday. This event was inaugurated by Prof AK Tripathi, Director, Institute of Science and Prof M Joshi, Dean, Faculty of Science. Prof TV Vijay Kumar, JNU was the keynote speaker.

60 more test positive in Prayagraj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

As many as 60 new cases of Corona infection were reported in the Prayagraj district late in the night. About 40 people defeated the infection. According to CMO Dr Prabhakar Rai with 60 new Covid positives in the district the figure of the infected has reached 27,610. Of these, 18 patients were discharged from Covid hospitals. Home isolation of 22 people completed. So far the number of those who beat Corona has increased to 26,529.

The CMO said that the number of deaths due to Covid infection on Sunday has increased to 365. He said that Covid testing of 4,531 people was conducted in the district.

A special testing operation was conducted at the ECC and CRPF camps.

After confirmation of Covid infection in people with no symptoms at the ECC and CRPF camps, the Health department decided to conduct random checks at public and crowded places. Samples will be sent for the Covid testing by sending teams to offices with more than a hundred employees. On every Saturday and Sunday, the CMO has decided to get Covid Protocol compliance checked in private hospitals.

SAHAI MADE ACO OF PRATAPGARH: The Health department on Saturday promoted seven of the provincial medical cadre, with seven being shifted to different hospitals. It also

includes Dr Rishi Sahai, the Nodal Officer of Corona. He has been made ACO of Pratapgarh.

This promotion of medical officers has been done in the fourth level.

According to the information of the Health department, Dr Arvind Kumar, Surgeon posted at Kotwan CHC, has been appointed as Senior Counselor at Beli Hospital, Dr Abdul Qadir, Anesthetist posted at District Joint Hospital, Sonbhadra and Dr Shambhu Saran, posted in the Eye Hospital, has been posted at Beli Hospital as a senior consultants.

Deputy CMO Dr Rajesh Kumar has been appointed as Senior Consultant in Fatehpur. While Nodal Officer of Corona, Dr Rishi Sahay has

been posted at ACO of Pratapgarh. Apart from this, Dr Neelima Dhawan, posted at Karchana CHC, was made Senior Counselor at Dufferin, Orthopedic Surgeon Dr Krishna Kumar posted at Colvin was appointed as Senior Consultant at Beli, Dr Shailendra Kushwaha, pathologist posted at Beli was appointed as Senior Counselor at District Hospital Pratapgarh, TB Dr Ramesh Kumar Pandey of the hospital has been appointed as Senior Consultant in District Hospital Pratapgarh. Additional Director Health Dr Mohan Ji Srivastava said that the government had promoted all these doctors in the past. On Saturday, the list has been released and new deployment has been done.

Unauthorised construction demolished

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

An unauthorised construction of Abbas Khan, a close associate and business partner of mafia don Atique Ahmed was brought down by the Prayagraj Development Authority JCB machines in Attersuiya locality on Monday. A few months earlier Mak Tower of the same Abbas Khan had been put under seal for irregularities.

When the PDA team, backed by heavy police force reached Attersuiya on Monday, family members of Abbas tried to create obstacles and pleaded that half of the building was authorised. They also tried to pose threat of a High Court order, which they could not produce.

As soon as the PDA bulldozers and JCB machines came into action the 95 year-old father of Abbas, Mohammad Yusuf fainted. He was immediately taken to a hospital. Family



members said that he could not brave the sound of the collapse of the walls and suffered a heart attack.

Over a dozen criminal cases had been slapped on

Mohammad Abbas Khan, and in 2017 he had been declared a big land shark. During the Mayawati government, Abbas had been booked under the provisions of the Gangster Act.

It may be mentioned here that a few weeks earlier the ADG Zone had performed a raid at the residence of Abbas and had seized three four-wheelers.

NCR's official language regional implementation body meeting held

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

A meeting of the Official Language Regional Implementation Committee North Central Railway was held under the chairmanship of General Manager Rajiv Chaudhry at the North Central Railway Headquarters. Addressing all the officials present in the online meeting, Chaudhry said that the use of Hindi as official language is an integral part of our administrative responsibilities. More than this, use of Hindi is a constitutional and national duty and the prime responsibility.

Hindi is the lingua franca and the official language of the country. As the most common mode of contact with our customers use of Hindi is extremely important for transport organisation like Indian Railways', Rajiv Chaudhry said and added 'North Central Railway falls in 'A' area. Therefore, we are expected to continue our outstanding work and contribution in the spread of Hindi'. General Manager said that the excellent work being done in the use and dissemination of



General Manager Rajiv Chaudhry releasing Rail Samagam booklet at NCR in Prayagraj

Pioneer

Hindi over North Central Railway is very commendable and the collective contribution of all Railwaymen plays the most important role in this. As a result, in the past North Central Railway has received recognition at highest level and during the last two years, the works of North Central Railways were praised by the Parliamentary Committee on Official Language for the use of official language in our offices.

At the beginning of the meeting, Chief Rajbhasa Adhikari and Senior Deputy General Manager Naveen Kumar Sinha welcomed General Manager and all the participants in the meeting and informed the members about the work done to promote use of Rajbhasa over NCR. Since last meeting, six workshops on Hindi, online seminar on 'Mahatma Gandhi's life, deeds, philosophy and Essay and Quiz' in

Hindi on the occasion of Vigilance Awareness Week and Constitution Day have been organised.

On this occasion, Principal Chief Commercial Manager, MN Ojha while discussing the literature of Dharamvir Bharati said that the literature of Dharamvir Bharati is an expression of such romantic sensations, in whose craft and object combination there is a mythical, historical and integral reality and contemporary sense of sentiment and incandescence. Bharti's Komalakat Shabd Yojana is more heartwarming than Sumitranandan Pant. His creations like Gunaho Ka Devta, Suraj ka Satava Ghoda, Andhayug, Kanupriya etc. are very popular among readers of every generation. He edited the contemporary popular magazine Dharmayuga and brought it to the top of excellence in the fields of literature and culture.

His Andhayug is one of the best creations of Hindi and Ojha gave an effective reading of several portions of Andhayug and Kanupriya.

CONIAPS-XXVI conference ends

ALLAHABAD (PNS): The three days international conference 'CONIAPS-XXVI' which was organised by the Department of Molecular and Cellular Engineering, Jacob Institute of Biotechnology and Bioengineering, Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology and Sciences (SHUATS), Prayagraj, in collaboration with International Academy of Physical Sciences, Prayagraj, INDIA and Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Kerala was concluded on Sunday.

On the third day of conference, Prof PW Ramteke, ex-Dean, Post graduate studies, SHUATS, chaired the third and final session of the conference, which included four invited lectures. First lecture was delivered by Dr Dhruv Kumar, Associate Professor, Amity Institute of Molecular Medicine & Stem Cell Research, Amity University, India, on understanding the signaling regulation(s) and

mutational heterogeneity in cancer and cancer stem cells. He emphasised on important aspects in cancer metabolism and interdependence of autophagy in the survival and progression of cancer cells.

Second lecture was delivered by Prof Joost Andre, Faculty of Bioscience and Aquaculture, Nord University, Norway, on Landscape genomics: from understanding adaptive potential to biodiversity conservation and natural resource management. He presented an overview, how they support biodiversity conservation and natural resource management. Lack of understanding of these issues has triggered the development of landscape genomics as a tool to quantify shared and unique adaptive responses across species within large and ecologically diverse landscapes. He presented an overview of these developments, and illustrated how they support biodiversity conservation and natural

resource management. Prof Jonathan A Lal, convener, welcomed Dr Sasmit Patra, Rajya Sabha Member, Odisha as the chief guest. Final lecture was delivered by Dr Arnab Bhattacharjee, Associate Professor, School of Computational and Integrative Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University. He presented his talk on How Protein Travels on DNA Track? He discussed the physical basis of such a fast and accurate target search mechanism of DNA binding proteins on both single- and double-stranded DNA tracks. An oral presentation was presented by researchers and students from across the globe on the conference focal theme. In valedictory function, Dr Paragti Misra, co-organising secretary, CONIAPS, presented a technical report highlighting the various sessions of conference. Dr Vijay Tripathi presented the vote of thanks. The awards in oral presentation category, was awarded to Jaidev Sharma and

team, from Maharshi Dayanand University, Rohtak, Haryana, and Sweeta Manas and team from Faculty of Basic Sciences, Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences & Technology of Jammu J&K.

LAWYERS PROTEST: As a protest against an FIR registered by the police against the secretary of the District Bar Association Rakesh Dubey, lawyers boycotted the court proceedings at the District Court and staged a protest at the gate of the SSP office near Kutchery. The lawyers raised slogans and demanded immediate withdrawal of the FIR and action against the police officials who registered the case against the Bar Association secretary. According to reports a person lodged an FIR against Rakesh Dubey mentioning that he had manhandled the person.

The officials were handed over a memorandum by the lawyers before they ended the protest.



Kanpur Divisional Commissioner, Raj Shekhar made a surprise visit to Paddy Purchase Centre, Bidhnoo, Kanpur on Monday

Pioneer

DC inspects paddy purchase centre

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Divisional Commissioner Raj Shekhar, while carrying out a surprise inspection of the paddy purchase centre at Bidhnu in Kanpur Nagar on Monday, directed the officials concerned to ensure that the pending payments were made to the farmers without fail in the next three days.

He expressed annoyance that the purchase centre incharge had not maintained the 'Rejection Register'.

He said the visit to the paddy purchase centres was as per the directives of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath that hassle-free paddy procurement be done at the purchase centres.

He asked the officials to ensure that the paddy purchase was as per the guidelines and mandate of the government and directed the district mag-

istrate and district nodal officer of the purchase agencies to ensure daily checking of purchase centres and to resolve the issues on time.

The divisional commissioner later said that he found that 150 farmers had sold their paddy to the centre and the total paddy purchased till date was around 5,603 quintals.

He said the target allocated to this centre was 10,000 quintal and this it had already achieved 56 per cent of the target.

Shekhar said around 5,000 quintals of the purchased paddy was sent to the attached rice mills and the rest would be delivered on Monday itself.

The divisional commissioner said during inspection, the essential equipment like weighing machines, dust cleaning machines etc. were functioning and were being used regularly. He interacted with

several farmers who had come to sell their paddy at the Bidhnu centre.

He said several farmers complained about the late issue of token and shortages of packaging bags at the centre.

During the inspection, Shekhar inspected the registers and also cross-checked the payment status by speaking to a few farmers on mobile phone.

He said as per the feedback, out of 150 farmers who sold paddy at the centre, around 129 had received money in their accounts and the remaining farmers were yet to receive the money.

However, the incharge of the purchase centre informed the divisional commissioner that out of the farmers who were to receive payments, some had sold paddy recently and in a few cases, the payment was delayed because of the mis-

match in the bank account numbers and the names of the account holders and the verification was being done at the tehsil level.

In view of certain lacunae and problems at the purchase centre, the divisional commissioner made adverse entries against the centre incharge and issued show cause notice to the PCF district incharge and directed him to reply in the next three days and also to ensure that the pending tokens were issued in the next two days and adequate packaging bags were arranged at all centres immediately.

He then summoned the field inspection reports of last two months of all the purchase agencies and incharge officials.

He said they need to submit these reports to the commissionerate in the next three days.

EOW probing sale of BIC assets

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Union government has ordered a probe by the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) into the sale of British India Corporation (BIC) assets worth crores of rupees at very low prices.

Instructions have been given to complete the investigations within three months and submit a report to the government.

The EOW circle officer has started gathering the documents on the issue.

According to reports, Surendra Gupta of Forum Against Corruption, Yashoda Nagar, in his complaint sent to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on June 1, 2018, has alleged large-scale swindling of funds in the sale of BIC assets.

It is alleged that the lease of the BIC's immovable properties had expired several years ago but despite this, the BIC officials in connivance with the builders had entered into an



agreement to sell the company's assets at very low prices.

It is alleged that the former collected only 25 per cent of the original cost of the land from the buyers and assured them to get the leases of these properties renewed and provide them the no objection certificate from the state government in due course.

It is further alleged that after entering into an agreement, when the BIC officials approached the district administration for renewal of the properties, the latter did not take the issue seriously.

Meanwhile, some brokers of Delhi had taken contract to sell BIC properties at ₹.50

crore and earned huge money.

The Forum Against Corruption alleged that presently the value of the BIC properties was worth around ₹ 4,000 crore but they were sold merely at ₹ 80 crore.

It said that even according to the valuation of these properties in 2004, their worth was between ₹2,000 crore and ₹ 2,500 crore.

The Forum Against Corruption has alleged that the sale of BIC properties at throw-away prices has caused a revenue loss of crores of rupees to the government.

EOW Superintendent of Police Babu Ram said the Forum Against Corruption had alleged swindling of around ₹2,000 crore in sale of BIC properties and complained to the prime minister and the state administration.

The probe has been assigned to EOW Kanpur Sector and Circle Officer Amar Nath has been appointed the inquiry officer.

56 more test positive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Nagar reported 56 more coronavirus positive cases on Monday evening. Chief Medical Officer Dr Anil K Mishra said that 56 more people had tested positive for coronavirus infection between Sunday evening and Monday evening taking the tally of confirmed cases to 31,887 cases. He said that 43 patients were discharged from hospital. He said no COVID-19 death in the city was reported till Monday evening keeping the death toll to 809. The CMO said at present 655 active cases were undergoing treatment. Dr Mishra said 3438 samples were sent for testing in the city.

IIT-K cognitive science dept to open a new realm of careers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The new cognitive science department launched at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur will open a new realm of careers for its students by converging knowledge from multiple disciplines such as artificial intelligence, business, data analysis, government intelligence, health care, human performance, information processing, law, marketing, product design and software design.

With this, the IIT-K has emerged as a pioneer among other IITs to have a department dedicated to the cognitive study of the complexity of perception and processes of the human mind.

This department aims to culture futuristic technology by understanding, mirroring and adapting human cognitive (related to the brain) behaviours.

With its first venture dating back to June 1, 2017, IIT-Kanpur has come a long way from establishing an interdisciplinary programme (IDP) for creating a dedicated department to prep its students to step into a future full of possibilities and opportunities.

Soon after, in 2019, a team of cognitive science experts as part of the National Advisory Committee visited the IIT-Kanpur campus and recommended the formation of a cognitive science department.

On December 7, the Board of Governors approved the proposal to start the new department, convinced by the institute's claim which believes in the development of this department as an amalgamating point for mapping the traditional Indian knowledge and understanding of the human mind with futuristic technology.

IIT-K Director Prof Abhay Karandikar said, "This venture of establishing a dedicated department to the cognitive science will promote research and teaching programmes at IIT Kanpur."

This newly-launched department will bridge the gap of cognitive studies in India and the world, helping the country to establish an identity as a world leader in the field of cognitive science.

dependence on natural elements and the MBAs, through their knowledge and experience, could negate all the risk factors and ensure that the growth did not stop.

He said agribusiness had the potential to be the largest contributor to the economy and this potential could only be realised by MBA graduates.

He said MBAs working in the agri-business had to face many tough challenges and thus they had to find solutions to all these challenges.

He said to work for agribusiness was like working for a greater cause while earning a good living and added that as an MBA working in the agribusiness industry, one could feel good about ones profession.

Two sisters die of suffocation

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

Two sisters died of suffocation while the third one was admitted to a hospital in a serious condition after they slept with an 'angithi' (coal brazier) on in a closed room in Majhwaliya village under the Barhalganj police station. Police sent the bodies of both the sisters for the post-mortem examination. According to information received here, Pratima (20), Antima (18) and Nidhi (17), daughters of Awadhesh

Prasad, a resident of Majhwaliya village, had slept in a room with the 'angithi' on. The room was closed and there was no window or ventilator there. The three went to sleep in the room after having dinner on Sunday night. On Monday morning the door was broken with an iron rod and all the three sisters were found in an unconscious state inside. Their family members immediately took them to a nearby hospital where the doctors on duty declared Antima and Nidhi

dead. Pratima is undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Barhalganj. Their family members are shell-shocked and inconsolable and a pall of gloom has descended on the village. Superintendent of Police (South) Vipul Kumar Srivastava said that three sisters had slept in a room with the 'angithi' on. Two of them had died due to suffocation and the third was undergoing treatment. The police have sent both the two bodies for the post-mortem examination.

NER bags three national level awards

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

Under the National Energy Conservation Awards on December 14 on the occasion of National Energy Conservation Day the North Eastern Railway (NER) has been successful in receiving three national level awards in the transport, building and industry categories. It is a matter of pride for NER that it in the transport sector under zonal railways the entire NER, in the industry category the mechanical workshop, Izzatnagar, and in the category of government buildings the Lucknow division's office

building have been awarded. It may be pointed out here that the National Energy Conservation Day is celebrated by the Government of India on December 14 every year. Under the National Energy Conservation Award in the field of energy conservation awards are given in various categories for innovative experiments and achievements. As a result of the rapid electrification of railway tracks on the NER with the running of electric locomotive trains a remarkable achievement has been achieved in saving energy. Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) Pankaj Kumar Singh said. In

workshops by using energy efficient machines and equipment continuous success in saving energy is being achieved. In government buildings 100 per cent energy efficient LED light along with energy-saving devices are being used and non-conventional energy is being used through solar panels. It is worth mentioning in this sequence that the Lucknow divisional office building has been awarded the first prize in the building sector by the Uttar Pradesh Government on the occasion of Energy Day. In all the offices and colonies of NER arrangement for LED lighting has been made.

DM inspects paddy procurement centres

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

District Magistrate Sushil Kumar Patel on Sunday inspected the paddy procurement centres located at Mandi



Samiti. Expressing his discontent over the tardy progress in the purchase the DM directed the incharges of all the three purchase centres on the campus that no laxity in the work would be tolerated at all. He told the staff deployed at the centres that if any farmer was harassed at any stage the staff would face the music.

Interacting with farmers present at the centres the DM inquired whether they were

facing any problem. He directed the staff to achieve the target of the purchase and pay the farmers without any delay. The DM informed that till date total 54,861 metric tonnes purchase had been done through 10,228 farmers in the district which was 21 per cent of the target.

ARRESTED: Three persons were arrested in connection with the incident in which a 23-year-old youth who was assaulted on Sunday night died at a hospital. According to a report, Ramvriksh Bind, a resident of Saria village, had lodged a named FIR against nine persons in which he claimed that they had assaulted his son, Sanjay (23), on Sunday night and he had died at a hospital. Taking action the police arrested three persons in this connection was conducting raids to nab others. On getting information the authorities, including the SP, visited the place and directed the police to take action against the culprits and control the situation.

ADM'S DIRECTIVE: Additional District Magistrate (Finance and Revenue) UP

Singh reviewed the pendency of cases under CM reference, DM reference, Sampooran Samadhan Divas reference, CG portal reference and defaulter reference at collectorate office on Saturday. Addressing the meeting the ADM directed the officials concerned to dispose



of the cases with quality and inform him without delay. Giving details of undisposed cases he made it clear that in case the disposal report was not sent to him action would be taken without hesitation. He made it clear that under the disposal satisfaction of the aggrieved was a must under the laws. The meeting was attended by SDM Madihan, Roshani Yadav, Chief Treasury Officer (CTO) Rajkumar, CMO Dr Prabhudayal Gupta, other district-level officers besides the bankers.

Ornaments, cash stolen from shop

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

In a sensational incident a gang of unidentified thieves sneaked into a jewellery shop situated on Bishunpur Matiaara intersection under the Jhangaha police station at night recently by breaking its shutter and decamped with ornaments

worth ₹5 lakh and ₹10,000 in cash. According to a report received here, the shopkeeper Umesh Verma, went home after closing his shop on Saturday. On finding the moment opportune some unknown thieves broke the shutter of the shop at night and took away a gold and silver jewellery, ₹10,000 in cash, DVR etc.

The people came to know about it on Sunday morning. Following an application given by Umesh Verma the Jhangaha police has registered a case against unidentified thieves under Sections 457 and 380 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) in this connection and had launched a hunt for nabbing them, last reports received said.

Three projects inaugurated

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

The Northern Coalfields Limited, a minirat-na company of the Government of India, along with meeting the energy requirements of



the country is continuously working for the development of the surrounding areas. Under the corporate social responsibility (CSR) the NCL in its nearby villages is running campaigns like 'Gaoon jodo' (link villages), 'sab saakshar' (all literate), 'sab swasth' (all healthy), 'swachh jal' (clean

water) etc. In the same sequence the NCL's Jayant Area has in Chitrang's Kapurdai gram panchayat got a six km link road connecting Salakhankala to Khokhwa constructed at a cost of about ₹2.37 crore. Besides, a community building has also

been constructed at Kapurdai at a cost of about ₹51 lakh and two anganwadis at a cost of about ₹24 lakh. Dedicated for the benefit of the people of the area these three projects were inaugurated by Sidhi MP Riti Pathak in the presence of MLA from Chitrang's Amar Singh. On the occasion NCL Jayant's Deputy General Manager (Civil) PK Rai, nodal officer, CSR, Gaurav Bajpai, and from NCL headquarters' CSR department Kundan Singh, Assistant Manager Shweta

and public representatives of the area were present. It may be pointed out here that the NCL Jayant area under CSR for providing basic amenities in the surrounding rural areas is working on many projects.

Growth potential in agribusiness course unlimited: HBTU V-C

KANPUR (PNS): Harcourt Butler Technical University Vice-Chancellor Prof NB Singh, while addressing the maiden session of the MBA Agri Business on Monday, said agribusiness could provide jobs for youth and help the nation achieve its development goals. He said it was highly essential to engage Indian youth in agribusiness in a changing climate.

Prof Singh said there was no doubt that agribusiness was one of the critical pathways out of poverty and unemployment for youth. He said the HBTU was imparting specialised courses like MBA Agribusiness and the reason was that youth must be empowered through opportunities to engage in agribusiness enterprises and

linkages to private sector and development agencies.

He said a large number of youth from the rural areas experienced several barriers, one of which was lack of information on current agricultural technologies and agribusiness. He said to overcome this barrier, training programmes that link young people to climate-smart agricultural practices and profitable new agribusinesses were underway in the country.

Prof Singh said MBA in agribusiness management was related to management of agriculture production, marketing of agriculture products, maintaining quality and growing of high quality goods. He added that the benefits for this would be that it was a different field

and very less students were pursuing it.

He said the main aim of the course was to provide students with knowledge of the concepts of crop cultivation, food production, agrichemicals, farm machinery, processing, seed supply and other concepts about agriculture business.

