

OPINION 8

PAKISTAN'S
DARKEST DAY

WORLD 11

PRACHANDA PICKED AS
PARLIAMENTARY LEADER

SPORT 14

MESSI BREAKS
PELE'S RECORD

LUCKNOW, THURSDAY DECEMBER 24, 2020; PAGES 14 ₹3



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ANIL PENS A
NOTE FOR
FATHER
12 VIVACITY

Talks only solution: Govt to kisan

Farmers can add or remove points to/from Govt proposal, stresses Agriculture Minister

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a bid to break the deadlock with protesting farmers, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Wednesday invited them for talks saying any agitation could be resolved only through dialogue. He urged them to fix a date and time for the next round of talks.

Tomar said farmers should tell them what they want to add or remove from the proposal given by the Government.

"I'm hopeful that farmers' unions will discuss our request. Whatever they want to add & subtract from the Government's proposal, they should tell us. We're ready for a discussion at the time & date of their convenience. I'm hopeful of a solution," Tomar said while talking to reporters.

Stressing that a solution can be reached only through dialogue, Tomar said, "History is witness to this fact. How old and strong the protest is, the end and the solution to a protest are reached through dialogue only."

Farmers' unions should discuss the Government's draft proposal and inform them if they want to add or delete anything, he added.

The Minister said there were recommendations for reforms in the farm sector in

the past also by experts, unions and State Chief Ministers, but the previous Government might have faced difficulties in converting the recommendations into laws. Tomar further said the Government will continue with reforms in the farm sector as they are still due in many areas.

The Union Agriculture Minister was referring to a proposal sent by the Centre to the farmers' unions on Sunday, in which it offered to hold the sixth round of talks at a date and time of the unions' choosing.

He added, "I would also like to thank banks, as they brought more than 1 crore farmers under Kisan Credit Card cover during the pandemic and gave farmers ₹1 lakh crore in last 8 months. We've undertaken some reforms and will bring more in future."

Total five rounds of talks, including one each on December 1, 3 and 5, have failed to break the deadlock between the two sides. While the Centre is firm that the laws won't be scrapped and has instead proposed amendments, the unions are adamant on a total repeal. The Government has worked the back channels to bring farmer groups back to the negotiating table.

Continued on Page 11



Tents installed for farmers at Ghazipur border during their protest against the new farm laws on Wednesday

PTI

Attempt to break movement, farmers' unity, allege unions

SHEKHAR SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The United Farmers Front, on Wednesday wrote a letter to the Central Government urging the Government not to repeat those "meaningless" amendments which have been rejected by the farmers' unions. Meanwhile, farmers also urged people to skip one meal on 'Kisan Diwas' on Wednesday, the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Chaudhary Charan Singh in support of their stir.

Addressing a Press conference on Wednesday at Singhu Border, the epicentre of the farmers' protests across the National Capital's borders, the farmers unions said United Farmers Front on Wednesday has written a letter to the Government.

"It states that the Government shouldn't question the letter written by the United Farmers' Front previously as it was a unanimous decision. Government's new letter is a fresh attempt to

defame farmers' association," said Yogendra Yadav of Swaraj India.

While reading the letter in Hindi, Yadav said the Government is constantly holding talks with so-called farmers' leaders and organisations, who're not associated with our movement at all. "This is an attempt to break our movement. the Government is dealing with protesting farmers, the way it deals with its Opposition," said Yadav.

Continued on Page 11

Covid vaccine to immunise against new strain: Experts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Even as the Government is yet to disclose if the Covid-19 positive flyers from UK carry the new variant of the virus that originated in Britain, experts here said that the upcoming vaccination can tackle the strain.

Six more passengers arriving in two flights from the United Kingdom, which landed at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) late on Tuesday night, have tested positive for Covid-19 and 50 passengers have been advised for institutional quarantine.

With this, the number of passengers from the UK who have tested positive at the IGIA has soared to 11. Five tested

6 more fliers from UK test +ve at IGIA, samples sent for genome sequencing

positive for the Covid-19 virus after arrival from the UK on Tuesday.

Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan on Wednesday took stock of the status of passengers coming from the UK to India and found that passengers were positive in ten States where the flights from UK to India land.

These States are Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Goa, Punjab, Gujarat, Kerala and Telangana. The Government has identified the laboratories for Genome Sequencing.

Continued on Page 11

Govt starts contest for strengthening digital network for vaccine distribution

New Delhi: The Government on Wednesday launched a technology contest to invite solutions from IT companies and start-ups to strengthen digital platform CoWIN, which will be used for rolling out and scaling up Covid vaccine distribution across the country.

STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	19,02,458	48,876	17,94,080
Karnataka	9,12,340	12,038	8,86,547
Andhra Pradesh	8,79,718	7,085	8,68,769
Tamil Nadu	8,10,080	12,024	7,88,742
Kerala	7,21,511	2,893	6,55,644
Delhi	6,19,618	10,347	6,01,268
Uttar Pradesh	5,76,824	8,224	5,51,917
West Bengal	5,41,624	9,473	5,16,462
Odisha	3,27,279	1,899	3,22,344
Rajasthan	3,01,708	2,642	2,87,418
Telangana	2,82,982	1,522	2,74,833
Chhattisgarh	2,69,857	3,212	2,50,766
Haryana	2,59,226	2,847	2,51,149
Bihar	2,48,668	1,367	2,42,244
Gujarat	2,38,205	4,254	2,23,011
Madhya Pradesh	2,34,331	3,514	2,20,051

Ammonia leak in IFFCO plant leaves two officials dead

Several workers hospitalised as tragedy hits Phulpur unit

PNS ■ ALLAHABAD

Ammonia leakage at the Phulpur unit of Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative Limited (IFFCO) in Prayagraj claimed the lives of two officials and left over a dozen workers seriously sick on Tuesday night.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya expressed grief at the death of the two officials of IFFCO's Phulpur unit in the ammonia leakage.

Prima facie, a mechanical failure appears to be the cause behind this accident while details will be known after the technical inquiry committee submits its report.

It was around 10:30 on Tuesday night when ammonia gas started oozing out from a production plant.

Panic gripped the workers who ran helter-skelter to save their lives, but two officers, deputy manager (offsite) Abhay Nandan, and assistant manager (urea) VP Singh tried to find out the fault and set it right and in this process they fell unconscious. Later they breathed their last in the hospital.

As many as 14 workers were rushed to hospital and four of them are said to be in a serious condition.

IFFCO Phulpur public relations officer Vishwajit Srivastava confirmed the death of two officials.

The IFFCO Phulpur unit is situated on Prayagraj-Gorakhpur highway, 30 kilometres away from the city. It has two units each of urea and ammonia production.

Things were normal in the night shift till 10:30 pm but suddenly ammonia leakage changed the scene and an emergency was sounded.

Officials and employees ran for help but by that time two officials and 14 other employees had fallen victim to ammonia. They were immediately rushed to hospital where the doctors could not save the lives of the two man-

agers. IFFCO Managing Director and CEO Dr Uday Shankar Awasthi deeply regretted the sad and unfortunate accident that happened on Tuesday night due to mechanical failure at the IFFCO Phulpur ammonia urea unit.

He said the employees at the site fought bravely to handle the situation.

"Our two officers laid down their lives tackling the accident and saving the lives of their other colleagues. My deepest condolences to their family and friends. The situation at the accident site is now under control. Other employees are also stable now and undergoing appropriate treatment," he said, adding that prima facie the accident at the ammonia urea unit was caused by a mechanical failure.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath expressed grief at the death of the two IFFCO Phulpur unit officials in the ammonia gas leak and announced a compensation of Rs 4 lakh each for their family members.

He also directed the officials of the district administration to arrange for the best possible treatment for the accident victims.

Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya, while expressing profound grief at the death of the two officials and nearly two dozen people falling sick due to ammonia gas leak, instructed the officers of the district administration to take concrete steps for the treatment of the affected and immediate protection of the villagers.

He also said that the entire matter be investigated and report be submitted.