"The growth potential in this field is unlimited. Commercial farming on a large scale has just begun to take off. Therefore, if you become a part of an industry at such an early stage, it bestows an opportunity for you to grow with the industry," he said.

The HBTU vice chancellor added, "Your position will see surplus growth as the industry also grows. You can be heading large agriculture-based corpo-

ration in a matter of years. Therefore, doing an MBA in agribusiness allows you to pave your path and dictate terms regarding your career."

Noted entrepreneur Rajeev Gangwar, who was the special speaker, said there were five major benefits for the youth, the first and foremost being fiscal benefits. He added that as there was a dearth of professional managers and other similar professions in agribusiness, for those who pursue the course, the salaries and benefits were quite high compared to other industries. Besides, he said, agri-businesses needed managers and other specialist positions for it grew fast and consistently.

Gangwar said this industry carried a lot of risks owing to

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

Under the guidance of chairperson Kriti Mahila Mandal of Northern Coalfields Limited (NCL), Sangeeta Sinha, and vice-chairpersons Dr Sunita Kumari, Suchandra Sinha and Lakshmi Dubey sweaters were distributed among children in Birkunya. This distribution was done keeping the increasing winter in mind under 'Gyan Jyoti', a branch of campaign 'Prayas' of Kriti Mahila Mandal. On the occasion all the children were made aware of the methods for preventing cold and were advised to wear face masks, wash their hands frequently and follow social distancing guidelines in order to prevent Covid-19.



TRAINING PROGRAMME

Under the guidance of chairperson of the Kalyani Mahila Samiti under Block B area of Northern Coalfields Limited (NCL) Shashi Duhan 10 women belonging to the nearby areas are being imparted training in knitting. In this 15-day-long training programme knitting of different types of sweaters, socks, gloves etc. is being taught. Besides, women are also being provided with wool and knitting material. It is may be pointed out here that the Kalyani Mahila Samiti has done many works for empowerment of women and skill development in the neighbouring areas in the past too.

After wife joins TMC, BJP MP threatens to divorce her

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The weird poaching contest between the Bharatiya Janata Party and Trinamool Congress has reached the bedrooms of politicians with Bishnupur BJP MP Soumitra Khan on Monday threatening to divorce his wife Sujanta Mondal Khan for joining the Bengal ruling outfit barely two days after dozens of TMC leaders led by ace Mamata Banerjee aide and former Minister Suwendu Adhikari joining the saffron fold.

Sujata who was instrumental in her husband's win from Bishnupur constituency earlier joined the TMC in presence of senior leader Sougato Roy and Kunal Ghosh explained her volte face saying despite the hard work she did for her party there was no recognition coming her way. Besides she expressed her dislike for a situation where BJP could put up a no Chief Minister candidate. She said, "it is difficult for me to work for a party which has six probable names

Sujata, who was instrumental in her husband's win from Bishnupur constituency, earlier joined the TMC in presence of senior leader Sougato Roy

for the CM post and 13 others for that of deputy CM... You cannot talk about Narendra Modi all the time because he is your Prime Minister and cannot come to Bengal to works as the Chief Minister."

She had singlehandedly crafted the victory of her husband a former TMC MP who had then freshly joined the BJP. As his entry was barred in Bishnupur for various reasons it was Sujata who slogged it out ensuring him get more than 6 lakh votes. Minutes after wife she joined the TMC her husband said "she is doing a big mistake" and asked her to change her

decision or else he would send her a divorce notice.

Khan, also State BJP youth wing president, said, "I concede that you had worked hard to ensure my victory but asking for posts in lieu of that is not acceptable as the BJP does not believe in kinship politics" reminding how the TMC had victimized her by taking her job and through other means when she was campaigning for him.

"This is my appeal to you to remove my surname 'Khan' from your name," he said saying how "when you lost your job due to Mamata Banerjee or Abhishek Banerjee I transferred 50% of my salary to your account every month... so that you don't have to ask for it... Now you have joined hands with those who had harmed you in past." Almost bursting into tears the MP said "every family has its fights. But, you have chosen politics over family to feed you high ambitions... and in doing so they have trapped you making you to do a big mistake.

Maha imposes night curfew in Mumbai, other cities till Jan 5

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In what will put a virtual stop to the Christmas and New Year-eve celebrations in Mumbai and other major cities in the state, the Maharashtra Government on Monday announced the imposition of 14-day-long night curfew from December 22 in the metropolis and other Municipal Corporation areas in the state, following the detection of a new strain of the SARS-CoV-2 in the United Kingdom.

Amid news reports that a distinct phylogenetic cluster of SARS-CoV-2 that causes Covid-19 has been detected and it is spreading rapidly in the United Kingdom, Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray reviewed the pandemic situation in the state and announced night curfew between 11 pm to 6 am, from December 22 to January 5, 2021.

At a high-level meeting chaired by the chief minister and attended among others by state chief secretary Sanjay Kumar, Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh and other top officials, the Maharashtra government also decided to quarantine compulsorily all passengers arriving in Maharashtra, particularly Mumbai, from UK, Europe and Middle East, as a precaution. "In view of the detection of a new deadly virus in the UK, we will have to be extremely vigilant over the next 15 days. Accordingly, we have imposed night curfew in all municipal corporation areas till January 5," Uddhav said.

"The new strain of Covid-19 detected in Britain is spreading rapidly. Its severity will be known in the coming days. Therefore, Beginning today, we are taking extra-precautions. There will be a thorough

check-up of passengers arriving in the state from international flights," the chief minister said.

Uddhav said that the passengers who have either arrived or will arrive from all European countries and Central-East Countries will be quarantined at various institutions for 14-days. These passengers will undergo an RT-PCR test on the 5th or 7th day. They will be allowed to go home after their 14-day period gets over.

The Chief Minister directed the municipal commissioners across the state to make arrangements of hotels and Independent hospitals where the international flights arrive in municipal jurisdiction.

"Passengers arriving from non-European countries will be stamped on their hand and home quarantined. All the workers who will undertake check-up of passengers arriving from European countries and Central-East countries will be provided PPE kits at the airports," Uddhav said.

Meanwhile, with night curfew in place between December 22, 2020 and January 5, 2021, there will hardly be any Christmas or new-year revelry in hotels and public places in the metropolis where there are normally all-night parties celebrations during the year-end. Same is the case with other major cities like Nagpur, Pune, Thane, Nashik, Aurangabad, Navi Mumbai and other municipal corporation areas in the state.

Significantly enough, the decision to impose night curfew comes on the heels of the Centre's decision to suspend all flights originating from the UK from December 22 to December 31 and to send all passengers found Covid-19 positive to institutional quarantine centres.

Hathras victim's family wants to move to Delhi

PRADEEP SAXENA ■ HATHRAS

The girl's relatives, who have been saying not to leave Boolgadhi, now want to leave Hathras. The family members have felt that the accused will get severe punishment after filing a chargesheet in the Special Court under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Act of Hathras by the CBI.

The father of the deceased said that CBI has found out the truth. Now the accused will be punished severely, but seeing the atmosphere of the village, they want to leave Hathras and go to Delhi. They also want the transfer of the case from here to Delhi. They said that people around the village were accusing them of killing their daughter. The CBI found out the truth by interrogating relatives other than the family. The exercise began to get a copy of the charge sheet filed by the CBI. Lawyers of both sides were preparing for this. They want to know what charges

have been mentioned in the charge sheet and what evidences have been given. The CBI has filed a charge sheet of murder and gang rape against Sandeep, Ramu, Ravi and Lavkush of the famous Bulgadhi case. All the four accused are in Aligarh Jail. The charge sheet has been prepared based on the victim's last statement. Advocate Bhagirathi Singh Solanki of the deceased party and Munna Singh Pundir, the advocate of the accused, said that they will file duplicate questions to get a copy of the charge sheet. The matter is now scheduled to be heard in the local court on January 4. After the filing of the charge sheet, there is disappointment in the accused side but still, they have hope. Lavkush's father Ramveer told that he would approach good lawyers. Three of the accused are from the same family while the fourth one is from another family. The matter is also to be heard in the High Court on 27 January.

NCB again grills Arjun Rampal in Bollywood-drug mafia link case

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Actor Arjun Rampal was on Monday grilled for the second time in five weeks in connection with the ongoing investigations into the Bollywood-drug mafia nexus case. Rampal, who had been questioned for eight-long hours earlier by the NCB on November 13, was grilled once again by the investigating agency, this time around over the doctor's prescription for psychiatric medicines submitted by him to the investigating agency.

The NCB is examining if the doctor's prescription for psychiatric medicines produced by the actor is genuine or fake. Unconfirmed reports said that the actor had obtained the doctor's prescription through a friend from a New Delhi-based doctor. The investigating agency had found some psychiatric medicines during the raids it had conducted on Rampal's Bandra residence in north-west Mumbai on November 9.

The NCB had earlier summoned Rampal for questioning on December 16. However, the actor had sought a week's time from the NCB to appear

before it for questioning. Rampal arrived at the NCB's office for questioning on Monday morning. The actor may be arrested, if the agency finds evidence to suggest the doctor's prescription submitted by him is fake.

Among other things, 47-year-old Rampal is being investigated for his links with South African national Agisialos Demetriades, the brother of actor's live-in friend Gabriella Demetriades and Australian-architect friend Paul Bartel, both of whom were arrested earlier with the Bollywood-drug mafia nexus case.

Agisialos was arrested by the NCB from Lonavala near Pune on October 19. Agisilaos is alleged to be a part of a larger drug syndicate operating in Bollywood, which is being investigated after the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput.

Bartel, an architect by profession who resides at Bandra in north-0west Mumbai, was arrested on November 13. The actor has known Bartel for a long time. He used to be a regular touch with Agisialos Demetriades, the brother of actor's live-in friend Gabriella Demetriades. The NCB's investigations have revealed that



Agisialos was in touch with Omega Godwin, a Nigerian national who had earlier been arrested for supply of cocaine in Mumbai. During his custodial interrogation, Godwin had named Agisialos. Earlier, ex-Dharma Productions employee Kshitij Prasad had earlier been arrested by the NCB in connection with the Sushant Singh Rajput's death-related drug case and expanded Bollywood-drug nexus case.

Sushant, it may be recalled, was found hanging from a

ceiling fan in his closed room of his duplex flat at Mont Blanc building at Bandra's Carter Road in north-west Mumbai on June 14.

Incidentally, the raid on Rampal's residence came a day after the NCB officials carried out searches at film producer Firoz A. Nadiadwala's residence along Gulmohar Cross Road at Juhu Vile Parle Development (JVPD) Scheme in north-west Mumbai. During the searches, the NCB sleuths seized a total of 717.1 gm of

Ganja, 74.1 gm charas and 95.1 gm MD (Commercial Quantity) along with Rs 3,58,610. They also seized 10 gm of Ganja from another accused Wahid Abdul kadir Sheikh @ Sultan. After the seizure of drugs and cash, the NCB officials arrested five persons, including Firoz A. Nadiadwala's wife Shabana Saeed. More than 25 persons—including Sushant's girlfriend Rhea Chakraborty and her brother Showik --- have been arrested and a large number of persons have been questioned in connection with a case registered by the NCB on August 28, two days after it registered a case suo moto. Subsequently, Rhea was granted conditional bail by the Bombay High Court in the Sushant death-related drug case on October 7, 2020.

As part of the investigations, the NCB had earlier questioned Bollywood's prominent actresses Deepika Padukone, Sara Ali Khan, Shraddha Kapoor and Rakul Preet Singh. The agency had also arrested television comedian Bharti Singh and her husband Harsh Limbachiya. It has also issued summons to film-maker Karan Johar.

Mission-200 our goal in Assembly polls, says DMK

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

The constituents of the DMK-led alliance in Tamil Nadu are upset and shocked over the declaration made by M K Stalin, president, DMK, that his party would not be content with even one seat less than 200 in the upcoming Assembly election.

"Our goal is Mission-200. Though we can form the government by winning 117 of the 234 seats in the Assembly, we are contesting not to secure just 117 seats. We cannot content with even one seat less than 200. Our aim is to win 200 seats on our own and that's why we have this Mission-200 programme," declared while addressing the party workers across the State on Sunday.

Stalin reminded the party workers that the DMK-led alliance had won 38 out of the 39 seats from the State in the 2019 Lok Sabha election and the party workers should repeat the performance in the assembly election too.

Political commentator Kolahala Srenivasan told The Pioneer that Stalin may find the Mission-2000 tough. "Since 1996 Assembly election, the DMK has never crossed the three-digit mark. It is going to be a tough task for him to realize this dream," said Srenivasan.

If Stalin is serious about Mission-200 in the 2021 election,

his alliance partners that include the Congress, CPI(M), CPI, VCK, MDMK, MMK and other fringe groups may have to content with the remaining 34 seats. There are reports that the DMK is in talks with the Vanniyar dominated PMK which is right now with the AIADMK-led front.

In the last Assembly election the DMK had contested 178 seats leaving 40 seats to the Congress, five seats to the Muslim League and nine seats to fringe groups. Since then, the CPI(M), CPI, VCK and MDMK, have joined the DMK camp and this would make it difficult for the Dravidian major to contest even 178 seats which it had set apart for itself

in the last assembly election, points out a senior Congress leader. He said the Congress would not settle for anything less than 40 seats.

The DMK is launching the 2021 election campaign on Wednesday. Party's ordinary workers will undertake villages in their areas with the slogan "We reject the AIADMK". Stalin himself would hit the campaign trial from January onwards. The DMK chief is upset over the possibility of matinee idol Rajinikanth playing spoilsport in the assembly election as he reportedly told party workers that the entry of film stars into politics was only with the objective of ensuring that the DMK does

not win the election.

This was in contrast to what the DMK's second in command M K Kanimozhi, (Stalin's step-sister and former chief minister Karunanidhi's lone daughter by his third wife Rajathi) had told last week in Coimbatore. "The DMK is not at all rattled.

The actor has announced the launch of his party for January 2021. I can say that it will not impact the DMK's victory and you can be sure that Stalin will be the next chief minister," Kanimozhi had told the media during her campaign in Coimbatore on December 6. The volte-face by the party leadership within a fortnight is interesting.

30 cities of Bihar to get tap water in 3 next three months

Patna: The Urban and Housing Development Ministry of Bihar has claimed that it will provide tap water to every household in 30 cities in the next three months.

Providing tap water to every household is an ambitious project of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and it has also been included in the 'Saat Nishchay Programme' of the state government.

A senior official from the ministry, on condition of anonymity, told IANS that connecting pipelines to every household was part of the 'Saat Nishchay Programme' during the previous tenure of the Nitish Kumar government.

"The deadline of the project was December 2020, however, installation of pipelines in some of the cities is still underway. It is expected that it will be completed by March 2021," he said. The delay in connecting the pipelines happened as it was very difficult to replace the

old pipelines with the new ones in some cities like Patna, Muzaffarpur, Gaya as they are ancient and developed in an unplanned way, the official added.

Citing the problem in Muzaffarpur, the official said that earlier the proposal was to complete the project in Rs 98 crore but the amount was not adequate so the authority has released more funds now. "The proposal is to complete 18 overhead water tanks and 95 pump houses and the company has been asked to complete the project in the given timeframe," he said.

According to the data available with IANS, there are 10,210 houses in Arrah, 21,524 in Bagaha, 24,000 in Biharsharif, 14,135 in Hajipur, 4,900 in Jahanabad, 6,320 in Kishanganj, 15,751 in Motihari and 6,722 in Sasaram where the installation of water pipelines has either been completed or is underway.

HC gives bail to man who offered namaaz in temple in Mathura

Prayagraj: The Allahabad High Court has granted bail to Faisal Khan, who was arrested for offering namaaz on the premises of the Nand Baba temple in Mathura district. The court however, directed Khan not to use the social media till the

conclusion of the trial. Justice Siddharth allowed the bail application observing that "having considered the material on record, larger mandate of the Article 21 (Protection of life and personal liberty) of the Constitution of India and the

dictum of apex court in the case of Dataram Singh Vs. State of Uttar Pradesh and another, reported in (2018) 3 SCC 22 and without expressing any opinion on the merits of the case, applicant can be released on bail".

AMU campus readies for centenary celebrations

Aligarh: The police administration has started their preparations for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's virtual address at AMU on centenary celebration. Stringent arrangements are being made by coordinating with the AMU Administration.

Close monitoring will also be done on the AMU campus and sensitive places in the city to avoid interference during the address.

SP City Kuldeep Singh Gunawat told that the meeting is going on with the AMU administration regarding the program.

Systems are being finalized after discussing every point. During PM Modi's address, special attention is being given to avoid the internet, screen and any other interference.

During the program, a large number of police will be deployed in the AMU campus and its surroundings, including PAC and RAF.

Police will also do patrolling in the city. The intelligence department has been activated and input is being collected for expected protest. Those who create disturbances will be strictly dealt with.

The centenary program will start on December 22 at 10 am. Its link has been released on the virtual card from AMU. Al ong with PM Modi, Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank will also attend the event. Preparations are being made to listen to this program in the administrative building of AMU. Media seating has also been arranged.

छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल

पर्यावास भवन, सेक्टर – 19,

नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, जिला – रायपुर (छ.ग.)

// सर्व संबंधित को सुचना //

भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय द्वारा जारी ई.आई.ए नोटिफिकेशन, 2006 (यथा – संशोधित) के तहत सर्व संबंधित को सूचित किया जाता है कि मेसर्स बरबसपुर फ्लेग स्टोन माईन, (श्री राजेन्द्र गुप्ता), ग्राम-बरबसपुर, तहसील व जिला महासमुंद (छ.ग.) स्थित खसरा क्रमांक 203, कुल तीन क्षेत्र –1.0 हेक्टेयर में प्रस्तावित फ्लेग स्टोन माईन (गोण खनिज) क्षमता-5.103 टन प्रतिवर्ष के पर्यावरणीय स्वीकृति बाबत लोक सुनवाई दिनांक 23/01/2021 को अपराह्न 12:00 बजे से ग्राम-पंचायत भवन बरबसपुर, तहसील व जिला-महासमुंद में निचली गई है। यह भी सूचित हो कि :

- लोक सुनवाई के दौरान सम्मिलित होने वाले व्यक्तियों को फिजिकल/ सोशल डिस्टेंसिंग का पालन करना अनिवार्य होगा।
- लोक सुनवाई में सम्मिलित होने वाले व्यक्तियों द्वारा मास्क का उपयोग किया जावेगा तथा समय-समय पर सेनेटाईजर का उपयोग किया जाना अनिवार्य होगा।
- लोक सुनवाई स्थल पर सम्मिलित होने वाले व्यक्तियों की बैठक व्यवस्था कम से कम 02 मीटर की दूरी रखना अनिवार्य होगा।
- कोरोना वायरस के निवर्तन एवं रोकथाम हेतु केंद्र सरकार तथा राज्य शासन द्वारा जारी समस्त दिशा- निर्देशों का अक्षरशः पालन किया जाना अनिवार्य होगा।

ई.आई.ए. नोटिफिकेशन, 14 सितम्बर, 2006 (यथा-संशोधित) के अनुसार संबंधित व्यक्तियों के अवलोकन/उपन हेतु ड्राफ्ट ई.आई.ए रिपोर्ट, कार्यपालक सार हिन्दी एवं अंग्रेजी भाषा तथा सी बी (साफ्ट कॉपी) डायरेक्टर, भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, जौरा बाग रोड नई दिल्ली, क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय (डब्ल्यू.सी.जेड) पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय भारत सरकार, ग्राउण्ड फ्लोर, ईस्ट बिल्डिंग, न्यू, सेक्रेटेरिएट बिल्डिंग, सिलिल लाईन, नागपुर (महाराष्ट्र) कार्यालय कलेक्टर महासमुंद, जिला व्यापार एवं उद्योग केंद्र जिला महासमुंद, कार्यालय सारंघ, ग्राम पंचायत बरबसपुर, तहसील व जिला-महासमुंद, क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, व्यवसायिक परिसर, कबीर नगर, रायपुर, जिला-रायपुर एवं मुख्यालय, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, पर्यावास भवन, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, रायपुर में रखी गई है।

हस्ता / –

सदस्य सचिव

छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल

नवा रायपुर अटल नगर रायपुर (छ.ग.)

क्रमांक:- 3354 शेका/तक/छ.प.सं.म/2020

दिनांक:- 21/12/2020

Office of the Executive Engineer, Construction Division-I, P.W.D. Raebareli

No. 1748/8Lekha/2020-21

E-Tender Notice (First Call)

Dated : 17/12/2020

The Executive Engineer CD-1, P.W.D. Raebareli on behalf of Governor of Uttar Pradesh invites the percentage rate bids online from the eligible and approved Contractors registered with UP PWD, class 'A, B, C, D' The Bidder may submit bids for any or all of the works. Bidders are advised to note the minimum qualification criteria specified in Clause 4 of the Instructions to Bidders to qualify for the award of the contract.

SL. No.	DIST.	Name of Work	Estimated cost (Rs. in Lakh)	Bid Security (Rs. in Lakhs)	Cost of Bid Document	Time of Completion	Address of Executive Engineer of the Executing work	Address of Super-Intending Engineer	Address of Chief Engineer
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	Rae- Bareilly	S.R. of Parshadepur Bara Nautahi Road Ch. 3.870 to 4.400	14.20	1.42	860.00	03 Month	CD-1, P.W.D. Raebareli	Lucknow Circle, P.W.D. Lucknow	Central Zone, P.W.D. Lucknow

The Rate adopted in the BQQ All Other taxes but excluding GST Taxes.

Cost of Bid Document : as per column 6 (non-refundable) To be deposited in the account of UP e-tender online Account through e-tender portal by Internet Banking only. All concerned please note that the bidding process will not move onward if the bid document's Cost (Tender Fee) is not paid through e-tender portal by Internet Banking.

Bid Security (EMD) : Bids must be accompanied with security of the amount specified for the work in the table as per column 5. Bid security will be deposited in the account of UP e-tender online Account through e-tender portal by Internet Banking only. All concerned please note that the bidding process will not move onward if the bid Security (EMD) is not paid through e-tender portal by Internet Banking. No other form of bid security will be accepted.