State cabinet minister Nand Gopal Gupta 'Nandi' in a tweet, expressed condolences to the families of the deceased officer.

Phulpur MP Kesari Devi Patel and Allahabad MP Rita Bahuguna Joshi also described the incident as tragic.

J&K picked BJP as 'largest' party, beat separatists: Shah

'DDC election results manifestation of faith in democracy'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah and the BJP on Wednesday hailed the outcome of Jammu & Kashmir's maiden District Development Council (DDC) elections, saying it was the manifestation of people's faith in democracy and a slap in the face of separatists.

Shah also "heartily thanked" the people for voting the BJP as the single-largest party in the polls.

"I heartily thank our sisters and brothers of J&K for voting the BJP as the single largest party in the District Development Council elections. The BJP under the leadership of PM @narendramodi ji will continue to work relentlessly towards the prosperity and development of the J&K region," Shah tweeted.

"Congratulations to the people of J&K for such great turnout in DDC polls. I applaud the efforts of our security forces & local administration for successfully conducting these multi-phased elections. This will further boost the morale and trust of people of J&K in democracy," he added.



BJP candidate Suresh Kumar celebrates after his victory in DDC election results in Jammu

PTI

Earlier, stating that people of Jammu & Kashmir are "making a new beginning", Union Minister for Law Ravishankar Prasad said the BJP has emerged as a "the single largest party in the poll and gained more votes than the National Conference, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the Congress put together.

Prasad said it is the BJP with 75 seats in the DDC and as the single largest party that has won the people's mandate and not the "opportunistic Gupkar alliance".

Prasad said of the 49 independents winning in the elections, "several are backed by the BJP". Independents have won more seats than the PDP, he said.

Continued on Page 11

Gupkar Alliance members celebrate win separately

Say outcome of DDC polls is rejection of abrogation of Art 370

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Leaders of People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) separately asserted on Wednesday that the outcome of the DDC poll was a rejection of the abrogation of Article 370, but even after winning 112 seats the PAGD constituents shied away from coming together on one platform to "unitedly" celebrate their victory.

The top brass of the National Conference organised a function at its own headquarters in Nawa-e-Subah, while PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti addressed a separate press conference at her Gupkar residence, with no party leader sitting by her side.

PAGD Spokesman Sajad Lone remained conspicuous even on social media.

No official statement was issued by the PAGD in connection with the poll results either.

Meanwhile, upbeat Omar Abdullah while addressing the party workers said the people have made clear their view by supporting the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) in the District Development Council polls.



Omar also observed he did not foresee Assembly elections in the Union Territory anytime soon because of the poll results.

"If you really say that democracy has won, then you will have to listen to the voices of the people, and the people of Jammu & Kashmir have said it with a huge majority that they do not accept (the decisions of) August 5, 2019," Omar said.

The Centre abrogated Article 370 — which gave special status to Jammu & Kashmir — and bifurcated the erstwhile State into two Union Territories on August 5 last year.

Omar said the results of the DDC elections have proved that the BJP will not be able to "bury" the NC.

Continued on Page 11

Govt OK's ₹59K cr scholarship for SC students to pursue post-matric studies

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a big push for education of Students belonging to the Scheduled Caste, the Union Cabinet on Wednesday okayed ₹59,000 crore for post-matric scholarship for five years.

The Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi estimated that this mega scholarship scheme will benefit more than four crore students for continuing their education from Class XI. The Central Government will spend 60 per cent of the programme. The rest will be provided by the State Government.

"This replaces the existing 'committed liability' system and brings greater involvement of the Central Govt in this crucial scheme," the Union Cabinet said in a statement.

Priest, nun get life for Sister Abhaya's murder

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Father Thomas Kottoor and Sister Sephy, the first and third accused in the Sister Abhaya murder case, were on Wednesday sentenced to life imprisonment and fines of ₹6.5 lakh and ₹5.5 lakh respectively by K Sanal Kumar, judge of the Thiruvananthapuram CBI Special Court.

Though Fr Kottoor was slapped with double life imprisonment (on charges of murder and trespass) the punishment would run concurrently and hence he need to serve only one sentence. He has to pay a fine of ₹5 lakh on charges of murder, ₹1 lakh for trespass and ₹50,000 for destroying evidence.

The nun Sr Sephy was awarded life imprisonment and ₹5 lakh for charges under murder, seven years rigorous imprisonment and ₹50,000 for destroying evidence.

Though the accused told

the judge that they should be freed of all charges considering their advanced age and ailments, they did not get any concessions. The judge had made it clear to the prosecution that since it was not a pre-planned murder, the accused would not be slapped with death sentence.

Father Kottoor was sent to Central Jail at Poojappura, a Thiruvananthapuram suburb and Sister Sephy to the Women's Jail in another suburb where she would have the company of Swapna Suresh, the kingpin of the gold smuggling case that rocked Kerala politics.

Expressing happiness over the judgement, Sister Abhaya Action Council convenor Jomon Puthenpurackal said he would not rest until the appeals to be filed by the convicts are rejected by the higher courts.

The Kottayam Archdiocese to which the accused belong issued a media release about the incident for the first time

since Sister Abhaya was murdered on March 27, 1992. "The Archdiocese is of the view that the death of Sister Abhaya is unfortunate and painful. Though the charges against Father Thomas Kottoor and Sister Sephy who are members of the Archdiocese are unbelievable we respect the court verdict. The accused have the rights for appeal against the verdict and prove their innocence," said the release.

According to prosecution, Kottoor and Poothrakkayil were having an illicit relationship with Sephy, also an inmate of the convent. On the night of March 27, 1992, Abhaya (21) — a second year student of the BCM college, Kottayam, was staying at St Pius convent — saw Kottoor and Sephy in a compromising position, following which the three accused hacked her with an axe and threw her into the well, the CBI had said in its charge sheet.

Varghese P Thomas, the



Father Thomas Kottoor being brought out of the court in Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday

PTI

then CBI Deputy SP who was the first investigation officer of the case and who had to resign his job because of severe pressure to write off the case as suicide, said that he was happy that the accused have been sentenced.



Sister Sephy (Left) PTI

CM: BJP committed to farmers' welfare

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath greeted the farming community on the occasion of the 118th birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Chaudhary Charan Singh and said that his government was committed to bettering their interests.

Hailing former Prime Minister Chaudhary Charan Singh for dedicating his life for the empowerment of farmers, Yogi said that the late leader strived hard for the uplift of the underprivileged sections of society.

“Chaudharyji used to say that the path of the nation's prosperity passes through farmland. In other words, India will progress if the farmers are progressive,” he said.

Pledging to infuse latest technology in agriculture, the chief minister said that as many as 20 new Krishi Vigyan Kendras were being constructed in addition to the existing 69 such KVKs linked to four agriculture universities in UP.

“Of these, 18 have already been completed,” the chief minister said.

“Farmers have been provided with the facility of soil testing and Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana has been further extended. Also, water has been provided to every farm under the Prime Minister Agricultural Irrigation Scheme,” he

Gifted tractors, farmers hail Yogi as messiah

Lucknow (PNS): Singing paeon to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and terming him a messiah, a section of farmers said that the state government always worked for their welfare and showed the resolve to solve the problems faced by the farmer community.

“Yogi Adityanath has always taken decisions for farmers' welfare. The chief minister and his government has shown dedication towards the growth of the agri sector and hence he is a 'messiah' for us,” said farmer Umakant Gupta from Malihabad after being gifted a tractor by the chief minister at an event in Lucknow on Kisan Diwas to commemorate the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Chaudhary Charan Singh.

Farmer Aarif Siddiqui from Unnao said that it was only because of Yogi Adityanath that he came to know about different farmer-centric schemes that benefited them a lot.

said. Yogi came down heavily on the opposition parties for spreading cooked up stories about the new agriculture laws and for misguiding innocent farmers.

“Neither the MSP (minimum



“The government is providing free good quality seeds which has resulted in higher yield, better quality of produce and increased profit”

“The government is providing free good quality seeds which has resulted in higher yield, better quality of produce and increased profit,” he said.