Bids can be downloaded online from date 24.12.2020 at 9:00 AM to 30.12.2020 at 12:00 Noon and bid can be submitted online on or before 30.12.2020 at 12:00 Noon. The technical bids will be opened online on date 31.12.2020 at 12:30 PM. According to the provisions of Government Order no. 1/2018/307078-2-2018/42 17/2017 (22) Date 03-01-2018 after opening of the technical and financial bids, the bidder has to submit original documents personally in department's office. In the event of non submission of original documents by the bidder, the appropriate action will be taken in accordance with the provisions of G.O.

All terms & conditions can be seen on website <http://etender.up.nic.in>

U.P.: 157971, Date : 19.12.2020

निष्ठाान वेबसाईट: www.up.gov.nic.in पर उपलब्ध है।

(Subhash Chandra)

Executive Engineer

Construction Division

PWD, Raebareli.

Sharma lauds Modi Govt for boosting infra



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A day after Congress interim president Sonia Gandhi reached out to dissenters within the party, senior party leader and former Commerce Minister Anand Sharma on Monday praised the Modi Government saying India had increased its infrastructure in recent years and congratulated the Centre and State Governments for working together towards it.

“India has increased its infrastructure and I congratulate central and state governments for it as they worked together for it. The country stood in the face of this crisis,” Sharma said.

India made a comeback in the second quarter after the first quarter was the worst for the economy as the GDP was adversely hit, he said. “We

hope that in the remaining two quarters as well, the balance of recovery will be maintained,” he added.

Sharma was a part of the group of 23 dissenters who wrote to party president Sonia Gandhi seeking a complete overhaul of the organisation within Congress. On Saturday, Sonia Gandhi held a meeting of all dissenters, including Sharma, with an aim to end the ongoing crisis.

Congress leaders including Rahul Gandhi have taken frequent jibes at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the state of the economy.

Last month, Sharma had to issue a clarification and amend his tweet when it was construed as praise for PM Narendra Modi. “Prime minister Shri Narendra Modi visit to Serum Institute, Bharat Biotech and Zydus Cadilla was a recognition of Indian scientists and their work to produce the vaccine for COVID-19 That alone will lift morale of frontline warriors and reassure the nation,” Sharma had tweeted after the PM’s visit to vaccine centres.

Vietnam an important pillar of India’s Act East policy: Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and Vietnam on Monday reviewed the entire gamut of bilateral relations as Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that Vietnam was an important pillar of India’s Act East policy and significance of this partnership will increase next year when both the countries will be members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

Addressing the India-Vietnam Virtual Summit, Modi said Vietnam is a vital partner of its Indo-Pacific Vision.

“Next year both of us will be members of the UN Security Council. So the significance of our cooperation in the global context will increase. We will implement a Joint Vision Document 2021-23 which is a plan of action for bilateral engagement,” Prime Minister said as he held a virtual meeting with his Vietnam counterpart Nguyen Xuan Phuc on to discuss the strategic partnership between the two countries.

Both the leaders held discussions on defence, energy, healthcare , development partnership and economic revival plan post-covid19.

India’s development and capacity building assistance to Vietnam through initiatives such



as Quick Impact Projects (QIPs), ITEC and e-ITEC initiatives, PhD fellowships, as well as projects in water resource management in Vietnam’s Mekong Delta region, SDGs, digital connectivity, and heritage conservation is also understood to have been discussed.

The two leaders reviewed the entire gamut of bilateral relations, discussions on regional and global issues of mutual interest.

In his opening remarks, Modi said, Vietnam is an important pillar of India’s Act East Policy and vital partner of our Indo-Pacific Vision.

He said, the relation between India and Vietnam are growing rapidly and spreading to new areas. The Prime Minister said, India looks at the ties with Vietnam with long-term and strategic perspective. He said,

Indo-Vietnam cooperation can contribute to maintaining peace and stability in the region.

Modi said, peace, stability and prosperity in Indo-Pacific region is a common aim of both the nations.

Prime Minister expressed condolences on the loss of lives and property in central Vietnam due to floods and landslides, and expressed hope that the aid sent by India will be helpful. He said India and Vietnam have signed seven new agreements on areas such as defence, scientific research, nuclear and renewable energy, petrochemicals and other diverse .

Earlier in February, Vietnam vice president Dang Thi Ngoc Thinh visited India on an official visit while Modi and Phuc had a telephone exchange in April to discuss the COVID-19 pandemic.

Battle intensifies between Mamata, Modi Govt on PM-KISAN scheme

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

With the Assembly elections knocking at the door, the political battle between Mamata Banerjee Government and the Modi Government further intensified on the issue of PM-KISAN scheme.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has written to the Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar seeking transfer of funds to the State administration for the implementation of the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi Scheme. Banerjee wants the funds to be routed to farmers through her government. According to Banerjee, more than 73 lakh farmers are to be benefitted under the scheme.

“After disbursement of funds, a list of beneficiaries will be sent to you (centre) for your information,” said Banerjee in her letter.

The centre had already rejected West Bengal’s request to not pay famers directly under the PM-Kisan scheme but routing it through the state government saying the scheme is based on idea of direct benefit transfer to farmers’ account and “routing money through state government would be against the spirit of the scheme”

Under this scheme, a total income support of ₹6,000 per year is provided in three equal instalments to farmers. In the

beginning the families of only the small and marginal farmers (those having a combined land holding/ownership of up to 2 hectares) were eligible. Later, from June 2019, the scheme was extended to all farmers irrespective of the size of their landholding. The scheme, however, is yet to be implemented in West Bengal.

In a letter to Tomar, Banerjee emphasised that the decision of the central government on implementation of the scheme in West Bengal and transferring the requisite fund to the state government for onward disbursement to the farmers through the state government machinery is “still awaited”.

The letter further states, “Decision of the central government on implementation of the scheme in West Bengal and transferring the requisite fund to the State Government for onward disbursement to the farmers through the State Government machinery is still awaited. The State Government is already implementing a scheme of direct fund transfer to the farmers including the sharecroppers with death benefit scheme as had been enumerated in my letter under reference”.

Banerjee has urged the Government to arrange transfer the requisite fund to the State Government for onward disbursement with full responsibility to the farmer beneficiaries

of the State through state government machinery. Banerjee further requested Tomar to “kindly recall” the letter written by her on September 9, 2020 regarding PM Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme in which, the TMC supreme had said that the scheme will be implemented in West Bengal “if the funds are routed through the state government”.

On September 9, the chief minister had wrote to the Union agriculture minister expressing her desire to be an intermediary for the farmers as a condition to join the PM-KISAN. In West Bengal, 96 per cent of these farmers fall under the small and marginal categories, much worse than the national average of 86.2 per cent according to the 10th agriculture census of 2015-16.

The Centre earlier appealed to her on a number of occasions, including one when the Union agriculture minister, on February 24, 2020, made a public request to join the scheme on its first anniversary.

PM-KISAN was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi On February 24, 2019, when Rs 2021 crore was transferred to bank accounts of more than 10 million beneficiaries. The Government so far has disbursed ₹93,000 crore to farmers since launch of the scheme in February 2019.

Political leaders condole death of Motilal Vora

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Political leaders cutting across party lines condoled the death of veteran Congress leader Motooilal Vora who passed away on Monday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he was saddened by his death and remembered him as a leader with vast administrative and organisational experience.

“Shri Motilal Vora Ji was among the senior-most Congress leaders, who had vast administrative and organisational experience in a political career that spanned decades. Saddened by his demise. Condolences to his family and well-wishers.Om Shanti,” the PM tweeted.

Congress president Sonia Gandhi, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi and party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra termed Vora a true Congressman and a wonderful human being. “Vora ji was a true congressman and a wonderful human being. We will miss him very much. My love & condolences to his family and friends,” Rahul tweeted.

Deputy Chairperson Rajya Sabha and several union Ministers and Chief Ministers across the country recalled their memories with Vora who spent more than six decades of political journey.

A former chief minister of



Madhya Pradesh and a former governor of Uttar Pradesh, Vora, a Gandhi family loyalist, was known for his relations across political spectrum.

In a party reshuffle carried out by Congress president Sonia Gandhi in September this year, Vora was not given any party responsibility in view of his advancing age.

A journalist by profession, he worked with Navbharat Times as its correspondent in Bombay (now Mumbai), then served by Navbharat in Nagpur and Raipur and later with Nagpur Times in Nagpur.

A two-term Madhya Pradesh chief minister – first from 1985 to 1988 and later in 1989, Vora also served as the union health minister in the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi’s cabinet in 1988-89. He retired as a Rajya Sabha member from Chhattisgarh in April this year. During his four terms in the Rajya Sabha, Vora was appreciated for his attendance and participation.

Congress leaders would

often quote Vora’s tips for discretion which made him ideal for the AICC treasurer’s post.

As AICC treasurer, Vora apart from managing the finances of the grand old party would also decide on allocating the rooms at the party headquarters at Delhi’s 24, Akbar Road.

It was well-known in party circles that Vora kept a strict vigil on the party functionaries at the Congress office.

Former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Mayawati made it a point to greet the veteran Congress leader whenever she saw him in the Rajya Sabha. It was Vora who had recommended removal of Samajwadi Party leader Mulayam Singh Yadav from the chief minister’s post on June 3, 1995, a day after the infamous “Guest House” episode.

Armed SP leaders and workers tried to assault Mayawati who locked herself in a room in a bid to escape the attack. On the same day, Mayawati took oath as the chief minister with the outside support of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Janata Dal. Vora would often recall his “bumpy” car journey that led to greater familiarity with former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee while on a tour from Lucknow to a remote village in the state during his term as the Uttar Pradesh Governor from 1993-19

CBI books Gujarat-based Siddhi Vinayak Logistics Ltd for cheating Union Bank

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has booked Gujarat-bssed Siddhi Vinayak Logistics Ltd and its promoters in a bank fraud case for defrauding Union Bank to the tune of over ₹100 crore.

The CBI registered the case following a complaint from the Union Bank of India dated December 17 under Indian Penal Code Sections relating to cheating, forgery and presenting forged documents as genuine among others besides provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act.

Besides the firm, those named in the FIR are Roopchand Baid, Laxmidevi Baid, Rajkumar Baid, Deepak Kumar Baid, unknown public servants and unknown persons.

“Siddhi Vinayak Logistics Ltd. And other accused persons during the period from September 2012 to October 2015 were party to a criminal conspiracy to cheat the Union Bank of India and in pursuance to the criminal conspiracy, the accused directors/guarantors of the firm induced Union Bank of India to sanction term loans to SVLL and disburse aggregate loan amount of ₹102 core for purchase of 337 commercial vehicles,” the reads the FIR.

The loan account of the

Min releases revised CBI Crime Manual

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge), Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr. Jitendra Singh on Monday released revised CBI Crime Manual in an official event. The event was attended by CBI Director Rishi Kumar Shukla and others including senior officers of the agency.

Singh congratulated the CBI for bringing out the updated CBI Crime Manual after fifteen years by keeping sight of latest developments in law, investigation techniques and procedures.

company became stressed due to non-payment interest and instalments during June 2014.

The period crime mentioned in the FIR is September 2012 to October 2015 and loan accounts were subsequently declared as Non-Performing Assets.



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will deliver the inaugural address at the India International Science Festival (IISF) 2020 on December 22 via video conferencing. The Ministry of Science and Technology and Ministry of Earth Sciences in association with Vijnana Bharati (VIBHA) conceptualized the mega science event to promote scientific temper in society.

“In the pandemic when a lot of excitement seems to have come to a halt, it is science and technology that is keeping the spirits high. One such live example is IISF 2020 where science can be experienced virtually.

“We have events where students can go for virtual tours, 3D exhibitions, virtual events, panel discussions, lectures and many more. There are 41 events and everyone is welcome in the event,” said Dr Ranjana Aggarwal, Director, CSIR-National Institute of Science, Technology and

Development Studies (NISTADS), New Delhi.

She was addressing at J C Bose University of Science and Technology, YMCA during the curtain raiser of the event recently.

Dr Aggarwal elaborated on the various events and their scopes and briefed about how students can be benefitted with the programs at the ease of sitting at their homes but without missing the real science.

“When the pandemic happened, we thought it will get over in few months and we will be able to conduct the program like we did last year. But by September it became clear that it won’t be possible for us to conduct it physically, then we thought of conducting it at virtual platforms” said Jayant Sahasrabudhe, National Organizing Secretary, VIBHA.

He explained that IISF is involving global and overseas Indian researchers and academics, beyond the barriers of time and borders. He said that despite the corona out-

break the number of events has been increased and there is a plan to increase it in the consecutive festivals.

Information on various activities related to the Science Festival and registration of partners is available on the IISF website www.scienceindiafest.org, said an official from the Science and Technology sMinistry.

Launched in 2015, the IISF is a celebration to promote science and technology. It aims to engage the public with science, celebrate the joy of science and show how Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) can provide solutions to improve lives, he said.

The goal of the IISF 2020 is to help youth develop 21st-century skills, with a focus on scientific knowledge, creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork. A long-term objective is to encourage students to study and work in scientific fields, the official added.

NIA arrests 17 SDPI, PFI activists in KG Halli Police Station riot case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Monday arrested 17 SDPI/PFI leaders/activists for their involvement in the violent attack and large scale rioting at KG Halli Police Station, Bengaluru on August 11 after a controversial Facebook post by the nephew of Congress MLA of Pulakeshi Nagar, Bengaluru.

The case was originally registered as FIR No .229/2020, PS KG Halli, dated August 12 and was re-registered as RC-35/ 2020/ NIA/ DLI on September 21 by NIA.

“Investigation so far has revealed that the SDPI (Social Democratic Party of India) leaders, namely, Md. Sharieff, President, Bengaluru District, SDPI, Imran Ahmed, President, KG Halli Ward, along with other senior leaders like Rubah Waqas, Shabbar Khan and Shaik Ajmal had conducted meetings at Thanissandra and KG Halli wards in Bengaluru in the evening of 11.8.2020 wherein they conspired,

mobilised and led the crowd gathered at KG Halli Police station to attack the police personnel, causing huge damage to the public and police station vehicles,” the NIA said in a statement.

Likewise, accused Abbas, SDPI President of Nagwara ward had also mobilised large crowds at the KG Halli police station through his associates Azil Pasha, Irfan Khan and Akbar Khan, the agency said.

Investigation also revealed the use of social media channels like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp to spread terror among people and mobilised people from far away places to gather at KG Halli Police Station. Accused Saddam, Sayed Sohel, Kaleemulla alias Shahrukh Khan were active social media users who participated in riots as well as instigated others to gather at the police station, it said.

Till so far, as many as187 accused persons have been arrested in connection with the case. Further investigation is continuing in the case, it added.

Population of leopards in India rises to 12,852: Report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The population of leopards in India has increased from 7,910 to 12,852, up by 60 per cent in four years since 2014, according to a report ‘Status of Leopard in India 2018’, released by Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar on Monday.

“India now has 12,852 leopards as compared to the previous estimate of 7,910 conducted 2014. The States of Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra recorded the highest leopard estimates at 3,421, 1,783 and 1,690 respectively,” Javadekar said as he remarked that monitoring of the tiger in India has clearly shown its umbrella role in the ecosystem, which has shed light on other charismatic species like the leopard.

“India’s world record tiger survey also estimated the population of leopards and the tiger range was found the home to 12,852 (12,172-13,535) leopards. They occur in prey rich protected areas as well as multi-use forests.

“A total of 5,240 adult individual leopards were identified



in a total of 51,337 leopard photographs using pattern recognition software. The statistical analysis estimates the leopard population at - 12,800 leopards within the tiger’s range,” said a statement issued by the Union Environment Ministry later.

The ministry claimed that the tiger has not only served as an umbrella species but even its monitoring has helped evaluate the status of other species, like the leopard which are among the most adaptable carnivores, and are known to exist very close to human habitations.

A study earlier this year had found four distinct sub-populations of leopards in India with high genetic variations - leopards of the Western Ghats, the Deccan Plateau semi-arid region, the Shivalik mountains, and the Terai region in North India.

As for region wise distrib-

ution, the highest number of 8,071 leopards were found in central India and eastern ghats, which include the states of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

In the western ghat region, which comprises Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Goa and Kerala, there are 3,387 leopards while there are 1,253 leopards in Shivalik and Gangetic Plains which includes Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Bihar. In the northeast hills, there are just 141 leopards.

“The leopard was estimated across forested habitats in tiger range areas of the country but other leopard occupied areas such as non-forested habitats (coffee and tea plantations and other land uses from where leopards are known to occur), higher elevations in the Himalayas, arid landscapes and a majority of North East landscape were not sampled and, therefore, the population estimation should be considered as the minimum number of leopards in each of the landscapes,” the Ministry said.

‘Meri Sangh Yatra’ by Sangh worker Om Prakash Garg released

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A book ‘Meri Sangh Yatra’ Aby Sangh Worker Om Prakash Garg was released by Sah Sarkaryavah Dattatreya Hosbale and Akhil Bharatiya Sah Sampark Pramukh Ramlal of RSS. Director General of the Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC) Prof. Sanjay Dwivedi was also present.

On the occasion, Dattatreya Hosbale said that several books in different languages have been published about the Sangh but every book has its own importance. When a Sangh worker writes a book, that book not only encloses his experiences but also his feelings.

He said that this book is a document of Sangh for future generations.

While Ramlal said that RSS cannot be understood merely by listening about it but by observing it, the author Om Prakash Garg, said that this book is not an autobiography but is a compilation of the inspiration to work, which he got by joining the Sangh and the society.

PIL in SC to establish special anti-corruption Courts in every district

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A PIL seeking to establish a special anti-corruption courts in every district to decide cases related to various economic offences like money laundering and tax evasion within one year has been filed in the Supreme Court.

The PIL filed by BJP leader and advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay has also sought directions to high courts to take appropriate steps to decide cases related economic offences.

The petition has made the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Law and Justice, and various states and Union territories parties in the case.

The PIL, filed through advocate Ashwani Kumar Dubey, contended that due to long pendency and ineffective anti-corruption laws, India has never been ranked among the top 50 in the Corruption Perception Index. The Centre and state governments have also not taken appropriate steps in this regard, the petition said.



None of the welfare schemes and government departments are corruption-free, it said.

“Due to long pendency and ineffective anti-corruption laws, even after 73 years of independence and 70 years after becoming a socialist secular democratic republic, none of our districts are free from cases related to black money, benami property, disproportionate assets, bribery, money laundering, tax evasion and similar other economic offences,” the petition said.

India’s anti-corruption laws are very weak and ineffective and fail to control corruption, and even the Benami Transactions Act, passed in 1988, is gathering dust without action, it said.

Nepal on the boil

As Oli dissolves House, losing the majority to challengers, it's time for India to manoeuvre the crisis to its advantage



For some time now, Nepalese Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli has been co-opted by China which has turned the Himalayan frontier State against India, challenging us on redrawing borders and questioning our shared civilisational heritage. And now that he is facing a rebellion in his Nepal Communist Party (NCP), with rival contenders Pushp Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' and Madhav Nepal now claiming majority support — both nurtured by India for a while — he has done the unthinkable. Cornered and desperate, Oli has dissolved the 275-member House of Representatives — the Lower House of the country's Parliament. Not only that, he got the

President to issue a communiqué on elections in April-May with his Government holding forth in the interim. The move is unconstitutional as the Pratinidhi Sabha has a five-year term and cannot be dissolved earlier. There is no provision that allows the Prime Minister to dissolve it unilaterally. Logically, he would have to face a trust vote by his own party, which would suggest the contender, in this case Prachanda, as Prime Minister for the remaining term. Of course, the matter is pending before Nepal's Supreme Court. An adverse verdict would mean he will have to resign. If not, he would continue until the summer elections. The dissension in the NCP is not new, with India trying to neutralise a hostile Oli by propping up the other two. But every time China has stepped in to broker a deal and keep Oli in the chair, simply because it wants to step up its offensive against India and keep the borders hot. In fact, China couldn't have asked for a more servile leader than Oli, who got into a map war with us at its behest to further its expansionist agenda. Beijing has been investing heavily in the infrastructure of the Himalayan nation, making it impossible for even the rival faction to ignore its geo-strategic heft. India has been trying to keep Oli in check and rework bilateral ties on more equitable terms with the Army chief, Gen MM Naravane, visiting in November, followed by Foreign Secretary Harsh Shringla. Oli thought that by grandstanding against India, he would have inspired a nationalist tide that would make him an indispensable leader of his party. But not all in his party or the Opposition want to burn bridges with India. Besides, the rival faction is looking for its own political legitimacy. When the NCP was formed in May 2018 by merging the Oli-led Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist–Leninist) and the Prachanda-led Communist Party of Nepal (Maolist Centre), both leaders had agreed to a power-sharing deal under which both would be Prime Minister for two-and-a-half years. But the deal never got ratified and Oli avoided taking it up with the combined general council, relegating it to a no-priority list and heightening anti-India rhetoric. But Prachanda is restless to realise his political ambition than sacrifice it to a manipulated threat perception from India. This could be an opportunity like no other for India to play upon Prachanda's anxieties and rebuild its relevance in the ensuing power play. Besides, there has also been a resurgence of pro-royalists, who want a return to monarchy, an aspiration that India could smartly play into, using the sentiment for a Hindu kingdom to strengthen ties with the Narendra Modi Government. Not that Nepal's monarchy was anti-China but at the moment a swell of opinion in its favour could give India a certain comfort level and help it bargain with both Oli and Prachanda.

Having been a Hindu kingdom and given its contiguity to India, Nepal has had a commonality of interests, which has been one of the reasons for the open borders between both countries. But Oli has been putting up cultural barriers, and is determined to delink any interdependent association with India. He is decidedly hawkish about China, willing to be its vassal State. In fact, China has upped its cultural diplomacy, too, in Nepal, helping it rebuild old temple complexes and shrines that were damaged in the earthquake of 2015. Oli's latest tirade against India questions Indian claims around the Lipulekh Pass based on varied interpretations of the British-era maps. Though there is a long history of both nations making claims and counterclaims over this area, according to a 1954 treaty signed between them and China, Lipulekh Pass is very much an Indian gateway. Although the new road near it, built by New Delhi to facilitate pilgrim traffic to Kailash Mansarovar, is now one of the quickest links between Delhi and the Tibetan plateau, China, too, has not objected to it. In fact, it recognised India's sovereignty by agreeing to expand trade through the Pass. India's over-dependence on historical, spiritual and geographical connect as a leitmotif of diplomacy is being tested severely. And though we are investing in bilateral relations on more favourable terms and pushing COVID-19 aid, we can't beat the Chinese, who make up 90 per cent of Nepal's Foreign Direct Investment.

Unanswered virulence

The festival season's spirit has been marred by a new virulent strain of COVID-19 in the United Kingdom



The British Government claims that a new strain of the Coronavirus is spreading like wildfire across the island nation which has led to several curious questions. When the books about the Coronavirus pandemic are written, several politicians will find themselves remembered poorly by historians, at least by those who have the ability to write freely. One of them who is almost certain to be pilloried is Boris Johnson, the man in 10 Downing Street in London. Not only was Johnson one of the first world leaders to get a bad case of the virus, the way the British Government has handled the virus with impossibly complicated tiered lockdowns and protocols that have been duly disobeyed by the public, now it emerges that there is a new virulent strain of COVID-19 doing the rounds in the British Isles just as the nation heads for its strictest lockdown yet just ahead of Christmas. It is claimed that this new strain is allegedly 70 per cent more virulent than the regular virus, albeit, we are assured, no less fatal. But that is a moot point, even with systems in place, the harsh winter across Europe and North America has made cases alongside fatalities spike and that has led to hospital systems being overwhelmed. However, with the suggested lockdown to keep the virus in check coming just ahead of Christmas, a particularly festive time in the United Kingdom, many on either side of the political aisle believe that this is a conspiracy theory. It has been said that this is a ploy to ensure everyone gets vaccinated, this at a time where prominent celebrities like Eric Clapton have come out publicly against wearing face masks and believe that the virus is a ploy to take away freedoms, sounding little different from some of Donald Trump's more hyper supporters. Others have claimed that this is a way for the British Government to justify its decision to clamp a lockdown and ensure that people stay home.

But it takes a lot of courage to shut the borders down, and ruin the most critical shopping season of the year. Even in India despite numbers spiking, governments across the board ensured that there were no lockdowns during the festive season. Indeed, a few kilometres beyond the Delhi borders you would not know that there is an ongoing pandemic with mask compliance almost non-existent and large social gatherings carrying on merrily. If the British Government is indeed telling the truth, it is imperative that India also closes her borders to all, including Indian citizens coming from the United Kingdom. There are currently nine non-stop flights a day from four Indian cities to London, an estimated 2,000 passengers daily. At least at the Government's level we must believe that Boris Johnson and his Cabinet are not lying. Hopefully, the Brits will be able to get control of this strain before it spreads although it already appears to be too late. The Indian Government and State Governments should be prepared for the worst case scenario.



A SURYA PRAKASH

With COVID cases in India falling from a peak of 98,000 new cases per day last September to below the 25,000 mark, it can now be said that the collective efforts of the Union Government, the State Governments, health administrators and the entire healthcare sector over the last eight months is finally yielding the results.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been leading from the front and has taken 10 meetings of Chief Ministers devoted wholly to the tackling of this pandemic. His hands-on approach, constant State-wise monitoring of the spread of the virus, interaction with Chief Ministers of the worst-hit States, visits to pharmaceutical companies to get an update on the manufacture of the vaccine have all contributed in a substantial way not only in controlling the disease but in keeping the morale high among doctors, nurses, paramedical staff and administrators and researchers in the field of medicine.

Apart from the Prime Minister, many Chief Ministers have put politics aside and worked tirelessly alongside the Union Government to control COVID-19 in their respective States. At last count, there are over 40 political parties governing this country at the national and State level. This includes members of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) at the Centre, regional parties with huge majorities in States like the Biju Janata Dal in Odisha, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Delhi, the All India Trinamool Congress in West Bengal, the YSR Congress in Andhra Pradesh and the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) in Telangana. There are also several States like Kerala, led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and Bihar with the Janata Dal (United) at the helm, which are run by coalition Governments. Apart from these parties, we have the national parties — the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Congress party (INC) — running several big States like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Haryana, Rajasthan, Punjab and Chhattisgarh, to name a few.

This is indeed a mind-boggling kaleidoscope of political parties governing 1,400 million people and this does not include several dozen more sub-regional political entities in positions of power at the *zila parishad* and

Unity in diversity

Disregarding respective political ideologies and affiliations, the Union and State Governments joined hands with healthcare professionals to beat the virus



municipal corporation levels. Yet, despite the fractious nature of our politics and high-decibel political battles that have been fought between the BJP-led Centre and States run by other parties in the recent years, they have by and large put aside their political differences and come together to fight the pandemic. This is the spirit of co-operative federalism that Modi was keen to usher in and it goes to the credit of all the players that they have displayed a unity of purpose to fight COVID-19 which is in contrast to the intense political battles that are fought on the ground in normal times.

A good example of keeping politics out and putting in a joint effort can be seen in the initiatives taken by Union Home Minister Amit Shah to reach out to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and to find ways to improve Delhi's infrastructure to tackle COVID-19. Shah had more than a couple of meetings with the Chief Minister and his officials when the COVID situation in the Capital began to cause concern. He was joined by Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan, who has been working vigorously over the last 10 months to confront and contain the biggest challenge to public health in this country.

The meetings in November resulted in Delhi getting more ICU beds and equipment. After this meeting, the Delhi Chief Minister thanked Union Home Minister and said he had the assurance that all Central and State Government agencies would work together to

THIS IS THE SPIRIT OF CO-OPERATIVE FEDERALISM THAT MODI WAS KEEN TO USHER IN AND IT GOES TO THE CREDIT OF ALL THE PLAYERS THAT THEY HAVE DISPLAYED A UNITY OF PURPOSE TO FIGHT COVID-19 IN CONTRAST TO THE USUAL INTENSE POLITICAL BATTLES

tackle COVID-19.

This is also the moment to acknowledge the work of our doctors, nurses and paramedical staff, especially in the Government sector, who have been working relentlessly against huge odds to treat COVID-19 patients. On testing COVID positive, this writer was treated at the Trauma Centre at AIIMS, which has been converted to a COVID Centre. Several doctors and

nurses working there had themselves contracted COVID in the course of duty. Yet, they were back at work after recovery. There are many such reports from other hospitals as well. But the one disturbing factor is the capacity of some private hospitals and reports of them charging mind-boggling sums just to provide a room for COVID patients. The Government has a responsibility to identify these institutions, investigate their practices and penalise them once the pandemic is under control.

Meanwhile, Modi has reviewed India's vaccination strategy, the current status of the research and the distribution of the vaccine when it is available. Here again, consultations with the States is already on.

This brings us to the lessons that we have learnt over the last 10 months. If one reflects over the situation when the crisis first hit us and the Union Government announced a lockdown and decided its extension, there was a nation-wide debate on the efficacy of the lockdown itself. Thereafter, many Chief Ministers were highly critical of the Centre and the latter had a lot of complaints about the non-response of States like West Bengal to the directions issued by the Centre. It took some time for all the stakeholders to realise that the Union Government's directives regarding the lockdown, social distancing, wearing of masks, closure of businesses, entertainment industry, educational institutions and so on flowed from the powers vested

in it by the Constitution to deal with national emergencies and disasters. The States also realised that in the absence of unity of action, all States would be doomed because the virus respects no geographical boundaries separating States.

Those who breathe negativity are unable to see all this. They are the doomsayers, hoping that this diverse nation will collapse like a house of cards. But all indicators show that this country's political leadership, both at the national level and in the States, is capable of rising over petty politics to offer a united challenge to this pandemic and to win the battle. Just look at the situation in the US and you will realise how blessed we are. Unfortunately, America has been unable to show a unity of purpose and the confidence to deal with the pandemic and this has resulted in COVID-19 spiralling out of control in that country.

Hopefully, the new year should see COVID-19 cases decline in India to the barest minimum, followed by a credible, reliable vaccine. That day, we must wholeheartedly acknowledge the integration that the political leadership brought about and the heroic fight that our doctors, nurses and everyone in the healthcare sector put up against COVID-19 which enabled us to overcome the deadliest health crisis this country has faced in the recent times.

(The writer is an author specialising in democracy studies. The views expressed are personal.)

SOUNDBITE

Prashant Kishor has said that he would quit Twitter if the BJP performs well in the Bengal elections. (Then) The country would lose an election strategist.

BJP general secretary
—Kailash Vijayvargiya



The developments that took place yesterday may seem unpredictable and abrupt, but this situation has been created by some inconsistent and distorted leaders of the party.

Nepal's Prime Minister
—KP Sharma Oli



I want to play characters that challenge me. I constantly tell myself to choose films and characters that help me tap into a different side of me. Comfort is boring.

Actor
—Amit Sath



The shorter the format, the more exciting the game becomes. I can't wait to play at the Zayed Cricket Stadium again. Watch out Abu Dhabi, a Gayle storm is coming.

Cricketer
—Chris Gayle



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Local sports get attention

Sir — It is truly delightful that the Sports Ministry has approved the inclusion of four indigenous Indian sports which are very popular and hail from different regions — Gatka (Punjab), Kalaripayattu (Kerala), Thang-Ta (Manipur) and Mallakhamba (Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra) — in the forthcoming Khelo India Youth Games 2021, scheduled in Haryana.

Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju has rightly said that India has a rich heritage of indigenous sports and it is a priority for the Sports Ministry to preserve, promote and popularise these games.

The Khelo India Games is definitely an excellent platform where athletes of these games can compete and showcase their talent not only in these sports but also bring national and global attention to these sports which are very popular since the ancient times.

Rijiju stated that these four disciplines, along with yogasana, will get due attention among the sports enthusiasts and the youth. The Sports Ministry is planning to include more indigenous sports in Khelo India Games.

M Pradyu
Kannur

India becoming centre for global wellness

That, after the "Pharmacy of the world", India could also get to be recognised as the centre for global wellness is no longer something in the realm of imagination but a declared truth. And this declaration of India being chosen as the global centre for traditional medicines came from none other than Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO's Director General, when he sent his message through the video on the occasion of the 5th Ayurveda Day, in which Narendra Modi inaugurated through video conferring the two future ayurveda institutions to come up in Jaipur and Jamnagar. In comparison to last year, this year in September the export of ayurveda products increased to 45 per cent which is enough to understand as to which extent the world showed its trust in ayurveda. And this is the only reason that WHO's response came into such form.

India accounts for more than half of the herbs produced in the world. But attention in the real sense toward this was paid for the first time when in 2000 a national policy was drafted under the Atal Bihari Vajpayee-led Government for the Indian medical therapies. Under this policy, unprecedented work of bringing ayurveda and unani therapy under the category of Harit Udyog (green organic industry) was



done. And then only the National Medicinal Plant Board grew conscious about chalking out a specific policy for the conservation and breeding of *aanwla*, *chandana* (sandalwood), *ashwagandha* and such other herbs and plants.

In this time of Corona, ayurveda brought a new hope to those facing extreme distress. So much so that having crossed the nation's boundary, it has even begun to gain the limelight in foreign lands.

E Rajesh Pathak
Bhopal

Dharma not the answer

Sir — This refers to the report 'Government plans breakthrough in kisan talks' (December 21). Farmers have put themselves in great inconvenience by staging protests in cold weather conditions.

They are putting their lives in danger and, at the same time, unable to find a common meeting

ground with the Government in talks that have been held so far. One can understand the issues raised by the farmers with the Government but to put up such a massive congregation at the borders of the Capital is perhaps not the best way to resolve the impasse.

The farmers' concern is that the new farm laws initiated by the Government would facilitate the

involvement of corporates who might later control the fortunes of the agriculture market, thereby putting farmers in the background.

But the laws do farmers a favour by eliminating the commission agents. So one does not know as to where things are headed with regards to the talks.

Devendra Khurana
Bhopal

Rahul has task cut out

Sir — This refers to the editorial 'Congress deal for Rahul?' (December 21). Since the Gandhian and young Congress leader quit as the party chief, taking moral responsibility for his party's embarrassing drubbing at the BJP's hands in the last parliamentary election, the grand old party has been at the receiving end of one after another body blow as several dissenting leaders from both the new and the old guard have deserted the Congress with several heavyweights even joining the ruling BJP's juggernaut, either after sulking over having no say with the party leadership or for the sake of seeking greener pastures on the other side of the fence.

I subscribe to the editorial view that this rapprochement between the Gandhi first family and the dissenters is driven with the dual purposes of keeping the Congress's flock together and paving the way for Rahul's comeback at the helm simultaneously by convincing the dissenters over the redressal of their grievances.

Azhar A Khan
Rampur

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

The unfruitful spring

The problem resides in the Arab world, where the political climate has only two seasons: Brief springs and very long winters



GWYNNE DYER

Ten years ago in the middle of December, Mohamed Bouazizi, a street vendor in Tunisia, set himself alight in front of a Government building in rage at the corrupt dictatorship that had ruined his young life. His sacrifice awakened hope in millions of others — but then half a million of them also died, although not at their own hands and the rest went quiet. It was called the Arab Spring.

It should have worked. Non-violent democratic revolutions had overthrown around two dozen other tyrannies in the previous 20 years. So when people in half a dozen Arab dictatorships, galvanised by Bouazizi's action went out into the streets to demand democracy in late 2010 and 2011, most onlookers expected them to win.

In fact they all lost, except in Tunisia. In Egypt the protesters forced the old dictator to quit but the army was back in power in less than two years. In Syria, Yemen and Libya, the protests morphed into savage civil wars that continue even today. Smaller protests in Lebanon and Bahrain were shut down by force.

This is a stunningly unimpressive record and it's not because the whole non-violent technique is falling out of favour. There are non-violent attempts to remove dictators underway right now in Thailand and Belarus, both with a reasonable chance of success.

So what's wrong with the Arab world, where only four out of 22 countries are classed as "free" or "partly free" by Freedom House? No other region of the world scores this badly. Don't say "meddling imperialists" or the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or give some other alibi involving foreigners, because three-quarters of the world's countries could use that excuse if they wanted. Most don't, because they don't need excuses.

There have been lots of attempts at democratic revolutions in the Arab world too, but the good guys keep losing. What is so different there? Here's one possible answer. Everywhere else, the political choice is binary: Tyranny or democracy. In most of the Arab countries there are three choices: The dreadful *status quo*, democracy or Islam. In every Arab country, out in the open or operating underground, there is also an Islamist opposition promising that, "Islam is the answer."

The right answer depends on what the question was and as a non-Arab and non-Muslim I am not the one setting the questions. I just observe that in the Arab world, unlike elsewhere, two alternative routes out from the existing oppression are on offer to the public. Both have considerable popular appeal but they are mutually exclusive.

Equality and its political expression, democracy, are human values. However, for historical reasons it is easy for Islamists to portray political democracy as an alien, Western value. Equality just for the true believers is a viable rival doctrine for revolutionaries in countries where most people are Muslim — and that is the fault line that the dictators exploited.

That's why the first thing Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad did when the pro-democracy protests began was to free several thousand Islamist activists from his prisons. Rival sets of enemies out in the streets is far better than a united opposition. It led to a ten-year civil war that has driven half the population into exile but Assad is still in power today.

The Egyptian army was more subtle. It let its old, discredited leader go under, knowing that a free election would bring the Islamists to power because most voters were rural and socially very conservative. The military calculated that the urban young who made the revolution would be dismayed and seek the army's help when the Islamists began forcing their values on the country. That's exactly what happened and the new dictator, General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, then closed the door on the whole episode by massacring about 4,000 Islamists on the streets of Cairo. Variants of this scenario played out in other Arab countries with more or less violence and only Tunisia managed to create a lasting (so far) democracy.

This is not uniquely an Arab problem, of course. Iran has been an Islamist theocracy for 40 years and Turkey's once lively democracy has been slowly strangled during Recep Tayyip Erdogan's 17 years in power. But as the distance from the Arab heartland grows, so do the prospects for democracy.

Pakistan manages to be a (quite corrupt) democracy about half the time, Bangladesh and Malaysia are quasi-democratic all the time. And Indonesia is a fully fledged, full-service democracy. These four countries account for almost half the world's Muslims — and African Muslims don't seem to have particular problems with democracy either.

The problem resides in the Arab world, where the political climate has only two seasons: Brief springs and very long winters. It may not be an insoluble problem but there's certainly no solution in sight, at least in the near future.

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

DIDI IS MAKING DESPERATE ATTEMPTS TO MAKE HER NEPHEW ABHISHEK BANERJEE THE NEXT CHIEF MINISTER OF BENGAL. —UNION HOME MINISTER AMIT SHAH

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



I WOULD LIKE TO CLARIFY THAT NO ONE IN MAMATA'S FAMILY IS EAGER TO BECOME THE NEXT CHIEF MINISTER OF BENGAL. THE BJP IS LYING. —TMC MP KALYAN BANERJEE

No power in these reforms

Just as the UDAY scheme was meant to extinguish the liabilities of discoms, the proposed electricity distribution reform programme, too, seeks to give them the money on a platter



UTTAM GUPTA

The Government is expected to announce a ₹3,00,000 crore electricity distribution reform programme to reduce losses and improve the efficiency of power distribution companies or discoms. Christened 'Reforms-Linked, Result-Based Scheme for Distribution', the move is aimed at helping discoms trim their electricity losses to 12-15 per cent from the present level and gradually narrow the deficit between the cost of electricity and the price at which it is supplied, to 'zero' by March 2025. This is quite similar to the Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY) launched in 2015, wherein the targets were missed by a huge margin. The Centre's planned electricity distribution reform programme will also meet the same fate as the real intent is not reform but to give money to the beleaguered discoms so that they can clear dues to power generators and other suppliers.

Meanwhile, amid the cacophony of farmers' protest over the enactment of the three farm laws by the Narendra Modi Government, a demand that went unnoticed relates to doing away with an amendment to the Electricity Act (2003) that requires farmers to pay tariff for electricity supply at the un-subsidised rate even as the State concerned provides Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) of subsidy to their bank account. Reportedly, the Centre has accepted this demand.

What it means is that the Centre will continue with the existing dispensation of supplying power at subsidised rates to farmers (in some States it is even free of charge). If it is done for farmers then logically, other beneficiaries of subsidised power, such as poor households should continue under the subsidising arrangement, too. You can't have two different methods of delivering subsidy to different albeit vulnerable sections of society.

Do we then take it that the Government has junked its plan on DBT? A cursory glance at a spate of announcements coming from the top may help us in unraveling the truth in regard to the DBT or for that matter, fate of other reforms in this crucial sector. Under the special economic and comprehensive package for the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan' announced in May, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had provided for a special loan of ₹90,000 crore from the Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) and the Power Finance Corporation (PFC) to discoms. This was done to enable them to clear their dues to independent power producers (IPPs) and generators in the public sector, such as the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC). But, this was conditional upon the discoms implementing reforms such as DBT of power subsidy, "open access" i.e. allowing consumer to draw power from a supplier of his/her choice and so on.

Sitharaman had linked the hike in the borrowing limit of States to the extent of 0.25 per cent of the State Gross Domestic Product (SGDP) (out of an overall increase of two per cent allowed to them) to power sector reforms. Of this, 0.05 per cent is predicated on the State reducing aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) losses (a sophisticated nomenclature for theft) of its discoms, another 0.05 per cent to their reducing the gap between the average cost of supply and average revenue realisation (ACS-ARR gap) from the sale of electricity and the remaining 0.15 per cent to DBT.

Each State was required to formulate a scheme to roll out DBT to farmers in lieu of free electricity from 2021-22. The scheme has to be implemented in at least one of its districts by December 31. Based on the progress on the above three parameters, the Power Ministry was required to recommend (to the Expenditure Department under the Finance Ministry) the release of 0.25 per cent by January 31, 2021. Even prior to this, power sector reforms have

“HOWEVER, THE DBT'S LAUNCH IS A PIPE DREAM AS ALL POLITICAL PARTIES, IRRESPECTIVE OF THEIR IDEOLOGICAL MOORINGS — WHETHER IN THE GOVERNMENT OR IN THE OPPOSITION — WANT THEMSELVES TO BE SEEN AS SUPPLYING ELECTRICITY TO FARMERS FREE OF CHARGE. HENCE THEY HAVE A VESTED INTEREST IN CONTINUING WITH THE STATUS QUO. TILL THERE IS NO POLITICAL WILL TO END THIS, THERE CAN BE NO REAL POWER REFORMS IN INDIA”



been on top of the Central Government's agenda. In November 2015, it launched the UDAY. The prime objective of the scheme which ran for nearly four years was to cut the losses of discoms by reducing AT&C losses and the ACS-ARR gap. These losses were a result of the increase in the cost of power purchase on one hand and supply to farmers at heavily subsidised rates on the other. They were required to reduce AT&C losses from 20.7 per cent during 2015-16 to 15 per cent by 2018-19. Further, they were asked to reduce the ACS-ARR gap from ₹0.59 per unit during 2015-16 to 'zero' by 2018-19.

Simultaneously, the Government gave them a financial restructuring package (FRP). Put simply, this was nothing but condoning their debt of about ₹4,00,000 crore (while 75 per cent of this was taken over by the States, for the balance, discoms were allowed to issue bonds at a preferential interest rate). The stated rationale behind giving FRP was to enable them start on a clean slate. In return, discoms were expected to set their house in order by achieving the milestones as specified above. But, they did not deliver.

During 2019-20, AT&C losses of discoms were 18.9 per cent against the target of 15 per cent for 2018-19. As regards the ACS-ARR gap during 2019-20, it stood at ₹0.42 per unit against target of 'zero'. This would mean that after initial reduction from ₹52,000 crore during 2015-16 to ₹17,000 crore during 2017-18, the discoms' loss increased to over ₹30,000 crore during 2019-20. In turn, this has led to a piling up of their dues to IPP/PSUs in excess of ₹1,30,000 crore.

Faced with the same predicament as in 2015, the Government is working on a ₹3,00,000 crore electricity distribution reform programme, which may be announced in the ensuing Union Budget. It was approved by the Public Investment Board (PIB) early this month.

The reforms are also aimed at improving the reliability and quality of power supply. It may also have a compulsory pre-paid and smart metering component to be implemented across the power supply chain, including in about 250 million households.

The Government is expected to contribute around ₹60,000 crore to the scheme's corpus and the rest may be raised from multilateral funding agencies such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank (WB). The Centre's contribution will be met through the previous commitment of the ongoing schemes viz. the Integrated Power Development Scheme (IPDS) and the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojna (DDUGJY). The funds will be released subject to their meeting reform-related milestones.