The chief minister interacted

with the farmers of the state and distributed tractors and cheques up to Rs 3 lakh. Later, he said that his government was working with a commitment in the interest of farmers.

reducing the cost of farming and increasing productivity.

The UP government distributed tractors and cheques up to Rs 3 lakh to the farmers of the state on this day which is celebrated as Kisan Diwas.

BJP plans Kisan Samwad to connect with farmers

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Aiming to connect with farmers at the block level on the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on December 25, Kisan Samvad will be held where Prime Minister Narendra Modi will interact with the farmers.

A plan was charted out for Kisan Samvad at a meeting attended by BJP state chief Swatantra Dev Singh and state general secretary (organisation) Sunil Bansal and other senior leaders in Lucknow on Wednesday.

Singh said that opposition parties were spreading confusion among the farmers about agricultural reform laws whereas the truth was that the laws would open new opportunities for the community.

The BJP leader told party officials that under the Kisan Samman Nidhi, the prime minister would transfer Rs 18,000 crore to nine crore farmer families on December 25.

Discussing the plan, Bansal said that party workers should choose a place where this Kisan Samvad programme could be held and the local unit should ensure large participation of people at the ground level.

In the Kisan Samvad programme, all MPs of the ruling party, MLAs and public representatives, including officials of corporations, boards and cooperative societies, will participate.

The BJP has also decided that all public representatives, including party officials of the state, region, district, mandal, sector should be present at their booths and pay tribute to Atalji on December 26 and 27.

Despite COVID-19 pandemic, 773 start-ups set up in UP in a year

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government said that exceptional improvement in ease of doing business in the state had a positive impact on the start-up sector.

With the numbers soaring in the state, 3,406 start-ups recognised by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) of the Union government have been set up in Uttar Pradesh in the last three years. Referring to the best start-up ecosystem being developed as a result of efficient implementation of IT and Start-up Policy, 2017 and New Start-up Policy, 2020, Deputy Chief Minister Dinesh Sharma, who holds the IT and Electronics portfolio, said that the state government was developing a world-class start-up ecosystem through a strong infrastructure and favourable policy environment. Sharma said that besides creating employment, the start-up policies were promoting innovation and entrepreneurship along with contributing to the state's economy and aiding the empowerment of youth.

Additional Chief Secretary (IT and Electronics) Alok Kumar said that despite the COVID-19 pandemic, 773 start-ups had been established between December, 2019 and 2020, in addition to 17 incubators set up in the last two years under the IT and Start-up Policy, 2017.

Kumar said that seven proposals for setting up incubators had been approved in December under the new Start-up Policy, 2020, including the first incubator of Bundelkhand in Rajkiya Engineering College, Banda, Atal Incubation Centre in BHU Varanasi, NASSCOM 10000 Start-up Warehouse in Noida, Jaipuria Incubator and Maharshi Centre for Entrepreneur Development in Lucknow, start-up launch pad in Mathura, GLA University, Krishna Engineering College, Ghaziabad.

Underlining the objective of encouraging start-ups in non-IT sectors, Kumar said that setting up of 117 incubators had been set as the target for developing start-up ecosystems in institutions, universities, colleges under main departments like MSME, Khadi, Agricultural Education, Medical Education, Higher/Technical Education, etc.

It is noteworthy that in the 2020-21 fiscal, an incentive of Rs 41.60 lakh has been provided to incubators and start-ups by the state government and an additional amount of Rs 41.41 lakh will soon be disbursed after getting financial approval under the IT and Start-up Policy, 2017. A sum of around Rs 83 lakh would be provided to incubators and start-ups in the current fiscal. In September 2020, UP was ranked in the category of Emerging Start-up Ecosystem in Start-up Ranking-2020 of states released by the Department of Industry Promotion and Internal Trade (DPIIT) of the Government.



सूचना
सर्वसामान को सूचित किया जाता है कि पहले मेरा नाम Sanjay Pandey था जो अब बदलकर Sanjay Kumar Pandey हो गया है। संक्षेप से मुझे इसी नाम से जाना व पहचाना जाये। Sanjay Kumar Pandey S/o Bare Lal Pandey, Bijlipur Lal Gopalganj, Prayagraj.

NOTICE

I, hereby declare that previously I was known by the name Meena Rawat. But now I have changed my name from Meena Rawat to Meenu Singh W/o Shri Mani Ram Singh. Both the above names are of same person and that is mine. Meenu Singh W/o Shri Mani Ram Singh, R/o B-5/434, Viraj Khand, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow.

NOTICE

I, Rekha Devi, Spouse of Bharat Bhushan Kanoujia R/o 61 Golf Course Colony, Bhajajapurva Shiwas Tannery, Kanpur Nagar - 208010. Have changed my name from Rekha Devi to Rekha Kanoujia Vide affidavit No. 30AE 750216 dated 16.12.2020 before Kanpur Court.

NOTICE

Power of Attorney registered on 17/05/1991 and original deeds of my house no. 35/32B Bengali Mohal Kanpur Nagar have actually been lost somewhere, which was registered on 17/08/1988 no. 21122 in the Sub Registrar. Use of the above will be illegal. Sushela Singh W/o Laxman Singh. 8840600028

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Syed Naved Ahmad Manager

Wife given triple talaq for not wearing jeans, hubby tries immolation

Lucknow (PNS): In a shocking incident, a man pronounced instant talaq to his wife for refusing to dance and wear jeans and later torched himself at his in-laws place in Meerut on Tuesday night.

However, the man was saved by his in-laws and the police were informed.

As per reports, New Ismailnagar resident Amiruddin married off his daughter eight years ago to Anas of Pilkhua (Hapur), who used to work in Delhi.

The woman alleged that Anas forced her to dance and sing which often led to squabbles between the couple. Fed up with the husband, she even approached a local panchayat but failed to get a solution.

On Tuesday, Anas pronounced triple talaq to his wife and later headed to his in-laws' place where he set himself afire. The harried in-laws raised an alarm, doused the flame and rushed him to a hospital with serious burns. The Lisari Gate police station was informed about the incident and a probe was underway to find out whether there was any other motive that led the man to immolate himself.

UP to deploy officers in other states to protect its migrant workers

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With a view to protect the migrant labourers who have gone to big cities to earn their livelihood, the Uttar Pradesh government is going to deploy officers in cities like Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata for the protection of these workers.

These officers will be tasked to monitor the security and dignity of the migrant labourers.

Uttar Pradesh will be the first state in the country to deploy officers in other states for the safety and convenience of its workers.

“The Yogi Adityanath government will keep a close watch on the safety and respect of lakhs of migrant labourers of UP who have become the backbone of economic development and industries of all the states, including Delhi, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh,” a government spokesman said.

The plan is going to start with the deployment of officers in Mumbai.

According to officials privy to the decision, two officers of Uttar Pradesh government will be posted in Mumbai.

Lallu beats taali and thali to support farmers' stir

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Taking a jibe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal of 'taali and thali' during lockdown, UP Congress chief Ajay Kumar Lallu and party workers clapped and banged 'thali' during a protest to express solidarity with protesting farmers on Wednesday.

Congress workers and leaders carried out a state-wide protest against the recently legislated agricultural laws on the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Chaudhary Charan Singh, in Lucknow and pledged full support to the farmers' stir against farm laws and the demand of repealing them.

However, as Congress workers marched to lay siege to the homes of BJP MPs and MLAs as per plan, they were stopped and detained. Later, Lallu staged a sit-in along with party workers. Many party leaders and workers were also confined inside the UP Congress headquarters at Mall Avenue and forced by the police to stage protest on the campus itself. Later, Lallu told news per-

AKY advises BJP to stop humiliating farmers

Lucknow (PNS): Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav said that the Bharatiya Janata Party must stop humiliating farmers as they were the honour of the nation but they have been forced to hit the streets to fight for their existence.