The proposed electricity distribution reform programme is more or less similar to UDAY but for the change of name and insertion of some catchy phrases such as Reforms-Linked, Result-Based and so on. One sees the typical syndrome of 'old wine in a new bottle.' Just as the real purpose of the UDAY scheme was to extinguish the liabilities of discoms, the proposed electricity distribution reform programme, too, seeks to give them the money on a platter. This will help them clear their dues to power generators and keep some cushion to take care of future losses.

The talk of trimming AT&C losses or lowering the ACS-ARR gap to zero is laughable when seen in the backdrop of similar target having been missed in the past. Under UDAY, discoms were required to reduce AT&C loss to 15 per cent in 2018-19; now the reformers want this figure to be reached in March 2025. Similarly, the zero gap for ACS-ARR was targeted for 2018-19; under the new scheme, this gets shifted to 2025.

That the Government is not serious about the reforms agenda in the power sector, it has further vindicated by promising farmers that DBT of power subsidy won't be implemented. DBT is a transformative reform. Under it, subsidy is given directly to the beneficiaries even as tariff is cost-based or market-determined. The discoms will set tariff in a manner as to fully recover their cost of purchase, wheeling and distribution thereby avoiding loss. They won't also be saddled with pending subsidy dues from the State as then, the latter will be dealing directly with beneficiaries for subsidy transfer.

Under the DBT dispensation, discoms also need not charge more from industries and businesses which they have to do under the present regime to offset the loss suffered on subsidised sale to farmers and poor households. This in turn, will help the latter reduce their cost of operations and stay competitive. The new regime will also empower consumers as then, it will be easier to implement the "open access" policy thereby enabling them to source power directly from a supplier who offers the lowest tariff.

In short, DBT will be a win-win for all stakeholders viz. agriculture, industry, businesses, exchequer (both Centre and States) even as farmers have nothing to lose (as only the method of delivering subsidy changes).

However, the DBT's launch is a pipe dream as all political parties irrespective of their ideological moorings — whether in the Government or in the Opposition — want themselves to be seen as supplying electricity to farmers free of charge. Hence they have a vested interest in continuing with the *status quo*. Till there is no political will to end this, there can be no real power reforms in India.

(The writer is a New Delhi-based policy analyst. The views expressed are personal)

Yet another bid at Opposition unity

State leaders believe that they must emerge as an alternative to the Congress and the ruling BJP for democracy to thrive in the country



KALYANI SHANKAR

In the early '80s, buoyed by his big victory against the Congress the then Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister NT Rama Rao (NTR) talked about the formation of a Front for regional satraps called the Bharat Desam. But, this did not materialise for many years as NTR's vision was ahead of his time. Finally, in 1989 the National Front was born, of which NTR became the chairman. The National Front came to power and VP Singh of the Janata Dal became the Prime Minister defeating the Congress Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

However, it wasted away soon, yielding space to another Front called the United Front in 1996, of which Deve Gowda became the Prime Minister, followed by I.K. Gujral. This alliance too, was short-lived.

The next Front was the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) led by AB Vajpayee in 1998 and 2004. Soon after, Congress chief Sonia Gandhi formed the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), which ruled for ten years. The year 2014 saw the grand return of the BJP-led NDA and its winning streak is still continuing. As the late Congress leader Ahmed Patel used to point out, the UPA was not a Front after the 2014 elections. The Congress' slide has made it easier for the regional satraps, who are growing in number, to come together. Several of them, with a strong base in their respective States, are now thinking of forming a non-BJP and pro-Congress alliance. This is necessary because of the vacuum created by a weak Congress on the one

side and the ambitious regional satraps who are dreaming of national leadership, on the other.

The question is, can this alliance, when it is formed, survive? The answer to this can only come with time. But there is no doubt that the regional leaders view this as an opportune time to strengthen their positions further and work towards an alliance. They are quietly sounding out the other regional strongmen and mobilising their support. They realise that the Congress Party has lost its sheen and there is also a leadership crisis in the Grand Old Party. Moreover, in the last six years, the Congress has failed to lead the Opposition, despite repeated attempts to do so.

The purpose behind the bid to form a new alliance is to stall the BJP's juggernaut. They want to float it now so that they will not be caught napping in the next Lok Sabha polls. One might recall the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) chief Chandrashekhara Rao

announcing on the eve of the recent Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) elections that he plans to visit Delhi soon to discuss a non-BJP alliance.

Second, leaders like the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) chief Naveen Patnaik, Trinamool Congress (TMC) supremo Mamata Banerjee, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) head Sharad Pawar, Shiv Sena president Uddhav Thackeray are really worried about the way the BJP is growing in their backyard and they have been unable to check its growth. Even neutral leaders like Rao and Patnaik are considering joining this Front, as they were hesitant to part of any group in which the Congress was a partner.

Third, they are concerned about the aggressive campaigning by the BJP for even municipal polls, like it did in the recent GHMC elections. The BJP has jumped from two seats to 48 — just a few less than the TRS — which was ruling the roost for the last six

years. Fourth, the regional leaders do not mind taking issue-based help from the Congress, both in Parliament and outside, as the alliance would be opposed to the BJP in their respective States and also at the national level. The regional bigwigs are miffed with the Centre as they feel that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is not adhering to the dharma of federal cooperation on many issues, including the Goods and Services Tax (GST) and the money due to them for dealing with the COVID-19 outbreak.

Fifth, many senior leaders in the regional parties are reluctant to work under the leadership of former Congress president Rahul Gandhi. They would not mind, for instance working under the leadership of Sharad Pawar because, being a senior both in terms of age and political experience, he is more acceptable to the other stalwarts. Last but not the least, the satraps think that the BJP does not have any leader of stature in most

States. They hope that this powerful alliance against the BJP would work in their favour. There is no doubt that for any democracy to function properly, there is a need for a powerful and effective Opposition. It is also clear that the splintered Opposition in the country has not been effective, even with a majority in the Rajya Sabha. The ruling NDA has been able to get many controversial Bills passed in the House of Elders because of the disunity in the Opposition ranks.

Hence, State leaders believe that they must emerge as an alternative to the Congress and the ruling BJP for democracy to thrive in the country. Earlier efforts to form a Third Front were all short-lived because of the ego problems among them. From the Janata Party days to the present times, every decade the idea of a Third Front surfaces. The present move is one of them.

(The writer is a senior journalist. The views expressed are personal)



FOREIGN EYE



THE PEOPLE STRUGGLE ON

Over this year, goodwill has not only been drained by the lockdown but squandered by official incompetence and the discovery that while millions are struggling economically, in the UK "chumocracy" has prospered from Government handouts dished out with little scrutiny. That people still want to do the right thing is despite, not because of, the Government.

(The Guardian editorial)

Global shares weaker as virus fears overshadow US stimulus

New York: Global shares retreated Monday as worsening coronavirus outbreaks overshadowed news that US lawmakers finally set a deal on more support for American families and businesses.

Markets fell in Paris, London, Frankfurt and Tokyo but rose in Shanghai. U.S. Futures were lower.

Concern about the coronavirus outbreak grew, as several European Union nations banned flights from the UK and others considered similar precautions aimed at preventing a new strain of the virus from gaining a strong foothold on the continent.

That overshadowed the expected passage by the U.S. Congress of the nearly \$1 trillion COVID-19 economic relief package later Monday.

Most investors had already factored in expectations for the fresh stimulus, Jingyi Pan of IG said in a commentary.

"The tentative accord on the approximate \$900 billion coronavirus stimulus deal, having been the talk of the town for weeks, brought forth little fresh enthusiasm for markets," Pan said. Germany's DAX and the CAC 40 in Paris fell 3.1%. In Britain, the FTSE 100 gave up 2.5% to 6,436.30.

US futures also weakened, with the contract for the S&P 500 down 1.7%. The futures for the Dow industrials dropped 1.6%.

The British pound, sometimes called the pound sterling, fell 1.8% against the dollar, to \$1.3274, down from \$1.3522 late Friday. "Combined with European border closures and

the UK Health Secretary using phrases such as 'out of control' to describe the new strain, Sterling is, unsurprisingly, under pressure today," Jeffrey Halley of Oanda said in a commentary.

In Asia, flaring COVID-19 outbreaks have led authorities to impose lockdowns or other restrictions in Australia and Thailand.

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index lost 0.2%, regaining some of its earlier losses after the Cabinet approved a record annual budget of 106.6 trillion yen (\$1.03 trillion) for the coming fiscal year, which begins April 1.

In Hong Kong the Hang Seng declined 0.7% and South Korea's Kospi recovered from early losses, gaining 0.2%. The Shanghai Composite index gained 0.8%.

The US stimulus agreement includes temporary \$300 per week supplemental jobless benefits and \$600 direct stimulus payments to most Americans, along with a fresh round of subsidies for hard-hit businesses and funding for schools, health care providers, and renters facing eviction.

The final agreement was reached after a breakthrough over Federal Reserve emergency powers was resolved by the Senate's top Democrat and a senior conservative Republican. Wall Street retreated on Friday, with the S&P 500 losing 0.4% a day after it and other major indexes breached record highs.

The pandemic's chokehold on the economy has worsened, with reports showing growing numbers of workers

applying for jobless benefits and weaker than expected sales for retailers. Wall Street's hope is that the stimulus for the economy might help carry it through a tough winter, until the widespread rollout of COVID-19 vaccines might bring relief.

But it will be months before most people can get the shots, and the pandemic is likely to do even more damage in the interim. In the bond market, the yield on the 10-year Treasury slipped to 0.91% from 0.94% late Friday.

US benchmark crude oil lost \$2.01, or 4.1% to \$47.23 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. Brent crude, the international standard, declined \$1.80 to \$50.46 per barrel. **AP**

Most Indians consider buying 5G ready phones, Oppo, Samsung preferred brands: CMR

New Delhi: Around 83 per cent people in a survey in India shared that 5G is one of the factors they consider while buying a new phone and nearly three in every five existing premium smartphone users are looking to upgrade their device to the next generation technology, according to a report released by Cybermedia Research.

According to the survey, 81 per cent respondents prefer Oppo for 5G smartphone and 79 per cent opted for Samsung.

The global survey conducted in India, China and West Europe found that 5G users, where the service is available, have experienced better video calls, faster downloads and ability to stream ultra high definition videos

Suspension of UK flights may not have much impact on tourist traffic: Industry

New Delhi: The government's decision to suspend all flights from and to the UK from December 23 to December 31, in view of the emergence of a new COVID-19 strain, is not likely to have much impact on the tourist traffic, and the companies are monitoring the situation, travel industry players said on Monday.

"The impact of the current flight suspension to the UK and from there will have a negligible impact on tourist traffic. Due to the current environment of COVID-19 and the quarantine rules and off season, tourism to the UK in any case had not picked up," EaseMyTrip co-founder and CEO Nishant Pitti told PTI.

This will lead to a faster growth and

demand for domestic tourism, especially when the international option is limited. Travellers are aspiring to travel and take a break, and the focus will be on choosing Indian destinations, he added.

In a statement, a MakeMyTrip spokesperson said the sudden turn of developments in the UK has created a sense of confusion and anxiety among travellers who were planning to visit family and friends during this winter holiday season.

"While we are yet to see any impact on bookings from India to the UK, we do expect inbound queries from customers who were planning to return home in the coming days.

Fin Min releases weekly instalment of ₹6,000 cr to states to meet GST compensation shortfall

New Delhi: The Finance Ministry on Monday released the eighth weekly instalment of Rs 6,000 crore to the states to meet the GST compensation shortfall, taking the total amount released so far under this window to Rs 48,000 crore.

"The Ministry of Finance has released the 8th weekly instalment of Rs 6,000 crore to the States to meet the GST compensation shortfall. Out of this, an amount of Rs 5,516.60 crore has been released to 23 states and an amount of Rs 483.40 crore has been released to the 3 Union Territories (UT) with Legislative Assembly (Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir & Puducherry)," it said in a statement.

The remaining five states -- Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Sikkim -- do not have a gap in revenue on account

of GST implementation. The Centre had set up a special borrowing window in October, 2020 to meet the estimated shortfall of Rs 1.10 lakh crore in revenue arising on account of implementation of GST. The borrowings are being done through this window by the Centre on behalf of the States and UTs.

The amount borrowed so far was released to the states on October 23, November 2, November 9, November 23, December 1, December 7, December 14 and December 21, 2020. "The amount has been borrowed this week at an interest rate of 4.19 per cent. So far, an amount of Rs 48,000 crore has been borrowed by the Central Government through the special borrowing window at an average interest rate of 4.69 per cent," the statement added. **PTI**

At USD 8.1 bn in Nov, FPI inflows highest in 12 years: Report

Mumbai: Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs), which own more than 24 per cent of the domestic market, pumped in a record USD 8.1 billion last month, highest in 12 years, and at USD 5 billion to date, December also looks to get record inflows, says a foreign brokerage report.

At USD 8.1 billion, India has received the highest FPI inflows among the emerging market peers in November, as Brazil got only USD 6.2 billion, South Korea (USD 5.2 billion), Taiwan (USD 4.5 billion) and Thailand at USD 1.1 billion.

This inflow had the valuation premium of India to other emerging markets in the MSCI Index shooting up by 5 percentage point to 46 per cent and is 5 per cent above the long-term average, says Bank of America Securities in a report on Monday.

Meanwhile, with over USD 2 billion pullout, the domestic funds turned negative on the market in November.

NIFTY 50						
SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE	
NIFTY 50	13741.90	13777.50	13131.45	13328.40	-432.15	
INFY	1188.00	1209.75	1152.05	1176.00	-13.8	
NSEINDX	18262.75	18325.00	18101.00	18129.70	-233.05	
HINDUNILVR	2343.00	2350.00	2265.10	2295.00	-38.45	
CIPLA	793	816.9	760	780	-13.45	
TCS	2861.00	2886.50	2785.00	2808.00	-53	
SBILIFE	858	864	832.55	840	-17.15	
KOTAKBANK	1935.00	1939.00	1907.60	1910.15	-39.2	
HCLTECH	886.65	910.5	850	872.15	-18.5	
ASIANPAINT	2595.45	2602.30	2539.10	2545.75	-55.75	
BRITANNIA	3719.00	3727.35	3534.85	3616.60	-103.9	
RELATANCE	2010.00	2022.00	1855.25	1934.95	-56.5	
MARUTI	5243.00	5299.00	5278.10	5344.00	-21.7	
HDFC	2468.00	2478.95	2370.45	2405.00	-74.4	
HDFCBANK	1417.50	1423.85	1366.70	1369.00	-42.35	
WIPRO	362.5	367.45	348.35	352.6	-10.95	
EICHERMOT	2460.00	2475.35	2340.60	2403.00	-77.95	
DREDDY	5243.00	5274.20	4962.05	5064.00	-164.75	
ULTRACEMCO	5155.00	5190.00	4865.45	4986.05	-166.45	
TITAN	1514.20	1528.55	1451.00	1469.95	-49.4	
TECHM	928.15	946.65	890	903	-30.8	
SHREECEM	24550.00	24550.00	23249.15	23712.15	-862.25	
BAJAJ-AUTO	3325.50	3355.00	3198.50	3229.00	-118.55	
BHARTIARTL	507.5	511.2	480.15	492	-18.65	
JSWSTEEL	361.6	388.4	344	350.65	-14.15	
IT	1276.25	1338.50	1154.00	1231.30	-50.25	
HDFCLIFE	546	633.15	617.4	627.4	-26.7	
GRASIM	909.6	909.95	868.3	871	-38.65	
POWERGRID	193	193.2	184.45	185.5	-8.4	
SUNPHARMA	573.8	589.5	539.7	549.85	-25.15	
BAJAJFINSERV	9189.00	9245.00	8569.65	8795.00	-420.6	
HEROMOTOCO	3148.00	3152.85	2944.95	2990.00	-145.3	
ICICIBANK	514.6	514.7	488.2	492.95	-24.2	
ADANIAPORTS	459	467	427.2	415.5	-21.8	
BAFINANCE	5228.00	5234.70	4955.20	5005.00	-247.5	
DIVISLAB	3789.00	3803.95	3543.80	3645.05	-187.85	
AXISBANK	605.25	607.25	573.4	578.05	-31.45	
UPL	460	460.75	417	435	-25.3	
ITC	214.5	214.7	199.15	202	-12.5	
SBIN	268.45	269	251.05	254	-17.45	
TATASTEEL	624	627.7	585.6	590.5	-40.75	
NTPC	103.7	103.95	94.75	97	-6.75	
COALINDIA	141.4	141.5	129.35	132	-9.7	
M&M	729	730	660.25	682	-51.6	
BPCL	393	393	357.65	365.45	-28.4	
IOC	93.4	93.4	84.6	87	-69.5	
HINDALCO	246	249.75	228.65	231.3	-18.6	
INDUSINDBK	905.2	906	814.7	833.3	-71.9	
GAIL	125	125	112.55	114.5	-10.55	
ONGC	98.9	98.95	88.95	89.65	-9.35	
TATAMOTORS	176	177.5	162.5	163.35	-17.2	

NIFTY NEXT 50						
SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE	
NIFTY NEXT 50	32107.00	32109.65	30165.80	30971.50	-1111.25	
DMART	2645.00	2715.00	2460.80	2675.00	-37.95	
LGTH	3370.00	3449.00	3280.00	3369.00	-12.6	
PGH	11069.05	11109.15	10920.05	10989.95	-8.1	
INDUSTOWER	231.15	247.3	227.15	230.6	-0.55	
BAJAJHLING	3011.10	3063.35	2971.70	3076.00	-11.9	
ADANIIGREEN	1004.80	1040.00	971	1005.00	-11.15	
DABUR	509	514.95	494.2	502.9	-6.45	
BERGEPAINT	710.45	713.9	681.7	695.2	-14.85	
OFSS	3180.00	3197.35	3063.25	3100.00	-67.6	
ABBOTINDIA	1617.00	1679.00	1570.00	1580.00	-37.81	
TATACONSUM	574	579.95	553.7	559.95	-13.6	
ICICIGI	1454.60	1457.95	1404.00	1425.00	-36.45	
GODREJCP	719	745.2	683.1	702	-18.2	
HINDZINC	242.4	246.3	229.8	235.3	-6.45	
IGL	480	483.9	451.65	464.5	-13.5	
HDFCAMC	2861.90	2950.00	2700.00	2780.00	-82	
ICICIPRULI	482	485.55	458.4	468.35	-14.2	
PIDILITIND	1730.00	1731.00	1643.40	1680.00	-51.8	
AMUL	2953.80	2988.00	2860.00	2865.00	-88.8	
MARICO	409	409	389.35	396	-13.3	
MUTHOOTFIN	1206.85	1249.70	1138.60	1170.00	-40.85	
COLPAL	1597.00	1598.50	1522.00	1540.05	-60.15	
SBICARD	835	846.1	799	808.05	-32.3	
SIEMENS	1542.80	1569.00	1441.15	1476.50	-62.5	
NAUKRI	4662.90	4729.20	4403.70	4452.00	-192.25	
LUPIN	983	991.8	875	930.7	-41.4	
HAVELLS	917	927	862.05	880	-39.35	
UBL	1139.00	1152.00	1038.60	1087.00	-50.55	
TORNTPHARM	2778.00	2809.60	2534.40	2655.00	-124.1	
ACC	1648.00	1648.00	1485.00	1572.85	-75.45	
AUROPHARMA	889.85	905.2	801.1	843.45	-42.55	
CADILAH	476	485.75	428.95	452	-24.6	
AGFLR	142	142.6	130	134.9	-7.75	
PETRONET	255.5	255.55	232.1	243.5	-14.4	
MCDOWELLN	589	594.25	550.1	555.65	-32.8	
BIOCON	470	473.4	439.6	445.5	-26.8	
CONCOR	406	407.6	369	381.55	-23.7	
SKSCLTD	1325.20	13294.00	11910.00	12407.30	-795.85	
NMDC	115.6	118.3	107.1	108.2	-7.5	
AMBUJACEM	259.0	259.9	225.95	234	-17.05	
MOTHERSUMI	154.5	155.35	141.55	146.5	-10.75	
PF	116.95	117.55	105.75	109.3	-8.2	
ADANITRANS	425	434.85	381.55	395	-29.85	
DLF	229	243.5	208.3	214.5	-16.9	
HINDPETRO	222.5	223.45	204.5	207.9	-16.5	
PNB	36	36.85	33	33.8	-2.75	
PEL	1440.00	1445.90	1302.30	1333.00	-112.15	
RANKBARODA	62.25	63.5	56.8	58.05	-5.05	
RANDHARBK	404.95	404.95	367.5	374	-34.2	
INDIGO	1,637.00	1,637.00	1,487.25	1,496.75	-154.3	