Addressing a meeting at the state SP office to celebrate the 118 birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Chaudhary Charan Singh, Akhilesh said that the BJP and its workers did not have any roots in rural India and were connected only with the corporate class.

“Unnerved by the huge protests of farmers, the BJP is indulging in futile exercise of

sons that the Union government was 'anti-farmer' and the Congress would support the farmers both on the streets and in the Parliament.

“Despite the 22-day protest by farmers, the Centre is not retracting the agricultural laws. This regime is arrogant and is



inserting government advertisements in newspapers to commemorate Chaudhary Charan Singh's birth anniversary, which is unprecedented,” said the SP chief.

trying to suppress the voice of opponents by misusing official machinery,” he said.

On the Centre's assurance of MSP, Lallu said that why did not the government guarantee it by bringing in a bill and alleged that the BJP regime wanted to sell farmers to the corporate houses.

Akhilesh further said that the BJP was living in the mistaken belief that by celebrating Chaudhary ji's birth anniversary, it could win the farmers trust or confuse them to give up their agitation.

“The BJP government is unwilling to address the grievances of the farmers and the pomp and show used to celebrate Charan Singh's birth anniversary will not help as it can no longer mislead the community. Paddy and cane farmers of the state have been running from pillar to post for selling their produce at procurement centres and getting payment from sugar mills,” Akhilesh charged.

“Farmers' outfits have been protesting for three weeks now but the BJP government at the Centre is refusing to listen to their woes. The Congress party will 'gherao' the homes and offices of BJP's MPs and MLAs and protest by beating 'taali' and 'thaali,” he said.

Litterateur Hari Om Sharma 'Hari' met comedian and chairman of UP Films Development Council Raju Srivastava at latter's office in Lok Bhawan and presented him a copy of his book titled 'Apna Raasta Khud Banayein'.

Srivastava showed interest in the inspirational book and congratulated Sharma. He said the book is a great source of motivation for youth.

DATE EXTENDED

In view of the ongoing Covid pandemic, the state government has extended the last date for uploading the online applications with late fees for class X & class XII students, including private candidates, of UP Board to January 5, 2021. Deputy Chief Minister Dinesh Sharma said that for admission to class IX and class XI, the last date for registration has been extended to January 10, 2021.



SHARMA MEETS RAJU SRIVASTAVA

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‘India faced with challenge of biodiversity degradation’

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

India is facing the challenge of biodiversity degradation due to deforestation, mining, climate change and other factors, chairperson of National Green Tribunal Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel said while speaking at the biodiversity conclave under ‘IISF-2020’, which was inaugurated at NBRI virtually on Wednesday.

Goel, who was the chief guest, said that earlier, India was

considered a poor country inhabited by the poor, but it has always been a rich country in terms of its biodiversity. “India hosts biodiversity hotspots harbouring unique biodiversity, particularly in the north-east region and western ghats. India is home to several tribal communities and has a long history of preserving traditional knowledge and biodiversity conservation,” he said.

He also talked about the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) which led to changes in administrative and legislative levels and paved the way for the Biodiversity Act of India 2002.

“Under the CBD, there is a concept of equitable sharing of knowledge and benefits arising from the sustainable utilisation of biodiversity,” he added. He said Indian approach has always been to respect the nature and not its exploitation. He reiterated the importance of sharing of knowledge among the subject experts and policy-makers. He also opined that the conclave will bring the common

people, administration and policy-makers on one platform to provide crucial outputs to conserve the invaluable biodiversity. Earlier, NBRI director Prof. SK Barik spoke about the structure of the biodiversity conclave. He said the conclave at the IISF-2020 would showcase the rich biodiversity of India at ecosystem, species and genetic levels, long tradition of biodiversity conservation by traditional communities and India’s efforts towards mapping the distribution of biodiversity and conservation of critical ecosystems and threatened species.

“Interactive meets and expos by students, researchers, indigenous communities, S&T experts and industries will also be part of the event. The two-day event will be entirely in a virtual environment and will include webinars by invited talks from globally recognised experts, e-poster gallery, biodiversity innovation expo, indigenous communities, S&T experts meet, entrepreneurs industry meet, short films and nature wildlife photo exhibition,” he added.

Kerala CM tussels with Governor over spl Assembly session

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The denial of permission by Governor Arif Mohammed Khan to the Government of Kerala to hold a special session of the Legislative Assembly on Wednesday to lambast the Centre and pass a resolution condemning the Agriculture Bills led to the staging of a demonstration by Chief

Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and members of his council of ministers at the capital city.

Vijayan issued a severe warning to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whom the former accused of following a divide and rule policy in India. “Public resentment against the Farm Bills would blow the BJP out of power in coming days and it would be better for the Centre to withdraw the legislations,” warned the Chief Minister.

He said the impact of the Farm Bills would be felt more in Kerala because of the food crisis being faced by the State. “We are dependent on other States for our food requirement because the production of food grains have come down drastically in the State because of the anti-people policies pursued by the Centre,” said Vijayan.

The exchange of letters between the Governor and Chief Minister continued on Wednesday also. Replying to Vijayan’s letter to Raj Bhavan on Tuesday in which he alleged that the Governor’s action to deny permission for Wednesday’s special session of the Legislative, Governor Arif mohammed Khan explained to him in a letter sent on Wednesday the precedence and rules in the Constitution relating to the convening of such meetings.

Meanwhile the Congress-led UDF demanded the Chief Minister to convene a special session of the MLAs outside the Legislative House and pass a resolution against the Prime Minister and the Centre.

BBAU teacher identifies bacteria which lessens chromium’s toxicity

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Dr Pankaj Kumar Arora from Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University has identified a bacterium which has the ability to convert highly toxic chromium to less toxic chromium. BBAU spokesperson Dr Rachna Gangwar said this bacterium is recognised as a member of the genus Bacillus that is capable of converting highly toxic chromium of 1000 ppm to less toxic chromium.

“For this, the genes involved in chromium transformation were identified by genome sequencing. The research has proved very helpful in reducing chromium toxicity. It has also been published in a journal,” she said.

She said chromium is a highly toxic metal that causes cancer in humans. “The main source of chromium pollution is the leather industry in which chromium is used as a tanning agent. Similar toxic pollution was

found in Kanpur district, where leather industries have spread chromium in the soil and water of the surrounding areas. Given the seriousness of the situation, there is an urgent need to remove chromium from the environment,” she said. Dr Arora has the distinction of being included in the list of top scientists of Stanford University.

Meanwhile, an MoU has been signed between Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University and NBRI. “The MoU is aimed at providing mutual support in education and research. Now, researchers of both the institutes will be able to get guidance from experts and scientists with mutual support and at the same time both institutes will also get the benefit of laboratories and other facilities for research work. Along with this, training programmes will also be organised from time to time to benefit both the institutes,” the BBAU spokesperson said.



Girls look at the Santa Claus at Cathedral church ahead of Christmas, in Lucknow on Wednesday

Pioneer

Temporal bone dissection lab inaugurated

Lucknow (PNS): A temporal bone dissection lab was inaugurated by director of Balrampur Hospital Dr Rajeev Lochan on Wednesday. DNB courses are running in Balrampur Hospital in various specialities and this lab is mandatory for teaching purposes in the ENT department.

“Students will learn how to dissect with microscopes on cadaveric bones before going for surgery in patients. They will learn normal anatomy of ear with in-depth knowledge of fine structures that can only be seen with the help of microscope like facial nerve sigmoid sinus, ossicles, middle and

inner ear structures. Basically, this lab is a wonderful place to learn and get trained in otology so that society can get good ENT surgeons,” a senior doctor said. He added that with this, Balrampur Hospital can also provide learning facility to students of ENT from other institutions also.

IMPACT OF NIGHT CURFEW— Hotels, restaurants in Maha to welcome NY ‘Thailand time’ TO WELCOME YEAR 2021 ONE-AND-A-HALF HOURS EARLY

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The “night curfew” declared by the Maharashtra Government has prompted the Hotel and Restaurant Association of Western India (HRAWI) to exhort its member-hotels and restaurants in Mumbai and other major cities across the State to gear up for early New Year’s eve celebrations coinciding with “Thailand Time”.

The hotels and restaurants in Mumbai and Municipal Corporation areas in Maharashtra — as per the advice by HRAWI — will ring in the New Year as early as at 10.30 pm on December 31 which is 12 midnight as per “Thailand Time”. In effect, the hotels and restaurants will usher in the year 2021 one-hand-a half hour early.

The HRAWI’s directive to its member hotels and restaurants comes in the wake of the Maharashtra Government’s decision to enforce night curfew in Mumbai and other municipal corporations of Maharashtra, between 11 pm and 6 am from December 22 to January 5, in view of new strain of the SARS-CoV-2 detected in the United Kingdom,

In a statement issued here, the HRAWI said that ending the



Mumbai streets wear a deserted look during night curfew on Wednesday

PTI

year earlier was a fitting tribute to the hospitality industry’s “never say die attitude” and that it would welcome the New Year filled with hope and promise.

The HRAWI said that while the curfew would disrupt hospitality industry’s plans, it appreciated the Maharashtra Government’s pre-emptive measures to allay any threat of the Covid-19 pandemic’s second wave.

“Like every year, Mumbai will have its celebrations this year too, albeit a little earlier. The Government is doing its

best to help keep its citizens safe and we see the intent behind the decision. But if it’s celebrations that Mumbaiers want, we will give it to them while ensuring that all norms and safety measures are adhered to. This is probably even better as people will get to be at their homes at midnight to bring in the New Year with their families,” HRAWI’s President Sherry Bhatia said.

The HRAWI member establishments are planning to “align celebrations with Thailand” and may even host



Police officers stop commuters at Girgaum Chowpatty during night curfew in Mumbai on Wednesday

PTI

virtual celebrations synchronised with them.

“The Hospitality industry wants to put the last eight months behind and instead look forward to the remaining eight days left in the year. We have braved the storm and have decidedly put the worst behind us. Nothing is going to dampen our spirits and we will emerge stronger than before. We welcome Mumbaiers to come join us in the last celebrations of the season, to bid farewell to 2020 and to usher in 2021 with lots of optimism, faith and hope,” HRAWI’s senior Vice President Pradeep Shetty said.

Maha issues safety guidelines for X’mas celebrations

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

As a precautionary measure against the spread of Coronavirus in the coming days, the Maharashtra Government on Wednesday came out with health safety guidelines for this year’s Christmas celebrations across the State. In a notification issued, the State Home department appealed to the Christian community to celebrate this year’s Christmas celebrations in a simple manner in view of the fact that the State continued to be in the grip of Covid-19 crisis.

“This year, all communities and religions celebrated various festivities in a simple manner in view of the health threat posed by Coronavirus. We expect the Christian community to celebrate this year’s Christmas in a simple manner,” the State Home department said, as it released 13-point safety guidelines for Christmas celebrations.

Significantly enough, the State Government has asked the Christian community to hold “Thanks Giving Mass” at or before 7 pm of December 31 instead holding them at 12 midnight. Among other things, State Government has mandated that there should be not be more than 50 people at church for the prayer meeting held on the occasion of Christmas, that there be systematic and exit arrangements at the Church, that the social distancing norms be followed strictly, that the Church be sanitised before mass and that the use Mask and Sanitiser is compulsory in Church.

कार्यालय जिला विद्यालय निरीक्षक, बाराबंकी

पत्रांक-2020-21 / 15781-83 दिनांक-दिसम्बर 22, 2020

अल्प कालिक निविदा/विज्ञापित

अनुभव प्राप्त पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से कार्यालय में बाउंड्री वाल की विशेष मरम्मत / चुनाई आदि कार्य के प्रति निविदाएँ आमंत्रित की जाती है। जो दिनांक 07.01.2021 को समिति द्वारा ठेकेदारों की उपस्थिति अथवा अनुपस्थिति में खोली जाएगी। निविदा फार्म / कार्य विवरण/नियम व शर्तें समयांतर्गत किसी भी कार्य दिवस में कार्यालय से प्राप्त किए जा सकते हैं। निविदा के किसी भी विवाद की स्थिति में बिना कारण बताये निरस्त करने का अधिकार अधोहस्ताक्षरी को होगा।

जिला विद्यालय निरीक्षक बाराबंकी

कार्यालय राजकीय इंटर कालेज साण्डा-सीतापुर

पत्रांक-राइड0का/ 134 / 2020-2021 दिनांक दिसम्बर 22, 2020

अल्प कालिक निविदा/विज्ञापित

अनुभव प्राप्त पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से विद्यालय में छात्र/छात्राओं को कक्षा में बैठने हेतु नए आयरन फर्नीचर (बैंच/डेस्क) की आपूर्ति के कार्य के सम्बन्ध में निविदाएँ आमंत्रित की जाती है। जो दिनांक 04.01.2021 को समिति द्वारा ठेकेदारों की उपस्थिति अथवा अनुपस्थिति में खोली जाएगी। निविदा फार्म/ कार्य विवरण/नियम व शर्तें समयांतर्गत किसी भी कार्य दिवस में कार्यालय से प्राप्त किए जा सकते हैं। निविदा के किसी भी विवाद की स्थिति उत्पन्न होने पर बिना कारण सूचित किये हुए निविदा निरस्त करने का अधिकार अधो-हस्ताक्षरी का होगा।

प्रधानाचार्य

राजकीय इंटर कालेज साण्डा-सीतापुर

GUJARAT WATER SUPPLY & SEWERAGE BOARD.

SECTOR-10/A, GANDHINAGAR

BRIEF SHORT NOTICE INVITING ON LINE TENDER FOR FIX QUANTITY CONTRACT OF PVC PIPE FOR THE YEAR 2021

GWSSB invites online tender through e-tendering of Fix Quantity contract for Manufacture, Supply & Delivery of Ring Fit PVC pipes (63 to 315mm Dia) with ISI Mark 859.40 MT Estimated amt. Rs. 1 149.73 Lacs (with GST), from approved vendors or approved vendors whose validity Expired & had applied for registration of vendors in GWSSB. Interested bidder who wish to participate in above tender may view the detailed tender notice & down load the Tender documents free of cost from web site.

<https://www.nprocure.com>

The last date of submission of online tender is 12-1-2021

NO/INF/PNP/2020/G/1569

IMPORTANT NOTICE

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

EXTENSION OF PERIODICITY AND REVISION OF TIME - TABLE

Train No. & Name	Notified Upto	Extended Upto	Revised Timings w.e.f.
02191 Jabalpur - Haridwar Jn Superfast Special Train	30.12.2020	31.03.2021	06.01.2021
02192 Haridwar Jn - Jabalpur Superfast Special Train	31.12.2020	01.04.2021	07.01.2021

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

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

Security Helpline No. 132 Integrated Helpline No. 139

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(1) अति अल्पकालिक निविदा संख्या 86-वि.पा.सं(प्र.ज)/2020-21, विद्युत पारेषण खण्ड-द्वितीय, लखनऊ के अन्तर्गत उपखण्ड अधिकारी, विद्युत पारेषण उपखण्ड - नूतन, लखनऊ के प्रयोगार्थ चालक संचित एक नम डीजल चालित टैक्सी कोटे का हल्का वाहन 09 माह की अवधि के लिये किराये पर लिए जाने हेतु निविदा आमंत्रित की गयी है जिसे www.upptcl.org पर दिनांक 23.12.2020 को प्रकाशित किया गया है। कार्य की अनुमानित लागत र० 1.89 लाख का कार्य की धरोहर धनराशि र० 2,000 00, है। प्रपत्रों को मूल रूप में इस कार्यालय में दिनांक 29.12.2020 को 14.00 बजे जमा करेंगे।