BSE 500

Script	Open	High	Low	LTP	
RELIANCE	2010	2022	1856.05	1939.75	TAYCON
BAJFINANCE	5233	5233.05	4907.2	5042.6	EICHEER
LT	1278	1338.4	1154.85	1234.75	SPICEJET
ITC	214.1	214.5	198.55	202.95	SBICARD
ASTRAL	1501.15	1555	1470.15	1498.95	DELTAACC
INDUSINDBK	908.7	908.7	814.55	841.85	LICHSGF
IDEA	9.99	10.04	8.9	9.22	PFIZER
INFY	1189.9	1209.5	1152.1	1176.3	POWERGR
KOTAKBANK	1939.9	1958.45	1907	1921.05	HFCL
TATAMOTORS	176.5	177.5	162.45	164.55	DABUR
SBIN	267.3	269	251.1	254.6	NATIONAL
HDFCBANK	1414.5	1423.8	1366.3	1372.4	BOSCHLT
CANBK	115	121.4	105.95	109.25	SUNTV
CIPLA	791.9	816.75	760	778.05	ITI
ICICIBANK	515.4	515.4	488.3	494.35	CONCOR
TCS	2865	2888.55	2782.9	2818.75	POLYCARB
MFLS	648.25	689.45	636	644.4	CHOLAPAT
HCLTECH	886.5	910.55	850	869.55	NESTLEIN
TATASTEEL	625	627.6	585.55	595.15	NAUKEN
LUPIN	987.7	991.8	875	930.3	MINDTRIT
GODREJIND	448	450	414.7	421.65	PEL
AXISBANK	607	607.05	573.7	582.6	HDFCLIFE
DRREDDY	5220	5273.95	4961.55	5065.65	AUBANK
IBULHSGFIN	202.5	203.5	180.2	184.25	MRF
MARUTI	7565	7597.3	7280	7364	HAL
IOC	93.05	93.5	84.6	86.95	HEG
LAURUSLABS	355	365.65	310	331.2	INDUSTO
TATAPOWER	76	76	66.4	69.1	NBCC
BANKBARODA	62	63.5	56.8	58.7	NMDC
ZEE	225.7	228.1	202.8	212.2	MANAPP
SUNPHARMA	574.75	585.7	539.45	552.1	LALAPATH
ADANIAPORTS	461.9	467	427.6	444.2	GRASIM
ONGC	99.15	99.15	88.95	89.9	PIDILITIT
PNB	36.15	36.8	33	34.05	ADANIP
BPCL	393.5	393.5	357.65	367.25	TATAMIT
COALINDIA	142	142	129.3	132.95	BALKRISH
GAIL	125.05	125.05	112.55	114.7	BHARATP
BHARTIARTL	510	511.25	480.35	490.15	BIOCON
ADANIANT	454.7	460.7	409.8	429.5	GRAPHIC
UPL	460.3	460.35	416.45	436.9	SANOFI
MOTHERSUMI	155	155.3	141.75	147.65	CONSUSU
BANDHANBNK	403.55	404.9	367.3	374.1	HINDPET
IPCALAB	2229.8	2236.75	2178.05	2219.95	ACAPAT
DMART	2633	2710	2458.75	2637	BANKIND
FEDERALBNK	66.1	66.15	59.55	60.35	CUMMIN
WELFKEY	98.2	98.55	88.4	92.35	BELM
IRVBL	146.65	147.3	130.2	133.58	CUMI
REDBANK	126.65	128.05	120.7	126.95	BLANSP
BAJAJFINSV	9197	9240.75	8758.7	8847.9	GMRINF
FAIRFINSV	81.65	81.65	73.95	74.05	HAVELLS
HDFC	2462.1	2478.1	2369.7	2412.5	
PFIZER	113.1	117.45	105.1	110.2	
PVR	730	730	660	686.2	
M&M	1434	1451.25	1291.3	1304.7	
BHEL	35.4	35.7	32	32.6	
AUROPHARMA	891.95	905	801	845.7	
BRITANNIA	3719	3725	3533.05	3623.4	
BIPOOD	2575.45	2817.7	2603	2680	
CADILAHC	479.5	485.65	429.05	452.45	
ARCTIC	1425	1436.3	1360	1378.45	
ASIANPAINT	2599.9	2602.2	256	2554.7	
RELIANT	135.15	137.6	126.3	130.1	
DEEPAKNI	925	929	801.95	868.55	
INDIGO	1650.8	1650.8	1485.15	1507.15	
SAIL	57	59.2	54.6	55.45	
TECHM	933.35	944.4	890.1	906.75	LEMONT
SWSTEL	360.55	368.2	344.05	351.75	TRENT
TITAN	1505.35	1528.65	1450.15	1469.45	TRIDENT
DLT&TFH	90.2	92	82.2	84.9	RELAXO
LDLTS	2200	2324.4	1968.05	2155.05	ADANIG
DLF	231.4	234.5	208.25	214.85	PETRON
BNBFOAT	216.25	225.5	194.7	202.3	PCJEWEL
INDIAMART	614.2	6290.75	4877	5694.75	HINDCO
HDFCHSTBT	36.85	36.85	33.65	34.25	WORKPT
AMOLMOTOCO	3143	3153.15	2945.9	2992.35	TONTPT
APOLLOHOSP	2387.15	2433	2304.9	2329	PIIND
JINDALSTEL	270	273.6	244.8	253	JKPAPER
ADANIGREEN	1016	1039.57	971	1020.55	BOMI
KAJARIACER	699.2	713.55	684.65	690.15	MGLDYE
DIVISLAB	3797.25	3800.3	3543.65	3631.9	RVNL
TATACHEM	490.5	491.2	440.95	460.9	IBREALE
MULTIRACEMCO	5140	5188.05	4835.45	5011.55	NCC
MULTIHOOTFIN	1210	1250	1119.35	1169.8	SIEMENS
CARBONUNIV	383	388.55	355.25	370.95	RAJESHA
HINDUNILVR	2337	2350	2265	2304.92	INDHOTI
WIPRO	362.5	367.4	348.3	354.7	SYNGENE
GODREJCP	720.8	745.95	683.5	703.2	SOUTHB
SCI	92.7	92.7	80	82.55	TATAELI
M&MFIN	174	174.2	163.85	165.75	COLPAL
ACC	1650	1650	1490	1569.65	IGL
NTPC	103.5	104	94.8	97.5	MPHASIS
TRANSFINST	1034.85	1034.85	944.45	967.15	UBI
HDFCAME	2862	2950	2701	2779.85	JUSTDIA
GRANULES	366.65	370.4	322	343.05	ASCLT
SUZLON	4.95	5.14	4.66	4.88	ADANTH
HINDALCO	246.25	249.7	228.9	232.7	EXIDINTE
APOLLO	191.5	191.5	172.35	177.1	CENTURY
AFLE	3843.55	3918.05	3650	3735.65	DISHTV
GODREJPROP	1384	1389	1274.25	1310.85	INDIANB
BAJAJ-AUTO	3167.55	3360	3166	3322.45	CHENNP
GLDMARK	535.25	531.7	464.45	489.2	VBL
PAGEIND	28199.95	28199.95	26994.42	2723.465	ICIGILI
TVSMOTOR	484.15	488	453.55	463	AKCYLAM
AMSCORTES	252.45	252.45	225.9	235.25	HINDZIN
ABB	1232	1242	1214	1247.55	UNIONB
SBILIFE	856	863.8	833	840	AMBER

Countries begin to seal off UK amid new covid variant surge

London: France became the latest European country to close all its borders with the UK after Germany, Italy, Belgium, Denmark, Bulgaria, the Irish Republic, Turkey and Canada suspended flights amid growing concerns of an “out of control” new variant of coronavirus spreading at a much faster pace in parts of England.

India, so far, remains in the travel bubble with the UK, with strict testing and self-isolation rules in place. But with most of Britain now in the strictest Tier 4 lockdown, all non-essential travel remains banned for the majority.

Other countries and territories to announce restrictions on UK travel include Hong Kong, Israel, Iran, Croatia, Argentina, Chile, Morocco and Kuwait.

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson will chair a meeting of the government’s emergency committee on Monday to take stock of the situation as a huge backlog build up on the border with France after even trucks and ferries were blocked entry



A police officer directs traffic at the entrance to the closed ferry terminal in Dover, England on Monday

AP

at the ports. European Union (EU) member states are also due for a meeting in Brussels to discuss a more coordinated response as the number of coronavirus infections in the UK jumped to 35,928 on Sunday, down to the much faster spreading new

mutation of the novel coronavirus, with the country’s death toll rising by 326 to hit 67,401.

“Everybody, particularly people in Tier 4 areas, needs to behave as if they might well have the virus – that is the only way we are going to get it under control,” UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock said, adding that the situation is “deadly serious” as the government tries to contain the rapid strain of an “out of control” virus.

“This is a deadly disease, we need to keep it under control, and it has been made more difficult by this new variant,” he said.

The new variant is said to be 70 per cent more transmissible, though health experts say there is no evidence that it is more deadly or would react differently to vaccines.

“It is really too early to tell... but from what we see so far it is growing very quickly, it is growing faster than [a previous variant] ever grew, but it is important to keep an eye on this,” said Dr Erik Volz from Imperial College London.

“The amount of evidence in the public domain is woefully inadequate to draw strong or firm opinions on whether the virus has truly increased transmission,” added Professor Jonathan Ball, a virologist at the University of Nottingham.

It is thought the variant either emerged in a patient in the UK or has been imported from a country with a lower ability to monitor coronavirus mutations.

The variant can be found across the UK, except Northern Ireland, but it is heavily concentrated in London, the South East and eastern England. Cases elsewhere in the country do not seem to have shot up in a similar way so far.

The government’s New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group (Nervtag) estimates the variant could increase the R number — or rate of infection — by between 0.4 and 0.9. The R number is how many other people one person will infect on average and an epidemic is in effect if it rises above one. **PTI**

EU regulator meets to discuss approval of Covid-19 vaccine

Amsterdam: The European Medicines Agency is meeting to consider approving a coronavirus vaccine developed by BioNTech and Pfizer that would be the first to be authorised for use in the European Union.

The closed-doors meeting comes weeks after the shot was granted permission under emergency provisions by regulators in Britain and the United States.

If EMA scientists conclude that the vaccine is safe, officials at the Amsterdam-based agency are expected to give conditional approval for it to be used across the 27-nation bloc. The European Commission must still rubber-stamp the decision before the vaccine can be rolled out, a process German officials say could begin Dec. 27. The pharmaceutical companies will also need to submit follow-up

data on their vaccine for the next year. The European regulator came under heavy pressure last week from countries calling for the vaccine to be granted approval for use as quickly as possible. EMA had originally set Dec. 29 as the date for its evaluation of the vaccine made by Germany-based BioNTech, but moved the meeting forward after calls from Berlin and others to move quicker.

The vaccine has already been given some form of regulatory OK in more than a dozen countries.

Britain, Canada and the US authorised the vaccine to be used according to emergency provisions, meaning the shot is an unlicensed product whose temporary use is justified by the pandemic that has killed almost 1.7 million people worldwide to date, according to Johns Hopkins University. **AP**

Congress seals agreement on Covid relief, Govt funding

Washington: Top Capitol Hill negotiators sealed a deal Sunday on an almost \$1 trillion Covid-19 economic relief package, finally delivering long-overdue help to businesses and individuals and providing money to deliver vaccines to a nation eager for them.

The agreement, announced by Senate leaders, would establish a temporary \$300 per week supplemental jobless benefits and \$600 direct stimulus payments to most Americans, along with a new round of subsidies for hard-hit businesses and money for schools, health care providers and renters facing eviction.

The House was expected to vote on the legislation very late

Sunday or Monday and Senate action would follow. Lawmakers are eager to leave Washington and close out a tumultuous year.

A breakthrough came late Saturday in a fight over Federal Reserve emergency powers that was resolved by the Senate’s top Democrat, Chuck Schumer of New York, and conservative Republican Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania. That led to a final round of negotiations.

The final agreement is the largest spending measure yet. It combines Covid-19 relief with a \$1.4 trillion Government-wide funding plan and lots of other unrelated measures on taxes, health, infrastructure and education. **AP**

Oli defends move to dissolve Parliament Blames own party leaders for his decision

Kathmandu: Nepal’s embattled Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli on Monday defended his move to abruptly dissolve Parliament, saying he was forced to seek a fresh mandate through elections as the rift within the ruling Nepal Communist Party severely affected his Government’s functioning.

Oli on Sunday sprang a surprise on his rivals and got the President to dissolve Parliament, a controversial move amidst a prolonged tussle for power between him

and former premier Pushpa Kamal Dahal ‘Prachanda’ within the ruling dispensation.

In a special address to the nation, Prime Minister Oli said that he was forced to dissolve Parliament and announce mid-term elections after he learnt about a plan to move a vote of no-confidence against him.

“I was forced to seek a fresh mandate through elections as attempts were made against my government, not to allow it to function properly,” the prime minister said while defending his decision to dissolve Parliament and announce dates for mid-term elections.

Oli, who is also one of the two chairmen of the ruling party, said that the intra-party rift in the ruling Nepal Communist Party severely

affected the government’s functioning.

“The elected government was pushed to a corner and picketed against and was not allowed to work so I decided to dissolve the house,” he said.

“Against the people’s mandate and their will, national politics was dragged into an endless and goalless direction by creating controversy, making Parliament meaningless as the elected government could not receive its support but always faced opposition and dragged into the controversy,” Oli said.

He accused some of his own party leaders of being responsible for forcing him to take this step.

“When the prime minister of the majority government was not allowed to work, I did not

want to indulge in unfair practices behind closed doors and reach a compromise with them,” Oli said, adding that giving a chance to the people for a fresh mandate is “the best democratic alternative.”

“This move could be seen as an abrupt step for now, but some of my party leaders should be held responsible for creating this situation who did not cooperate with my Government,” Oli said.

Prime Minister Oli also insisted that his government had done well in terms of safeguarding the country’s territorial integrity and sovereignty.

“I was victimised for enhancing national pride by publishing a map with the inclusion of Kalapani and Lipulekh,” Oli said. **PTI**

Report: Gov’t spyware targets phones of Al-Jazeera reporters

Dubai: Dozens of journalists at Al-Jazeera, the Qatari state-owned media company, have been targeted by advanced spyware in an attack likely linked to the Governments of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, a cybersecurity watchdog has said.

Citizen Lab at the University of Toronto said on Sunday it traced malware that infected the personal phones of 36 journalists, producers, anchors and executives at Al-Jazeera back to the Israel-based NSO Group, which has been widely condemned for selling

spyware to repressive governments.

Most unnerving to the investigators was that iMessages were infecting targeted cell-phones without the users taking any action — what’s known as a zero-click vulnerability.

Through push notifications alone, the malware instructed the phones to upload their content to servers linked to the NSO Group. Citizen Lab said, turning journalists’ iPhones into powerful surveillance tools without even luring users to click on suspicious links or threatening texts. **AP**

Pak govt allows construction of Hindu temple in Islamabad

Lahore (PTI): Pakistan government on Monday granted permission for the construction of a Hindu temple in Islamabad, nearly six months after the work at the site was stopped apparently because of the pressure from the radical Islamic groups.

The Capital Development Authority (CDA) issued a notification in Lahore on Monday, giving permission for the construction of the boundary wall for cremation ground for the Hindu community in sector H-9/2, Islamabad.

“Permission to construct the boundary wall around cremation ground for the Hindu community in sector H-9/2, Islamabad is hereby accorded in accordance with clause 4.I.I of Islamabad Capital Territory, Building Control Regulations 2020 ensuring that height of this boundary wall shall not accord 7’-0”,” says the notification, a copy of which is available with the PTI.

“It may either be a solid wall, or up to one foot it shall consist of solid masonry and remaining portion may be of light material such as fence etc. The height of the enclosure shall not be less than 3’-0” in any case, it says.

Earlier, some hardline clerics had warned the government not to allow the construction of the temple in Islamabad.

China criticises Trump suggestion it is behind cyber spying

Beijing: China’s Government on Monday criticised President Donald Trump’s suggestion that Chinese hackers, not Russia, might be behind a cyber espionage campaign against the United States.

Trump on Saturday scoffed at assertions by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and other officials that the Kremlin was behind attempts to spy on federal agencies. Trump, without offering evidence, said “it may” be China. The Foreign Ministry said China opposes cyber spying and has crackdown on cyber crime. **AP**

Thai actress aiding protests charged with insulting monarchy

Bangkok: A well-known actress who is one of the most high-profile supporters of Thailand’s pro-democracy protest movement answered a police summons on Monday charging her with violating the country’s harsh law against defaming the monarchy, even though she is not known to have spoken publicly about the royal institution.

Inthira “Sai” Charoenpura, who is also a singer, has drawn both praise and criticism for giving material support and raising funds for the student-led movement.

Along with seven protest

leaders, she presented herself at a police station in Bangkok to hear charges that they had violated the country’s lese majeste law, which calls for a prison term of three to 15 years for defaming the king or members of his immediate family.

The law, known as Article 112, has long drawn criticism for its harshness and terms that let anyone file a complaint, allowing its use for partisan political purposes.

Its use against Inthira appeared to be unprecedented since she was not directly tied to any comments about the

monarchy. She has helped provide food, protective gear and other equipment for the protest rallies over several months that have attracted thousands of people.

Charging Inthira “sets a very disturbing precedent,” said Sunai Phasuk, a researcher for New York-based Human Rights Watch, adding that it now seems that being an accessory to any actions that Thai authorities consider to be offensive to the monarchy are punishable. “So now the net is being cast very wide, much wider than ever before,” he said. **AP**

EU warns Bosnia of ‘alarming’ migrant state, urges action

Brussels: The European Union on Monday warned Bosnia that thousands of migrants face a winter without shelter, and it urged the country’s bickering political authorities to set aside their differences and take action.

“The migration situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is alarming,” the EU commissioners responsible for foreign policy, migration and enlargement said in a joint statement.

Bosnia has been widely criticized in recent years for mishandling the arrival of thousands of people, many fleeing war and poverty. **AP**

Around the Globe

Cairo: Local authorities in rural Egypt have declared a state of emergency after detecting two outbreaks of bird flu.

Berlin: Countries trying to keep alive the 2015 deal on Iran’s nuclear program agreed Monday to “positively address” the possibility of a US return to the accord under the Biden administration.

Cape Canaveral (US): Jupiter and Saturn will merge in the night sky Monday, appearing closer to one another than they have since Galileo’s time in the 17th century. Astronomers say so-called conjunctions between the two largest planets in our solar system aren’t particularly rare.

FROM PAGE 1

INDIA STOPS FLIGHT OF UK VIRUS

India and the UK were connected by several airlines including Air India, Vistara, British Airways, Virgin Atlantic connecting London to Indian airports like Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Ahmedabad and Amritsar. While regular scheduled international flights are still not allowed by authorities here, India and the UK had entered an air bubble arrangement. Four airlines - Air India, Vistara, Virgin Atlantic and British Airways - operate over 40 weekly flights between India and the UK.

On December 19, the British Government had alerted the World Health Organisation about a new variant of the coronavirus that the Prime Minister said maybe “up to 70 per cent” more transmissible than earlier strains. The new strain - now officially named VUI-202012/01 - showed a “substantial increase in transmissibility”.

British Health Secretary Matt Hancock says “the new variant is out of control”. The United Kingdom announced a surprise lockdown in London and other parts of the country amid the surge in cases due to the new strain of the virus. Europe has been walloped this fall by soaring new infections and deaths due to a resurgence of the virus, and many nations have reimposed a series of restrictions to reign in their outbreaks.

OK VACCINE EMERGENCY USE AFTER TRIALS ON BIG SAMPLE: HOUSE PANEL

The report also noted that Government hospitals bore the largest share of the burden of extending comprehensive healthcare during the pandemic, as private hospitals were either inaccessible or not affordable to everyone.

Therefore, more funds should be allocated to public hospitals to strengthen the public health infrastructure so that they can equip themselves appropriately to handle such pandemics in the future, the committee suggested in the report.

It also recommended that learning from the experience of the pandemic, there is a need for a comprehensive public health act preferably at the national level with suitable legal provisions to support the Government in keeping checks and controls over the private hospitals “as there have been reports about the selling of hospital beds by them”.

“And also keep a check on the black marketing of medicines and product standardisation.” At the same time, the panel said it is also necessary to make people aware through campaigns on cheaper and effective repurposed medicines to prevent them from panicking and spending a huge amount of money on expensive drugs.

“The committee recommends that good quality and affordable medicines be provided to everyone, especially at a cheaper or subsidised rate to the marginalised sections of the society especially at the time of Pandemic like Covid-19,” the report said.

FEEL THE PAIN OF PATIENTS, PREZ TO KGMU DOCS

have adopted 10 villages and committed themselves to health services there. “In the annual conferences, I have been regularly pointing out that governors should ask universities and educational institutes to shoulder their social responsibilities,” he said.

“In 1911, the first decade of the university was full of grave challenges. The first batch of the students in 1916 were posted in difficult circumstances at various fronts during the first World War. In 1918, the world was under the grip of Spanish flu in which around 1.5 crore people died in India while five crore died across the world. It was also evident when the census registered low figures for the first time,” he recalled.

About the changes which were taking place during that period, he said that the Prince of Wales came to India in 1905 and to commemorate his visit, the foundation of the medical university was laid. “But when the next Prince of Wales arrived in India in 1921, a feeling of

nationalism and freedom was prevailing and under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi, non-cooperation protests were happening in all parts of the country and Lucknow also participated in the boycott of government programmes,” he added.

SHAH LIES ABOUT BENGAL PROGRESS, WILL BEAT HIS ‘BIGGEST’ RALLY: DIDI

The three IPS officers --- an ADG, a DIG and an SP who were responsible for the security of BJP national president JP Nadda whose convoy was on December 10 attacked by alleged Trinamool Congress men were transferred on deputation to Central services. The matter has been taken by the State Government to the Supreme Court.

Meanwhile, Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar once again attacked the State Government for disregarding public interests in its bid to oppose Central schemes and politicising the police administration.

He said, “While the rest of India was moving in one direction and Bengal in the other” questioning the reason behind the State Government’s decision to block the Central schemes providing monetary benefits to the farmers.

“It is difficult to understand why the Central schemes for farmers were blocked by the State Government,” he said adding “clashes between constitutional authorities are not desirable when the matter relates to public interests.”

Ruing the “politicisation of police administration,” he said that he had been a witness to the appointment of two dozen police officers that brazenly testified his claims.

On the conduct of elections he said, “I am not concerned with who win the elections but I am concerned with how the elections are conducted,” reminding the state of affairs at Diamond Harbour area --- where Nadda’s convoy was attacked by alleged TMC men.

Charging the District Magistrate for violating the protocol associated with a Governor’s visit dur-

ing his trip to Diamond Harbour, he said, “Diamond Harbour is not a personal fief of anyone... it belongs to the people of the country and Bengal,” wondering how the Indian citizens could be regarded as outsiders in the State. He would not however name local MP and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee’s nephew Abhishek Banerjee.

NOTHING NEW IN GOVT’S PROPOSAL, RUE FARMERS

In the letter, Aggarwal said the Centre is making all efforts with “an open heart” to find an appropriate solution to resolve all concerns raised by farmers.

“We have studied their proposals clause by clause, and we have repeatedly told them that we want the laws to be repealed,” said Amarjeet Singh Rarra, general secretary of Dwaba Kisan Committee.

“The farmers have already sent them our proposals, and pointed out the issues we had with the Government’s proposal. They need to respond to what we have already told them. Tomorrow, there will be a Sanyukt Morcha meeting to decide how and when to respond to the government. We will evaluate the government’s letter and then decide,” said Gurmeet Singh, Krantikari Kisan Union.

Several roads have been shut due to the agitation and the Delhi Traffic Police has been updating commuters on open and closed routes

Taking to Twitter on Monday, the traffic police said the Singhu, Auchandi, Piau Maniyari, and Mangesh borders are closed. It has advised commuters to take alternative routes through the Lampur, Safabad Saboli and Singhu School Toll Tax borders.

Police said as traffic has been diverted from Mukarba and the GTK Road, people are suggested to avoid Outer Ring Road, the GTK Road and National Highway (NH) 44.