(2) निविदा संख्या 86-वि.पा.सं(प्र.ज)/2020-21, विद्युत पारेषण खण्ड-द्वितीय, लखनऊ के अन्तर्गत उपखण्ड अधिकारी, विद्युत पारेषण उपखण्ड-प्रथम, लखनऊ के प्रयोगार्थ चालक संचित एक नम डीजल चालित टैक्सी कोटे का हल्का वाहन 09 माह की अवधि के लिये किराये पर लिए जाने हेतु निविदा आमंत्रित की गयी है जिसे www.upptcl.org पर दिनांक 23.12.2020 को प्रकाशित किया गया है। कार्य की अनुमानित लागत र० 1.89 लाख का कार्य की धरोहर धनराशि र० 2,000.00 है। प्रपत्रों को मूल रूप में इस कार्यालय में दिनांक 27.01.2021 को 14.00 बजे तक जमा करेंगे। कार्य की कुल मात्रा निविदा विधि-01-करण व अन्य नियम एवं शर्तें www.upptcl.org पर उपलब्ध है।

अधोहस्ताक्षरकर्ता को बिना कोई कारण बताये किसी भी निविदा अथवा सभी निविदाओं को अस्वीकार/विनाशित करने का अधिकार सुरक्षित है। निष्पक्षित स्थिति के विस्तार तथा शुद्धि पत्र से सम्बंधित सूचना यदि कोई होगी केवल वेबसाइट पर डाली जाएगी अतः स्वयं को अपडेट रखने के लिए उपरोक्त वेबसाइट को नियमित देखते रहना चाहिए।

अधीनस्थ अधिकारिता, विद्युत पारेषण मण्डल-प्रथम, उपप्रभागवार ट्रान्समिशन कारपोरेशन लि०, कक्ष सं०-111 से 114, भू-तल, पारेषण भवन, विद्युति खण्ड-11, गोमती नगर, लखनऊ। पत्रांक-2175, दिनांक-23.12.2020

“राष्ट्रहित में विजली बचाएँ”

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Less than a month after the Bombay High Court quashed the demolition notice issued to Bollywood actress Kangana Ranaut and dubbed the subsequent demolition of portions of her bungalow as “a clear malice in law”, the Maharashtra State Human Rights Commission (MSHRC) on Wednesday summoned Mumbai Municipal Commissioner Iqbal Chahal to appear before on January 20, 2021 in connection with the much-discussed demolition.

Hearing a petition filed by Advocate Aditya Mishra against the demolition of a portion of Kanga’s Bandra Bungalow saying it as an act of “human violation”, the MSHRC admitted the petition and ordered issuance of summons

to Chahal to appear on January 20 to depose before it connection with the petition.

The petitioner has relied on the order of the Bombay High Court which had on November 27 quashed the demolition notice issued by the BMC to the Bollywood actress in September this year, terming both the notice and the subsequent demolition of a portion of her Bandra Bungalow were “actuated by malafides” and they involved “a clear malice in law” and ordered compensation for her.

In his petition filed before the MSHRC, Mishra cited a Supreme Court ruling that declared the right to private property to be a human right. Quoting the apex court’s order, the petitioner said that if any act by the state or its agencies pertaining to someone’s private

BJP emerges single largest party in DDC polls

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

By winning 75 seats, three for the first time from Kashmir valley and 72 from across its strong bastion of Jammu region, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has emerged as the single largest party garnering around 25 per cent total vote share of the total votes polled in the District Development Council polls.

On the other hand, the People’s Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) may have

won 112 seats but it fell way behind BJP, securing around 22 per cent total vote share.

Indian National Congress, which won 26 seats, seven from Kashmir valley and 17 from Jammu, garnered over 13 per cent total vote share while securing 3,94,575 votes in the DDC polls.

Significantly, the biggest chunk of 32 per cent votes was polled in favour of the Independent candidates across Jammu & Kashmir.

Out of 20 District

Development councils, these candidates are going to play the role of ‘kingmakers’ in the five district development councils of Rajouri, Poonch, Ramban, Kishtwar and Srinagar. A total number of 50 independents have won these polls, 20 from Jammu and 30 from Kashmir region.

According to the vote percentage data shared by the State Election Commission after the declaration of the poll results, the BJP has topped the chart. It garnered 708714 votes (24.82

per cent) of the total votes polled. According to the State Election Commission, a total number of 28,55,509 votes were polled in the DDC polls.

Out of 75 seats, BJP won 72 from Jammu region and opened its account for the first time in Kashmir by winning three seats, one each from Srinagar, Pulwama and Bandipur districts.

On the other hand, Jammu and Kashmir National Conference party won 67 seats, 25 from Jammu and 42 from

Kashmir region. The total vote share garnered by the party was 16.46 per cent. The party candidates secured 4,70,099 votes across Jammu & Kashmir.

The National Conference had contested around 60 seats in Kashmir, while PDP contested 45, Peoples Conference 13, JKPM 6, CPI(M), Awami National Conference 5.

Another important constituent of the PAGD, JKDPD polled 1,13,175 votes which is 3.96 per cent of the total votes polled.



IIT-BHU Director Prof PK Jain (left) and Dr PV Venkatakrishnan of ISRO (right) showing virtual signed MoU in Varanasi on Wednesday

Pioneer

ISRO to open RAC-S at IIT-BHU

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the Indian Institute of Technology, Banaras Hindu University (IIT-BHU) and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Wednesday to pave the way for advanced research in the future technology of the Indian space programme. Under this agreement ISRO will open the Regional Academic Centre for Space (RAC-S) in the IIT-BHU. The MoU was signed by IIT-BHU Director Prof Pramod Kumar Jain and Director, CBPO, ISRO HQ Dr PV Venkatakrishnan on behalf of ISRO virtually.

On this occasion, the inaugural address was presented by

the Scientific Secretary of ISRO R Umamaheswaran. The guests were welcomed by Prof SB Dwivedi, Dean, Academic Affairs and a vote of thanks was proposed by Dr Anurag Ohri. Prof Rajeev Prakash, Dean, Research and Development, Prof Rajnesh Tyagi, Dean, Faculty Affairs and Prof PKS Dixit, Head of Department, Civil Engineering, were also present. In his briefing, IIT-BHU Director Prof Jain said that the RAC-S of ISRO will act as a major facilitator for promoting space technology activities in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh. He also said that IIT-BHU will act as a catalyst for capacity building, awareness creation and R&D activities of ISRO. The activities of

RAC-S shall be directed to maximise the utilisation of research potential, infrastructure, expertise available at ISRO and IIT-BHU. IIT-BHU will be the leader and project monitor of RAC-S in which Institutes of Excellence in the field of science and technology in the states of UP, MP and Chhattisgarh will be roped into participate in various research and development activities. IIT-BHU will identify the Regional Coordinator of RAC-S who will be responsible for the overall management of the centre. Prof Jain further said that with the help of the RAC-S at IIT-BHU will leverage research in space science and space technology, space application, agriculture, telecommunica-

tions, meteorology, water resources to design developmental models for effective natural resource management. He iterated that such an initiative will greatly benefit the Purvanchal (eastern UP) and central regions of the country. The centre will facilitate short and long-term projects to propel the culture of research and development. Short-term projects for B-Tech and M-Tech students from the institute and associate institutes will also be included in this sequence. Long-term R&D projects leading to the PhD programme will also be offered. Capacity building programmes like conferences, exhibitions and short courses will also be organised to strengthen the knowledge base in the field.

73 more test positive in Prayagraj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The corona test of 6,650 people was conducted on Tuesday of them, the Covid infection was confirmed among 73 people, including an army major late in the night. At the same time, 44 people beat Corona. So far 27,983 people have been infected in the district.

According to the Nodal Officer for Corona Dr Rishi Sahai, active patients of Covid are decreasing in the district. Despite increasing the scope of testing, the number of active patients has been reduced to 798. He said that the number of patients admitted to Covid hospitals is decreasing.

On Tuesday night, 58 patients were admitted to SRN, 38 to Beli Hospital and 17 to United Medicity Medical College.

According to Dr Rishi, the infected included a High Court officer, Standing Counsel, an advocate, deputy manager of Axis Bank Civil Lines, chief manager of SBI Main Branch, an Anganwadi worker, a clerk of Bahadurpur SBI branch and a primary school teacher.