Those travelling to Haryana can go through the Jharoda (only single carriageway), Daurala, Kapashera, Badusarai, Rajokri NH-8, Bijwasan-Bajghera, Palam Vihar and Dundahera borders.

“Tikri, Dhansa borders are closed for any traffic movement. Jhatikara border is open only for two

wheelers and pedestrian movement,” the traffic police tweeted.

“Chilla border one carriageway from Delhi to Noida is open for traffic, however, other carriageway from Noida to Delhi is closed,” it added.

Farmers are protesting against the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020, the Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020.

The three farm laws, enacted in September, have been projected by the Government as major reforms in the agriculture sector that will remove middlemen and allow farmers to sell anywhere in the country.

However, the protesting farmers have expressed apprehension that the new laws would pave the way for eliminating the safety cushion of Minimum Support Price and do away with the mandis, leaving them at the mercy of big corporates. The Centre has repeatedly asserted that these mechanisms will remain.

The sixth round of talks on December 9 was cancelled.

The farmer leaders are expected to meet on Tuesday to discuss the next plan of action, said Gurmeet Singh of Krantikari Kisan Union. “We have already sent them our proposals, and pointed out the issues we had with the government’s proposal. They need to respond to what we have already told them.

“Tomorrow, there will be a Sanyukt Morcha meeting to decide how and when to respond to the government. We will evaluate the government’s letter and then decide,” Gurmeet Singh said.

Asked why the talks with the Government have failed to yield any result, he alleged that the three laws were “anti-farmer” and the Government was “favouring the corporates” over the farmers and the common man. “We will meet tomorrow, deliberate and then see what has to be done, but our demand remains the same - we want the laws to be repealed or we won’t move,” said Ram Singh, Haryana State president of Ambekar Sangharsh Morcha.

DOCYARD
DR PAVAN YADAV

Consultant,
Interventional
Pulmonology

ASTER RV HOSPITAL



Whistle of wheezing



The winter time can be a dreaded season for asthmatics as during the colder seasons it is common for them to witness an increase in asthma attacks. This is mainly because of two reasons, one is that people are more frequently exposed to certain indoor allergens during the winter and another is the cold temperature itself. The dry wintry air can irritate the inner lining of the throat. During the colder season, the heart also works doubly hard in order to keep the body warm and in asthmatics the lungs may find it difficult to keep up with any extra or strenuous activity. However, with careful self-observation and with the right tools on hand, the winter season can be enjoyable too! The following are some helpful tips on managing your asthma during the colder season:

Identify triggers and try to eliminate them
Since we're all spending most of our time indoors, identify certain allergens that trigger your asthma. Dust mites, pet hair, pollution or construction site dust, mould, pollen etc can all contribute towards increasing asthma attacks. Indoor dust is one of the most common triggers, so make sure you keep your floors and fans clean! Change your bed sheets often, fluff your pillow and remove dust from your blankets by shaking vigorously on a daily basis. Do this in an open area so as to not trigger another attack.

Keep your immunity high
During the winter season you are at a greater risk of developing coughs, colds, flu or other chest infections which can worsen asthma. Take extra care to avoid unwanted exposure to viruses, focus on immunity boosting foods such as green leafy vegetables, fruits, whole grains and protein. Smoking and drinking are a big no. Channel your energy in more productive ways by exercising or find some other creative outlet to keep your mind healthy. Consider getting a flu vaccine if required.

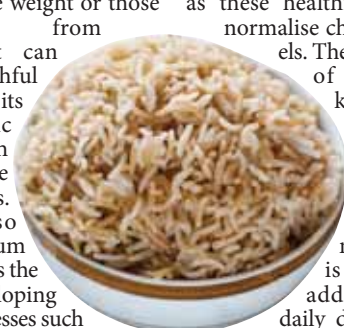
Keep warm
Get ample Vitamin D whenever you can catch some sunlight, and go out and stand on the balcony for 15-20 minutes daily even when the sun isn't directly visible. Wear woolen clothes or thermals to help your body maintain a stable temperature. Consider investing in an indoor heater and humidifier if you stay in very cold regions. Keep a flask of warm water handy and preferably drink warm liquids throughout the day. Hot water bags could also be used when you sleep at night to help keep the body warm and ease congestion inside the lungs. Avoid too much caffeine.

Keep your medicines handy
If there is a change in asthma severity particularly during winters or if you experience asthma only during the winters, your doctor may prescribe a different medicine for you apart from the standard inhaler. This can be a different strength or type of inhaler or allergy control medications such as antihistamines, nasal sprays or eye drops. The doctor may also suggest nasal irrigation or a saline rinse depending on the severity of your attacks and the condition of your airways.


The crux of preventing an asthmatic attack depends on successfully identifying and eliminating or finding the best ways to cope with a reaction. Exercise may trigger an attack in some people whereas in others it may be less obvious things such as insects, fragrances, smoke from fire, etc. Speak to your doctor for more detailed advice on coping measures that are designed for your particular health background and you will understand if you require a vaccination, and if so what kinds, and the best type of medication suited for you.

WARMFOODS

BROWN RICE: Brown rice is rich in proteins, thiamine, calcium, magnesium, fiber, and potassium. For those trying to lose weight or those suffering from Diabetes, it can prove a healthful staple given its low glycemic rating which helps reduce insulin spikes. It is also rich in selenium which reduces the risk for developing common illnesses such as cancer, heart disease and arthritis. One cup of it provides 80 per cent of our daily manganese requirements. Manganese helps the body synthesize fats. It also benefits



our nervous and reproductive systems. The naturally occurring oils are beneficial for the body as these healthful fats help normalise cholesterol levels. The fiber content of brown rice keeps bowel function at its peak since it makes digestion that much easier. It is the perfect addition to the daily diet for those seeking bowel regularity. In addition, it also makes the tummy feel full which translates to smaller meal portions and thereby aiding in weight loss.



A COLD ISSUE

Winter, indoor and outdoor pollution, allergies and the common cold can trigger sinusitis. DR SANJIV DANG tells you the symptoms to look out for and shares ways to keep it under control

Do you encounter problems like nasal congestion? Is that nagging cold giving you a tough time by not allowing you to do your real-world activities with ease? To top it all, do you encounter breathing issues constantly? Then, you will have to consult a doctor as it could be sinusitis.

Sinusitis, also known as sinus, affects people of all age groups. Winter, indoor and outdoor pollution, allergies, and the common cold can trigger this condition, and give you a tough time. One may encounter a sinusitis problem because of the inflammation of the tiny air pockets that are located around the bones of one's nose. Normally, the sinus, or the pocket, is filled with air, and then one will be shocked to know that the area gets filled with germs or fluids that can invite infection. One with sinusitis may feel that he/she is getting cold. Seasonal allergies and pollen can trigger this condition, and the symptoms worsen during winter.

Know why winter can be harsh on people with sinusitis

Winter season leads to a change in the air pressure. Moreover, it is the time you get cozy in those blankets. But, make sure that it doesn't carry dust as this can aggravate your sinusitis pain. Moreover, carpets and rugs at home that are filled with dust can also be problematic. During winter, one also tends to opt for indoor heating. You will be shocked to know that the air will dry out owing to electric heaters and air conditioners causing irritation to your nasal passage. Furthermore, opting for foods like alcohol, sugar, or even dairy can lead to nasal congestion and lead to inflammation in the body.

The symptoms can be a headache, runny nose, and swelling of the sinuses, nasal congestion, nasal discharge, and breathing problems. Furthermore, people having chronic sinusitis experience facial, upper jaw, and tooth pain. Postnasal drip, sore throat, loss of taste because of the congestion, and fatigue are some of the classic symptoms of this condition. You will have to take antibiotics to manage pain and inflammation. Remember to recognise the sinusitis problem on time, and take the expert's advice.

Here are a few tips to tackle sinusitis:

- In order to generate more oxygen, it is advisable to keep oxygen plants at home.
- Do not eat cold stuff and try to drink a lot of warm water.
- Taking steam on a daily basis will help you clean your nasal passage. The excess mucus will be cleared and you will be able to breathe freely. So, just inhaling the steam for merely 20 minutes can do the trick.
- Stay hydrated all the time. Drink a lot of water which will thin the mucus and help manage sinusitis. Not only will this, drinking enough water to ensure that your lungs are lubricated.
- Do not sit in a humid environment. Avoid opting for a humidifier as it could lead to dry air and cause inflammation of the sinuses.

■ Do not rub your nose too hard as it can lead to bleeding.

■ Elevate your head while sleeping as it can help you manage your congestion.

■ Breathing exercises can help you clear your nasal passages. Also, take the medication prescribed by the doctor on time.

■ Getting a flu shot in winter can help prevent sinusitis.

■ Eat a well-balanced diet loaded with fresh fruits, vegetables, and legumes. Do not go overboard on antibiotics and wash your hands frequently to keep germs and bacteria at bay, and avoid getting cold or allergies. Say no to smoking as it may irritate your sinusitis.

■ Keep your windows closed and prevent dust from entering the house. Also, clean your bedding, carpets, and rugs from time to time. Also, avoid swimming during those chilly days to keep sinusitis at bay.

■ Change your air filters regularly. This will help get rid of dust, pet dander, and even pollen.

■ Wear jackets and sweaters during those chilly days to avoid getting sick as this can aggravate sinusitis.

■ Avoid exercising in the cold weather. If you go out for morning walks during those chilly days then you are doing it all wrong. The cold weather can wreck havoc on your health. So, be careful! Do not step out during winter.

The writer is ENT specialist, Apollo Cradle

THE SYMPTOMS OF SINUSITIS CAN BE A HEADACHE, RUNNY NOSE, SWELLING OF THE SINUSES, NASAL CONGESTION, NASAL DISCHARGE AND BREATHING PROBLEMS. FURTHERMORE, PEOPLE HAVING CHRONIC SINUSITIS EXPERIENCE FACIAL, UPPER JAW AND TOOTH PAIN

DadiKaKehna

With the cold wave gripping most parts of the country, having a sore throat is common. ROSHANI DEVI shares easy home remedies that can help relieve it



Getting a sore throat is horrifying, especially during the current time. However, it is not only COVID-19 that causes it, there are other factors too. Here are a few remedies that will help you.

Gargle with salt and lukewarm water. Take a cup of lukewarm water, add half tsp of salt and gargle twice a day.

Drink hot water. While it doesn't taste too great, but it is advisable to have hot water at regular intervals. It will help calm down your throat.

Honey can help. Mixed in tea or taken on its own, honey is commonly used in relieving a sore throat.

Use peppermint. Peppermint contains menthol, which helps thin mucus and calm sore throats and coughs. Peppermint also has anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, and antiviral properties, which may encourage healing.

Baking soda gargle. While the saltwater gargle is more commonly used, gargling baking soda mixed with salt water can help relieve a sore throat as well. It can kill bacteria and prevent the growth of yeast and fungi.



It's on your fingertips

Taking care of hands is just as important as the rest of the body. KOUSHIK SREEDHAR shares tips that can help do the job

The perfect season of warm cuddles and hot chocolate has arrived along with the chilly air that can wreak havoc on your skin — making it dry, itchy, and irritated. For all the seasonal highs that winter brings and comforts of heaters, blowers and hot water, there is also an unpleasant side that manifest in the form of dull and dry skin making it lack lustre and glow. And as health and hygiene takes precedence with the constant washing and sanitising of our hands, its essential to take the right amount of care to ensure our hands stay healthy, hydrated and soft.

Here are five easy tips to take care of your hands this winter season:

Too hot to handle: While we all switch the hot water on to escape the cold weather outside, make sure we don't use steaming hot water as it can strip away the moisture of your skin. Use lukewarm water instead to wash your hands before and after eating or coming from outside. Don't forget to tap your hands dry with a soft towel/napkin and not with a rough cloth to avoid rashes.

Cover it up: Our hands can be the first to indicate dry skin. With more family members at home especially with WFH becoming a norm, it also increases the amount of clothes and dishes to be washed. Hence, invest in a good waterproof pair of gloves to save your hands from being exposed to water a lot. Moreover, as the temperature drops especially in regions like North India, it is advised to wear gloves; however, woolen fabric tends to be irritating on the skin and leaves rashes. Hence, you should always apply a moisturising hand cream to keep your hands soft under the gloves.

Nailing the look: An important yet unspoken factor about hand care is also nail care as nails are an extension of the skin and hence require the same tender loving care. Hence, give them some extra attention by soaking them into lukewarm water, cleansing and applying a good hand moisturiser to keep them clean, strong and healthy.

The moisturiser mantra: Always consider a moisture cream that not only works in sync with your skin but also with your daily routine. While there are various types of skins with different needs, it is essential to have some ingredients that are vital to keep it soft and supple. Hence, look out for a dermatologically-approved good intensive hand cream enriched with Jojoba oil and Vitamin E that is anti-greasy and can quickly absorb and refresh the skin. You can also apply it regularly after your cleansing ritual for smooth, soft and supple hands.

And so, as we settle into the new normal, keep these simple steps in mind for the perfect hand care winter remedy at the first sign of chill and enjoy this season to the fullest!

The writer is Beiersdorf R&D Director, India Hub

INBRIEF

The Himalaya Drug Company, India's leading wellness brand, shared the results of the clinical study they commissioned to evaluate the role of their well-known herbal products (Tab Septilin and Tab Bresol in combination) as an adjuvant treatment in mildly symptomatic and asymptomatic COVID-19-positive patients. The clinical trial was conducted under the supervision of Dr CR Jayanthi (MBBS, MD), Dean and Director of the prestigious Victoria Hospital (BMCRI — Bangalore Medical College and Research Institute), Bengaluru.

Septilin is a well-known proprietary Ayurvedic formulation with time-tested ingredients such as Guggulu, Yashtimadhu, and Guduchi, and possesses strong immunomodulatory property. The safety and efficacy of Septilin has been extensively evaluated in multiple clinical and preclinical studies.

The study was conducted with a strong rationale that both Septilin and Bresol have been proven, in preclinical and clinical studies, to provide support and have a positive, multifaceted influence on immunity and respiratory functions. These adhere to stringent quality parameters, which makes them ideal to be tested against COVID-19 without any concern whatsoever.

YOGA TO THE RESCUE



Yoga is a formidable natural immunity booster for long life. JAYANT BOKADIA shares poses that one can opt for

It's time we must be on guard to prevent ourselves from falling sick. The winter season is known to bring along cold, cough and fever and aggravate respiratory and cardiac issues. People with low immunity are at a higher risk of falling ill. If you face high stress, frequent occurrence of infections, tiredness, stomach disorders, it implies that you need to work on your immunity levels. The rapid transmission of the COVID-19 pandemic also underscores the need to strengthen our immune system. The advent of globalisation, changing lifestyle and food habits warrants the need for a sound immune system to keep pathogens at bay.

Yoga is a formidable natural immunity booster for long life. Its key advantage is its simplicity of asanas, diversity of asanas to suit all age-groups and a time-tested natural way of boosting immunity. It is a holistic and simple regime, and if followed correctly, can yield good results. Here are a few asanas that you must perform if you are looking to boost immunity.

Pranayam: The word 'prana' refers to the universal energy that sustains our life. This technique refers to the art of controlling breath and regulating it in sync with various asanas. This body of knowledge believes that a high prana level indicates a continuous flow of energy and a calm mind. However, lack of knowledge and inadequate attention to breath can block *nadis* and *chakras*, leading to tension, worries, fear and conflict. *Bhramari pranayama* refers to bee breathing to give a break to your hectic schedule and an occupied mind. It is immensely beneficial for hypertension patients.

Vrikshasan: This *asana* denotes the steady yet graceful pose of a tree. Unlike other *asanas*, this *asana* is performed with eyes open to balance the body. *Vrikshasan* is best performed on an empty stomach with at least four to six intervals between meals and the *asana*. One must avoid putting the sole of the lifted foot beside the knee as it builds pressure on the latter. This *asana* helps in achieving concentration and mindfulness.

Surya Namaskar: This *asana* denotes the salutation to the Sun and involves 12 poses. It involves stretching of almost all parts of the body and serves as an excellent cardiovascular workout. It stimulates the nervous and cardiovascular system, strengthens the immune system and enhances cognitive abilities.

Vajrasan: This *asana* is also known as the thunderbolt, involves sitting straight on the knees with feet flat on the ground with soles pointing upwards. It focuses on breathing and holding the posture for at least 30 seconds. It is the only *asana* that is performed on a full stomach after having a meal. It relieves constipation and serves as an exercise for the liver, stomach and uterus. The resting of feet over hips stretches and flexes quadriceps.

Anjaneyasan: This *asana* involves bending a knee on the floor right above the hips. The arms are extended upwards with palms facing each other. The lower back is extended, and hips are aligned in such a way that it stretches the frontal region of the leg and hip flexors. Those with hypertension or knee injury should avoid this *asana*.

The writer is CEO, Nimba Nature Cure

EAT, DRINK AND BE MERRY!

Considering the year we have had, it is wise and suitable to keep the celebrations low-key. But with the holiday season in full swing, some things never change. So let's find out how various cafes and restaurants are safely celebrating Christmas this year. By TEAM VIVA

Carols, bells, lights, decorations, chilly winters and rum cake — the season of joy is here! People are set to welcome Christmas and New Year with open arms. Considering the year we have had, it is only wise and suitable for us to keep the celebrations low-key. But with the holiday season in full swing, some things never change. So let's find out how various cafes and restaurants are safely celebrating Christmas this year.

KAMPAI

A special menu, a live saxophonist and food tapping music along with the festive decor will make it an unforgettable Christmas experience. They always believe that festivals should give one a lot of memories to cherish later. Hence, they have carefully crafted their menu and offerings keeping in mind the taste and preferences of the clients.

Avantika Sinha Bahl at Kampai says, "One has to move on and accept the new normal while taking all the necessary precautions. We are making sure that we and our team adhere to social distancing norms and follow hygiene protocols to stay safe. But we will also make sure to give you merrier times. People are gradually stepping out and all they need is the assurance of safety. With proper precautions in place, we are sure people will want to step out."

The chefs have curated the menu where people can choose between the variety of soups, salads and dimsums. The appetizers available are — Tori no Kkarage, Yaki buta baraniku, Rock shrimp tempura and more. Sushi rolls like Aburi salmon roll, spicy tuna roll, Ebi tempura roll, crunchy vegetable roll are on the offer. The main course where the chef has some of his star dishes includes Tori no teriyaki, Yasai teppan, Teppanyaki fried rice, Yaki soba noodles, Lamb bulgogi and much more. To end the meal on a sweet note, the chef has made a special plum cake.



Molecule are complete fun, food and frolic as we are always up for extravagant and magnificent affairs, and this year is no different. Starting with the performance of celebrity DJ ATIS on December 24, we are all prepped up. We have done successful bashes post-COVID lockdown already and

more. The ambience will be decked up with fresh flower arrangements. Right from flea stalls, face paintings to DIY cocktail corners and edible flower ice cubes in your drinks — one can find the little things which will make you happier and merrier. Along with these elements, one can

that the merry spirit of the holiday season is all set to arrive at Plum By Bent Chair. Witness the charm of eccentricity and the quirk of colorful hues as you dwell in the season of festivity with Santa and Plum over Pan Asian delicacies. After all that you've been through this year, they special-

ly crafted exotic cocktails, inspired from the magic of Christmas, to turn your night #Plumazing. Priyank says, "Food and drinks are the most exciting part of the festival along with bright decorations and fares. Holiday meals have a special feel when paired with great drinks. Plum by Bent Chair is coming up with exciting handcrafted cocktails that one can sip on during the festival." The packages start at ₹2,000.

DIABLO

Make this Christmas all about magnificent vibes and stellar music as Diablo invites you for a groovy night with Danza in the city. What makes it even more special is that Techpanda X Kenzani will be showcasing their album on Christmas eve. While you sway, they make sure you feel welcomed with their modern Middle Eastern delicacies. The true flavour of Mediterranean cuisine paired with handcrafted artisanal cocktails adds to the overall experience and is a perfect way to make your Christmas

merrier.

L'OPERA

Christmas and New Year are the most important celebrations of the year in France and many other European countries. Their day is specially dedicated to family, unity and friendship. It's a time for solidarity and, of course, a time to savour succulent, festively baked and decorated desserts.

PLUM BY BENTCHAIR

Restauranteur Priyank Sukhija says



Right from Kampai Irish coffee, Myth of Monarch to The Auld alliance, there are some best concoctions to make your day. The exclusive Christmas packages are priced at ₹2,999 and ₹3,999 plus taxes.

MOLECULE

Christmas at Molecule will be a hearty affair. Manish Sharma, founder of Molecule, says, "Those festivals at

we are lucky that we are getting love from our people, who are very well aware of our conscious efforts to fight the pandemic. We will continue to act safely and with this, we are sure people will step out of their homes."

Molecule will be dressed up in the theme of *Money Heist*. One can expect servers dressed up as Dali with live bands, rooftop brunch, winter cocktails and

enjoy the specially curated chef delights such as sushi, dimsums, salads, air breads, pizzas, pastas and more. Not only this, melange of different artists at different time slots will be performing to make sure each music lover gets to hear their favorite. The packages start at ₹1,800 plus taxes.

Comfort is boring: Amit Sadh



Actor Amit Sadh finds comfort boring, and says he constantly wants to experiment with new genres and characters. "I want to play characters that challenge me. I constantly tell myself to choose films and characters that help me tap into a different side of me," said Amit, who has featured in the OTT-released films *Yaara* and *Shakuntala Devi* this year, besides the web series *Avrodi: The Siege Within* and *Breathe: Into The Shadows*. He is now gearing up for the release of the web series *Zidd*.

"There are actually several things. I call it the magic box. They start with five boxes, which are halved in 10 to 20 boxes depending on how complexed and

perplexed the character is. Comfort is boring. I want to try my hand at new genres and characters that are completely different from what I have done in the past. I want to be part of films that shape me both as a human being and as an actor. I want to do characters with a never-dying human spirit. Stories of the underdog also fascinate me. But I don't want to bore the audience with my method," he added.

Amit found his role in *Shakuntala Devi* particularly interesting, as Ajay Abhay Kumar, who is married to Sanya Malhotra's character Anupama, daughter of the titular protagonist played by Vidya Balan. Ajay becomes a pivot

as well as a victim in the mother-daughter tension played out in the story.

"Seldom is there a nice story of a mother and a daughter, and when they are Shankuntala Devi and Anu it becomes more special. I am always fascinated with real cinema. I was fascinated to be on the sets with so many supremely talented women, including my director, my DOP, and the actors. When this film came out, my fans made this outing even more special for me and gave it their love. Also, Vidya Balan was in the film and so I was happy to be a part of it," he said about the film that will air on Sony MAX soon.

—IANS

'My journey has been overwhelming'

Actor Aparshakti Khurana started his Bollywood journey in 2016 with the Aamir Khan-starrer *Dangal*. After interesting roles over the past four years, he is now gearing up for his solo release as a protagonist, the comedy film *Helmet* opposite actor Pranutan.

The actor is happy the way his career is shaping up. He says feels amazing when he looks back at his journey and shares that he had no idea that god has this in store for him.

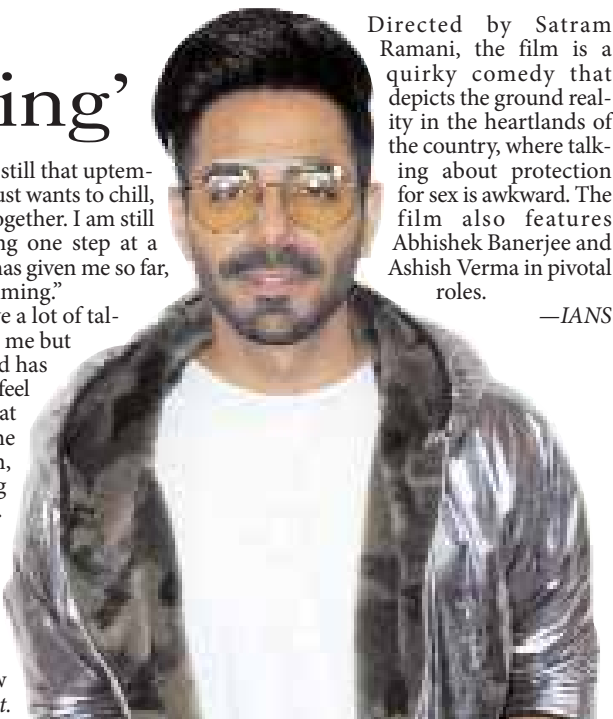
Before his debut in Bollywood, Aparshakti, brother of actor Ayushmann Khurana, was a radio jockey in New Delhi. After his shift to Bollywood in 2016, he was seen in hit films such as *Badrinath Ki Dulhania*, *Stree*, *Lukka Chuppi* and *Street Dancer 3D*.

Talking about his journey in Hindi cinema from being a radio jockey to an actor, Aparshakti said, "It feels amazing to see that journey. I had no idea that god has this

"I have many great memories of my childhood during Christmas," remembers Laurent Samandari, co-founder and MD of L'Opera. "I particularly remember how much I used to love the warm smell of baking of alpine nut cake. It used to be nice and comforting. I wish to offer the same feeling to L'Opera guests and patrons. We are bringing back its classic selection of products encompassing bûches (Yule log), chocolates, panetone, Christmas pudding, biscuits, plum cake, alpine nut cake, galette des rois as well as a signature toffee sauce to relish with the Christmas pudding. Bûche (Yule log) is a traditional dessert served during pre-Christmas dinners and luncheons in France and in other neighbouring countries. It is made of a delicate sponge cake to resemble a miniature

other big festival in India now. We are getting ready with the right decor including Christmas trees, starry decorations and accessories that fit and get along the merry making vibe. We are giving away amazing packages for people to celebrate the eve with us."

They are set to celebrate the power of women with DJ Akanksha Popli and DJ Gouri. The menu has varied offerings where you can entice your taste buds with different varieties of salads and soups. Lets spread the festive joy with enjoying the live counters of pasta, pizza and roasted turkey. Cold cuts like pepperoni, salami and sliced grilled chicken are just too perfect to resist. So, if you are looking to enjoy Christmas in the perfect way, Friction, The Drinkery awaits you.



Directed by Satram Ramani, the film is a quirky comedy that depicts the ground reality in the heartlands of the country, where talking about protection for sex is awkward. The film also features Abhishek Banerjee and Ashish Verma in pivotal roles.

—IANS

Boxing Day Test will decide series fate: Burns

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

If opener Joe Burns' views are any indication, another onerous task awaits an embattled Indian team, as Australia are entering the second Test believing that a favourable result for them in Melbourne could "decide the fate" of the four-match series.

Trailing 0-1 in the series after the batting debacle in Adelaide and with Virat Kohli going back to India for the birth of his first child, India will be led by Ajinkya Rahane in the remainder of the of the series.

"We have got some scars as well, we just have to prepare well, start well and carry on the momentum from the last game," Burns said during a virtual press conference on Monday.

"We know that Indians are going to bounce back in the next Test, which is going to play a crucial role in (deciding the) fate of the series."

The absence of Kohli and Mohammed Shami will be "big losses" but Burns is expecting a strong comeback by the visitors.

"I think Shami and Virat are obviously big losses for India. In saying that the Indian team does have very good depth as well. So, they are still going to be very challenging," Burns said.

"It is always hard to replace world class players like that, but when we look (at the guys) that they got to come in, we are going to prepare well for the next game. We know that Indians are going to bounce back strongly," the opener added.

'BEST TEAM IN THE WORLD'

Woefully out of form in the run-up to the series opener, Burns got his mojo back with a half-century in his team's second innings at Adelaide Oval.

Burns said that a pull shot he played off pacer Umesh Yadav changed the momentum for him.

"It is funny how in this game how often one shot can get you everything that you are searching for as batters. Probably, the first pull shot I hit off Umesh Yadav, I was on four and felt amazing," said the opener, who has 1438 Test runs.

The 31-year-old top-scored



Australian opener Joe Burns shake hands with Captain Tim Paine after win in 1st Test AP

in Australia's second innings and he said it felt nice to be back among the runs.

"It is obviously nice to make some runs myself again. In the lead up to the game I was short of few runs but more than anything it just was nice get back the rhythm."

"I felt fantastic out there and looked to get the job done, (it was) an amazing day for Australian cricket to back up their bowlers and finish the job really quickly."

Pacers Josh Hazlewood (5-8) and Pat Cummins (4-21) demolished India with the pink ball as the hosts won by eight wickets to take a 1-0 lead in the four Test series.

"We are the best team in the

world, very confident against everyone in every venue. Our bowlers are unbelievable, so I think they bowled well in the first innings and didn't get the rewards; in the second innings, they (Indians) just nicked everything."

"Our bowlers have done for a long time, so we know that game in and game out they are going to be doing that, putting pressure on the opposition, it is a great luxury that our team has," he added.

Burns took a blow on his elbow off a Jasprit Bumrah delivery in Adelaide but the opener has been cleared for MCG after scans.

The batsman has his sights set on the remaining three Tests,

Rohit quarantining in Sydney

Adelaide: Senior batsman Rohit Sharma can start training from January 3 ahead of the Sydney Test. He is currently locked in a hard quarantine in a two-room apartment in Sydney.

Cricket Australia has already flown David Warner and Sean Abbott from Sydney to Melbourne due to restrictions imposed by the New South Wales state Government in the wake of another surge of Covid-19 cases.

The BCCI, at the moment, can't shift Rohit in the middle of quarantine.

The other aspect is that CA is still confident of hosting the third Test in Sydney from January 7 as per schedule and in that case, there is no need to shift the senior player to Melbourne as in any case he is not playing the second game.

In case the situation changes and the third Test match is shifted, the BCCI will discuss with CA and take necessary steps. PTI

saying his goal was to get match-winning hundreds.

"We have got three more Test matches to go, it is going to be very tough and my job and my goal is to go and get big match-winning hundreds in those games," he signed off.

If fit, Jadeja likely to replace Vihari in playing XI

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

The Indian team management will be keenly monitoring Ravindra Jadeja's progress leading up to the Boxing Day Test against Australia this weekend as, if fit, the all-rounder could walk into the playing XI in place of Hanuma Vihari.

Jadeja, who suffered a concussion during the first T20I, also sustained a hamstring injury which ruled him out of the first Test.

However, over the past few days when India were playing the Test match, Jadeja has slowly returned to the nets.

It has been learnt that the senior all-rounder is recovering well but it can't be said with certainty that he will be 100 per cent fit for the second Test in Melbourne starting on December 26.

But if fit, the axe will fall on Andhra Pradesh batsman Vihari, not because of his low scores in the Adelaide Test but purely based on the best combination that Ajinkya Rahane and Ravi Shastri can put on the field.

"If Jadeja gets fit to bowl

long spells, then there is no debate at all. Jadeja replaces Vihari on the basis of his all-round skills. Also it gives us an option to play five bowlers at the MCG," a senior BCCI source told PTI.

Jadeja has 1869 runs in 49 Tests at an average of 35 plus which includes a hundred and 14 fifties. He has struck half centuries in both England Australia on previous tours.

On the other hand, Vihari, in his 10 Tests, has scored 576 runs with a hundred against West Indies and four half-centuries at an average of 33 plus.

There is a school of thought that if pure batting skills are taken into account, then there is not much of a difference between "specialist Vihari" and "all-rounder Jadeja".

With Mohammed Shami already ruled out of the series because of a wrist fracture, India might just be tempted to go in with five specialist bowlers instead of the usual four, which has been their template for years.

PRACTICE CANCELLED

The Indian team had a scheduled practice session at the Adelaide Oval on Monday but due to steady rain, it had to be cancelled.



Gavaskar wants KL to open in 2nd Test

New Delhi: Legendary Indian batsman Sunil Gavaskar wants KL Rahul to open in place of an out-of-form Prithvi Shaw and the promising Shubman Gill to play in middle order during the second Test against Australia at the MCG from December 26.

"India will look at making 2 changes. Firstly, maybe KL Rahul should replace Prithvi Shaw as an opener. At No 5 or No 6, Shubman Gill should come in. His form has been good. Things can change if we start well,"

Gavaskar told *Sports Tak* on possible changes in the line-up.

He did caution that if India can't stay positive, a 0-4 drubbing might just be on cards. "India have to believe that they can come back in the remainder of the Test series. If India don't find the positivity, then 4-0 series loss can happen. But if they have positivity, why not? It can happen (comeback)," Gavaskar said, sounding hopeful.

"India should start the Melbourne Test well, it's necessary for them to step onto the ground

with a lot of positivity. Australia's weak point is their batting," he said.

Gavaskar also rued the missed catches which also reduced the lead to a mere 53. "Had we held on to our catches well and had good field placements, there might not have been any problem, Tim Paine and Marnus Labuschagne would have gotten out early. "We could have got a lead of 120 runs. Australia got ahead in the Tests because of those dropped catches, they got the lead down to 50 runs," Gavaskar added. PTI

India's best chance to win was in Adelaide: Haddin

Melbourne: Former Australia wicketkeeper Brad Haddin reckons the opening day/night Test was India's best shot at winning in the ongoing series as it will be very difficult for the visitors to script a turnaround after demoralizing eight-wicket loss in Adelaide.

India were bundled out for their lowest-ever Test score of 36 in their second innings as Australia claimed an eight-wicket win in the pink-ball Test to take a 1-0 lead in the Border-Gavaskar trophy.

"I don't think they will (recover from the loss)," Haddin told *SEN Radio*.

The 43-year-old, who featured in 66 Tests for Australia, feels the conditions at the Adelaide Oval were conducive to the Indian bowling attack.

"I thought their only opportunity to win a Test match was the first Test at Adelaide. "I thought the conditions suited their bowling and I thought they'd get enough runs. But I don't think they'll be able to turn it around. "You've got one Test up at Brisbane where no one beats Australia. These next two wickets will be suited to Indian cricket, but I don't think they'll be able to turn it around," Haddin added.



India created history by registering their maiden series win Down Under in 2018-19 on the back of a lethal pace-bowling attack.

However, the visitor's are without the experienced Ishant Sharma and Shami, who suffered a fracture after being hit on the elbow during India's second innings on Saturday.

"They had a great bowling attack the last time they came out here, and now with Shami out with a broken arm they don't have enough depth to cover that," Haddin said.

Reflecting on the Indian batting collapse Haddin said "I think it's really concerning."

"Yes India were driving the game and we were talking at the

start of day three about how Australia would get back into it, but the collapse they had has to leave some marks."

With skipper Virat Kohli returning home for the birth of his child, India are faced with selection dilemmas.

"There were a few performances from the Indian batsmen that will come under scrutiny over the next week.

"Do they go in with (Wriddhiman) Saha? Who goes to the top order for Prithvi Shaw? Rohit Sharma comes out of quarantine, does he come back into the side? "They have a lot of things they're going to have to tackle over this next week leading into this next Test," Haddin added. PTI

Injured Babar, Imam out of 1st NZ Test

PTI ■ NAPIER

Pakistan captain Babar Azam and opener Imam-ul-Haq were on Monday ruled out of the upcoming first Test against New Zealand with thumb injuries, prompting the tour selection committee to include rookie Imran Butt in the 17-member squad.

The Boxing Day Test is scheduled to be played in Mount Maunganui from December 26-30.

While Babar has fractured his right thumb, Imam has injured his left thumb during training sessions in Queenstown last week.

According to a statement issued by the Pakistan Cricket Board, both the batsmen are yet to return to the nets and the team's medical staff was closely monitoring their progress.

"Decision on their participation in the second Test, which commences in Christchurch on 3 January, will be made closer to the time," the PCB said. In Babar's absence, wicketkeeper Mohammad Rizwan will lead Pakistan in the first Test and will become his country's 33rd Test captain.

Also returning to the Pakistan Test side are Abid Ali, Azhar Ali, Fawad Alam, Haris Sohail, Mohammad Abbas, Naseem Shah, Shan Masood, Sohail Khan and Yasir Shah.

They will replace Abdullah Shafiq, Haider Ali, Haris Rauf, Hussain Talat, Iftikhar Ahmed, Khushdil Shah, Mohammad Hasnain, Musa Khan, Usman Qadir and Wahab Riaz, who will now join Pakistan Shaheens (A team) for five T20 matches against the local and New Zealand XI sides.

The PCB further said that Imad Wasim and Mohammad Hafeez will no longer be seen in action on the New Zealand tour. While Imad will travel to Australia to join Melbourne Renegades in the BBL, Hafeez will return to Pakistan.

Saina, Sindhu headline 8-member India squad for Thai tourneys

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's top shuttlers PV Sindhu and Saina Nehwal will be seen in action for the first time since the coronavirus-forced break when they compete in three upcoming tournaments in Bangkok, including the prestigious BWF World Tour Finals.

With Olympic qualifications in mind, the Badminton Association of India (BAI) on Monday announced a strong eight-member squad to participate in the three upcoming tournaments, scheduled in January.

The team, consisting of Olympic-bound shuttlers Sindhu, Saina, B Sai Praneeeth, Kidambi Srikanth, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, Chirag Shetty, Ashwini Ponappa and N Sikki Reddy, will begin their campaign with Yonex Thailand Open from January 12-17.



That will be followed by Toyota Thailand Open (January 19-24) and the prestigious HSBC BWF World Tour Finals which is rescheduled for January 27-31.

After the coronavirus outbreak in March disrupted the sporting world resulting in cancellation or postponement of a number of tourna-

ments, this will be the first time that top Indian players, apart from Srikanth, will feature in any international tournament.

The former World No 1, Srikanth had made a comeback when he played the Denmark Open in October.

"We are very happy to see badminton finally getting back on the court. It gives us hope that tournaments can eventually make a steady comeback in near future. Most of our players haven't played tournaments in the last 7-8 months," BAI general secretary Ajay Singhania said.

"However, they have been training to the best of their abilities at the camp. The purpose of sending a full-strength team in these tournaments so that players can get the much-needed tournament practice ahead of the Olympic qualifiers," he added.

Real Madrid move level with Atletico at top

AFP ■ MADRID

Karim Benzema was described as "phenomenal" after scoring the opening goal and creating two others as Real Madrid won 3-1 at Eibar on Sunday to move level on points with city rivals Atletico at the top of La Liga.

Benzema and Luka Modric scored inside the first 13 minutes in the Basque Country to put Zinedine Zidane's men on their way to a fourth straight league win, with Lucas Vazquez scoring a late third after Garcia Kike pulled one back for Eibar.

"He is decisive. What he does is phenomenal," said Real coach Zinedine Zidane in praise of French compatriot Benzema.

"Not just in terms of goals. I'm repeating myself on Karim, but he doesn't just score goals. Karim brings clear-sightedness to our game, that's very important."

"When he scores it's even better, but beyond that he is very important to us."

Real sit behind Atletico on goal differ-

ence, but have the better head-to-head record, which is how level teams are split at the end of the season.

Diego Simeone's Atletico have two games in hand, though, after Saturday's 3-1 success against Elche.

Eibar started brightly, but fell behind in the sixth minute as Rodrigo fed Benzema to slot in his seventh league goal of the season.

Benzema created the second goal seven minutes later, cutting inside and picking out Modric who fired home right-footed.

The striker should have doubled his tally in the 16th minute, but he headed Modric's cross past the post. Eibar got themselves back into the match in spectacular style before the half-hour mark.

Kike collected the ball outside the area before curling a fine finish past Thibaut Courtois.

Vazquez wrapped up the points in injury time with a cool finish from a tight angle, having been played in by Benzema.

SINGLES

CA TO HONOUR INDIGENOUS PIONEER

MELBOURNE: The player of the match in the upcoming Boxing Day Test between India and Australia will be awarded with the Johnny Mullagh Medal as a tribute to honour the captain of Australia's first sporting team to tour internationally. Mullagh was the leader of the 1868 Aboriginal tour to the United Kingdom. "The best player in the Boxing Day Test will be awarded the Mullagh Medal, named after the legendary Johnny Mullagh, captain of the 1868 cricket team who became the first Australian sporting team to tour internationally! #AUS/IND," CA posted on its Twitter handle.

INDIAN MEN IN 4TH SPOT IN FIH RANKINGS

LAUSANNE: The Indian men and women hockey teams will finish 2020 in fourth and ninth positions, respectively, after a major part of the year was disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The International Hockey Federation (FIH) on Monday confirmed that the Belgium men's team and the Netherlands' women will finish the year at the top of the world rankings. In January, the FIH moved away from the previous tournament-based rankings system to a dynamic, match-based method where opposing teams exchange points in official, FIH sanctioned games. The number of points exchanged depends on the result of the match, the relative ranking of the teams and the importance of the match.

LILLE RECLAIM TOP SPOT WITH PSG DRAW

LILLE: Lille moved back top of Ligue 1 on Sunday after holding PSG to an uninspiring goalless draw which failed to live up to its pre-match billing. Lille take first place in the French top flight from Lyon on goal difference after a match which saw just a handful of shots on target and very little in the way of incident. PSG are a point back in third after failing to create anything from their territorial dominance, shorn of attacking inspiration without Neymar and Mauro Icardi, among others, while Kylian Mbappe started on the bench as he reportedly struggles with a thigh knock.

HAMILTON WINS BBC'S TOP SPORTS PRIZE

LONDON: Seven-time Formula One champion Lewis Hamilton capped another successful year by claiming the BBC's Sports Personality of the Year prize. The 35-year-old driver, who last month equaled Michael Schumacher's record of seven F1 titles, overcame Jordan Henderson and Hollie Doyle to win the British broadcaster's prestigious prize in a public vote.

GENOA FIRE MARAN AFTER SLOW START

GENOA: Italian club Genoa fired coach Rolando Maran on Monday as the team remained stuck in the relegation zone following a 2-0 loss to Benevento. Genoa has just one victory in 13 games this season in Serie A and was in 19th place as it prepared to play at Spezia on Wednesday. In a brief statement, the team said the 57-year-old Italian coach had been fired. "The club thanks the coach and his staff for their commitment," it said.

GAYLE, AFRIDI TO PLAY IN ABU DHABI T10

ABU DHABI: Some of the world's most renowned cricketers like Chris Gayle, Shahid Afridi and Dwayne Bravo will be seen in action in the fourth edition of Abu Dhabi T10 tournament, to be played from January 28 to February 6. The entire tourney will be played at the Zayed Cricket Stadium. While Gayle is part of Team Abu Dhabi, Afridi will be the icon player for Qalandars, Bravo for Delhi Bulls, Russell for Northern Warriors. Agencies

Kallis appointed England batting consultant for SL tour

London: South African legend Jacques Kallis was on Monday appointed as the batting consultant of the England team for next month's two-match Test tour of Sri Lanka.

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said in a statement that the team will depart for Sri Lanka on January 2.

"Seven coaches will join the squad for the two-Test tour, with the tour party departing on 2 January," the ECB said.

"Former South Africa all-rounder Jacques Kallis joins the England setup for the first time as batting coaching consultant," it added.

The 45-year-old Kallis worked in a similar

role with the Proteas last year in the Test series against England.

It is not yet known if Kallis' appointment will extend to the marquee tour of India beginning February next year.

Former England batsman Paul Collingwood will be assistant to head coach Chris Silverwood in Sri Lanka, while Jon Lewis will be the bowling coach. Jeetan Patel will be the spin bowling consultant and Carl Hopkinson will serve as the fielding coach. James Foster will be the wicketkeeper coaching consultant.

Both the Tests will be played at Galle from January 14-18 and January 22-26. PTI

Afghanistan gets land for new cricket stadium



PTI ■ KABUL

Afghanistan Cricket Board chief Farhan Yusefzai is confident of bringing international matches to the country in the near future after securing land for a new stadium in Kabul, having played most of their 'home' games in India so far. Afghanistan President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani on Sunday allocated more than two acres of land in Alohkhail area of Kabul for the construction of a state-of-the-art stadium.

um.

"With the construction of this ground, we will be able to host international cricket and our people will watch international players playing at their ground in the centre of the capital Kabul," Yusefzai was quoted as saying by *Cricbuzz*.

It is major breakthrough in the strife-torn country's quest to start hosting international cricket matches.

"Kabul will be home to a standard state-of-the-art international cricket stadium. I

express my special thanks to Mr President who has always supported the development of cricket and encouraged our players.

"After initial formalities, the construction of the stadium will also commence and we will ensure it is done with best quality," he said.

According to the report, the stadium will include "a five-star guest house, a standard swimming pool, indoor and outdoor academies, canopies for crowd, health clinic, mosque, car parking, administrative block and other such facilities."

The stadium will have a capacity to accommodate 35,000 spectators.

Since getting full membership from the ICC a few years ago, Afghanistan has hosted all its 'home' matches at neutral venue India, mostly in Dehradun and Greater Noida.