Coronavirus infection is not yet completely eradicated. In Prayagraj, it still has an impact. In the Corona era, due to the high stock of immunity boosters in the district these days, its sales may be making a difference, however, the sales of masks have

increased tremendously this month. The reason for this is also believed to be the strictness of the police.

Ever since the police started taking strict action against those not applying masks and imposing strong fines, the sale of masks has increased by 8 to 10 times since then. Masks ranging from ₹ 10 to ₹ 150-200 are available in the market.

At the same time, due to the abundance of immunity boosters capsules and syrups in the market, their sales have made a big difference. Due to the outbreak of Corona pandemic, most of the reputed pharmaceutical companies have started making immunity booster capsules etc. Even Chyawanprash is available in

the market of immunity boosters. The special thing is that companies are sending immunity booster medicines, syrups etc. despite the demand of the businessmen. Due to this, it has become very popular in the wholesale market Leader Road shops of medicine.

Due to non-sale in terms of stock availability, the wholesale dealers of the drug have also started worrying about the loss because the companies are not refunding these drugs. Chairman of Allahabad Chemist and Druggist Association, Anil Dubey said that the government should pressurise companies to refund medicines otherwise it is difficult to consume these drugs.

Agricultural laws meant to increase farmers' income: Rita Bahuguna

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The new agricultural laws that the Modi Government has enacted are meant to increase farmers' income. The opposition does not have any issues, so is doing politics on welfare legislation. Farmers across the country are being misled. These views were expressed by MP of Allahabad Parliamentary seat Rita Bahuguna Joshi. She was addressing BJP workers here.

She said that even when the Agriculture Minister is giving written assurance, the opposition is tricking the people. This is negative politics. A fatal trend for democracy is being developed. Promoting public sentiments for your own purpose and disturbing law and order is synonymous with anti-socialism, she added.



MP Rita Bahuguna Joshi

MP Rita Bahuguna Joshi said that record purchases of paddy were made from farm-

ers in the BJP government. Minimum support prices of crops were also increased.

The Agricultural Insurance Scheme was also made effective. Many other crops were included within it. Farmers will get direct benefits of this.

The opposition is saying that there is a conspiracy to end the mandis. This is a lie. The Agriculture Minister is assuring in writing that neither the mandis will end nor the system of minimum support price.

By registering on the portal, farmers can sell their produce anywhere across the country. This will also give them good value. Even the common man will not have to give more value to things from time to time. Seasonal inflation which comes on potato, onion, tomato and other things will also get relief, she added.

Cong leaders put under house arrest

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The district administration put under house arrest the senior leaders of the Congress Party on Wednesday and thus the party workers failed in staging demonstration at the parliamentary office of the PM and houses of BJP MLAs of the district on the occasion of Kisan Diwas showing their solidarity with the farmers who have been agitating for the last 28 days in protest against three farm laws. Meanwhile, the activists of some organisations staged a protest at Shastri Ghat in protest against the three farm laws.

The Congress Party had announced to stage a statewide demonstration at the houses of BJP MPs and MLAs on the occasion of Kisan Diwas to show their solidarity with the farmers agitating for the last 28 days at the borders of national capital for the last 28 days demanding repeal of three agriculture laws terming them as black laws. It is pointed out that the Jayanti of the former PM Chaudhary Charan Singh is observed as Kisan Diwas on



KNM UP activists supporting ongoing farmers' agitation on Chaudhary Charan Singh Jayanti in Varanasi on Wednesday

Pioneer

December 23.

The district administration and police remained alert and made the senior leaders and office-bearers of the Congress Party including the district president of the party Rajeshwar Patel, city chief Raghvendra Chaubey, Manish Chaubey, Mayank Chaubey and Dr Jitendra Seth house arrest on Wednesday morning and did not allow them to go out in order to stop them from staging protest at the parliamentary office of the PM in

Ravindrapuri and houses of the MLAs of ruling party. Some party workers put up their protest by tying black ribbons on their hands and observing fast at the camp office in Chandpur. The police personnel were also deployed at the parliamentary office of the PM and houses of the BJP MLAs as a precaution.

Meanwhile, the activists of Kisan Nyay Morcha staged a dharna at Shastri Ghat in protest against the three farm laws and extended their sup-

port to the farmers agitating at the borders of the capital of the country.

They observed the Jayanti of the former PM Chaudhary Charan Singh by keeping his portrait and paid their floral tributes to him.

They said that the government at Centre enacted the farm laws without holding deliberation with the farmers and blamed the government for showing insensitivity to the farmers who have been agitating for the last many days in this chilly cold. Had the government brought these laws after holding the discussion with the farmers across the country the farmers would not have to move for the national capital, they said and demanded the government to repeal the laws in the larger interest of the farmers. Mahendra Prasad, BM Singh, Ashok Singh and others were present on the occasion. The activists of local unit of Rashtriya Lok Dal also observed the Jayanti of the former PM and demanded the government to roll back the farm laws which are not in the interest of the farmers.

38 new Covid cases in Varanasi

VARANASI (PNS): As many as 38 new patients have been detected in the district on Wednesday, increasing the total number to 20,773. The day also saw two more deaths, increasing the toll to 348. During the day, the follow-up negative reports included 32 and all of them have been recovered from home isolation, increasing the number to 17,109. As no patient has been discharged from any hospital, the number remained at 2,952. The total number of patients who have been recovered so far is 20,012, leaving 413 active cases. The recovery rate is 96.33 per cent, while the mortality rate is 1.67 per cent.

Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr VB Singh has informed that in the first report of the day, 29 positive patients were found out of 2,618 reports received. Till then, the total test reports received were 4,94,728 and the results of 3,220 are awaited. Out of them, 4,73,964 were negative, while 20,764 positive. The total number of samples collected was 5,21,099. Earlier, a male aged 64 and a female (58) from Badagaon and Chhitupura respectively succumbed to COVID-19 at Sir Sundarlal Hospital, Banaras

Hindu University (SSH BHU). With the addition of three new red zones, the total number of hotspots has increased to 2,619 including 200 red zones. One green zone has been converted into a red zone again. There are 2,419 green zones with six new ones.

Meanwhile, in view of the growing cold, Additional Chief Secretary Amit Mohan Prasad has sent letters to all the CMOs and directed them to make adequate medical arrangements for patients in all hospitals. Instructions have been given to check the shelter homes and ensure antigen tests of those staying there. In response to the instructions, CMO informed that antigen tests were conducted by the Health department at 14 shelter homes and all the 174 tests were found negative. Besides, mass / group corona antigen tests continued at the static booths and stations of the district under the direction of District Magistrate (DM) Kaushal Raj Sharma. All the 262 tests were found negative at SSPG Hospital Kabirchaura apart from 68 at District Women's Hospital, 29 at CHC Shivpur, 90 at LBS Hospital Ramnagar and 76 at SSH BHU.

However, one out of 51 was detected positive at Vivekananda Hospital, Bhelupur.

AEFI TEAM FOR CORONA VACCINATION: Preparations are being finalised for vaccination of corona in the district as the Health department is busy these days in making all the systems and facilities smooth at every level for the vaccination. Regarding this, all the arrangements are also being made to avoid any type of problem while applying corona vaccination to the health and frontline workers apart from the common man. For this, a committee has been constituted here on Wednesday under the chairmanship of the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr VB Singh for Adverse Events Followed Immunisation (AEFI) i.e. adverse effects after vaccination to review the vaccine reaction or any medical problem arising from it. The government has also been made aware of this.

CMO Dr VB Singh will be AEFI Committee chairman while District Immunisation Officer / ACOMO Dr VS Rai secretary. Along with this, DCMO and general physician Dr Sanjay Rai, District Surveillance

Officer and ACOMO Dr SS Kanauria, pediatrician of Swami Vivekananda Hospital at Bhelupur Dr Gulrez Alam, microbiologist Dr Anoop Srivastava, neurologist Dr Pramod Kumar (both of DDU Hospital), cardiologist Dr Anjan, chest physician Dr Ghanshyam Srivastava (both of SSPG Divisional Hospital), pathologist Dr Rajeev Ranjan Singh of LBS Hospital Ramnagar, IMA representative Dr Karthikeya Singh, drug inspector Dr Saurabh Kumar Dubey, cold chain officer Dr Ashutosh Mishra from UNDP, epidemiologist RK Singh from IDSP Cell, Mukesh Pathak from Lions Club International, SMO Dr Jaishil from WHO and DMC Manoj Kumar Singh from UNICEF have been included in the committee. The CMO said that AEFI Committee has been formed to deal with any adverse medical effects after the vaccination and ensure immediate treatment at the selected places. All the hospitals, urban primary health centres (UPHCs) and community and primary health centres (CHCs/PHCs) of rural areas will have the facilities of treatment and the doctors will remain ready there.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Saints of Khak Chowk and Dandi Bara in Magh Mela have staged a massive dharna at Magh Mela Development Authority office demanding proper allotment of land as per the revised list provided by them.

The mela officials are finding it difficult to include new entries and are sticking to the earlier list available with them.

The annoyed saints have cautioned the authorities that they would intensify their agitation and will meet the Chief Minister if their demands are not conceded.

The Wednesday dharna at Magh Mela Vikas Pradhikaran office was led by the president



of the Khak Chowk Vyavastha Samiti Sitaram Dasji Maharaj, general secretary Santosh Das Satua Baba, and vice-president Janmejyaji Maharaj.

The Tirth Purohitis (panda) are also not happy with the present allotment of land.

CHRISTMAS PROGRAMME HELD: Christmas programme was celebrated with great pomp in the Christy Memorial School and College which is affiliated to CBSE Board and located at Hathigan Karma. Keeping in view the safety of the students and threat of COVID-19 epidemic, this programme was organised with college staff and the other dignitaries religiously following the Covid guidelines.

Chief guest Chairman

Vinod B Lal cut the cake and congratulated everyone for Christmas.

He said that due to the blessings of God and the hard work of teachers and staff, this school has gained fame in a short time by providing quality teaching and moral values education. He said that the online education being provided by Christy School would also help the children of rural areas to advance in the field of technology and be ready for the future challenges. Vinod B Lal also honoured all the teachers and staff by giving them Christmas gifts.

Principal Neha Pitamber led the inaugural prayer while coordinator Vishal Charles read the Bible verse.

AU to have badminton court soon

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Allahabad Central University will soon have a badminton court to enhance the talent of the game. Vice-Chancellor Prof Sangeeta Srivastava said during a surprise inspection of the building under construction. She over-saw various university campuses. During this, she inspected the International Hostel, Ranjit Topa Complex and Student Activity Centre. Also, she gave necessary instructions in this regard.

The Vice-Chancellor said that a stage should be made in the Activity Centre, on which cultural programmes can be held. Also, a badminton court should also be constructed outside the building. A 400-seat auditorium will be ready soon. In her instructions, he emphasised that there is a need to use the space in all the buildings. This allows more work in less space. During this, the Registrar Prof NK Shukla was also present.

Professor Sangeeta Srivastava, Vice-Chancellor of Allahabad Central University, participated as the chief guest in an online lecture organised by Lady Irwin College, Delhi University. She said that education is undoubtedly one of the most important factors affecting the growth and development of a country. She said that our old education policy was designed by El Macaulay. Now we are moving towards redesigning it under the new education policy. Improvement in education will not only



increase efficiency but will also increase overall quality of life. She emphasised extensive research work and feasibility of product development. She believes that the thesis should not be kept locked in a dark room. Its usefulness should be linked to everyday life.

Dr Rajneesh Kumar Srivastava of the Department of Electronics and Communication at Central University has been appointed as the Coordinator of the Centre of Vocational Studies and Skill Development. It is the

university's independent centre. On the instruction of Sangeeta Srivastava, Registrar Prof NK Shukla has assigned this new responsibility to him. With immediate effect, he will also handle this responsibility along with academic work. This information was given by PRO Dr Jaya Kapoor.

Meanwhile, the agitation continued under the leadership of Ajay Yadav Samrat, the student leader at the student union building of the university, demanding the restoration of the students' union. Ajay said

that the new vice-chancellor should regularise the annual sports and cultural activities in the varsity. Apart from this, debate competitions were also demanded to be organised. If the students' union is restored, the students association assures full cooperation in all these activities. On this occasion, Jia Konain Rizvi, Rahul Patel, MohdMubashir Harun, Navneet Yadav, Sunil Patel, Akash Yadav, Prakash Singh, Masood Ansari, Mo. Obada, Mohd Salman, Abhay Singh, Abhishek etc. were present.



District Magistrate, City, Alok Tiwari chairs the Kisan Samman Diwas on Wednesday.

Pioneer

Government more focused on farmers: Kanpur DM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Nagar District Magistrate Alok Tiwari, while addressing the farmers community at LB Shastri Auditorium here on Wednesday to commemorate the birth anniversary of Chaudhary Charan Singh, said due to the strenuous labour put in by the farmers the people were able to enjoy seasonal crops, fruits and vegetables.

He said the government was more focused on the farmers and thus it was devising ways to boost the profits of the farmers and also providing the latest know-how in farming,

latest equipment, and fertilisers to boost the yield to ensure massive profits to them.

The district magistrate said on account of adopting scientific methods of farming and the timely availability of seeds, fertilisers and DAP, there was tremendous growth in agricultural production.

He said this day those farmers were being felicitated who had grown good crops of different varieties through scientific approach. He said in Kanpur Nagar district alone there were 76 plus such farmers.

The district magistrate said for the highest yield in wheat,

the first prize had been given to Ramdas of Badle Simnapur in Ghatampur while the second prize had been given to Ashok Kumar of Bhitargaon.

He said another farmer, Ram Kishore, had bagged the first prize in gram production.

The district magistrate then felicitated all the farmers who had assembled in the felicitation ceremony. They all were given a certificate, a shawl and cash reward.

He also gave away cash for farm equipment to five farmers.

Tiwari said the entire nation was full of gratitude to the farmers who toil hard in the

fields in adverse weather conditions to grow crops to feed the people.

He said the present UP government was committed to the uplift and progress of the farming community.

He said all the farmers had been provided with special helpline number on which they could call in case they faced any problem related to farming. He said the farm scientists had been asked to provide guidance to the farmers to better their yield.

District agriculture officer, deputy director agriculture, CDA and several officials were present at the function.

58 more test positive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Nagar reported 58 more coronavirus positive cases on Wednesday evening. Chief Medical Officer Dr Anil K Mishra said that 58 more people had tested positive for coronavirus infection between Tuesday evening and Wednesday evening taking the tally of confirmed cases to 31,001 cases. He said that 54 patients were discharged from hospital. He said one COVID-19 death in the city was reported till Wednesday evening. The CMO said at present 658 active cases were undergoing treatment. Dr Mishra said 3628 samples were sent for testing in the city.

Green Park Stadium pavilion likely to be named after Raina

KANPUR (PNS) Kanpur's Green Park Stadium may soon have its pavilion named after India's 2011 Cricket World Cup winner team member and former cricketer Suresh Raina.

A proposal in this regard has been sent to the state government.

The attacking batsman is all set to return to the cricketing arena on January 10, with the start of the Syed Mushtaq Ali tournament.

Raina recently attended a 10-day camp at Kamla Club, organised by Uttar Pradesh Cricket Association, and he will soon represent his home state in the Syed Mushtaq Ali tournament from January 10 onwards. The tournament is spread across six bio-secure bubbles in cities like Bengaluru, Kolkata, Indore, Mumbai, Vadodra and Chennai. The final will take place on January 31 and the BCCI will make a decision on the Ranji Trophy and Vijay Hazare Trophy after the group stage of the domestic T20. Cricket fans will be delighted to see a stand named after a cricketing star who started his journey from a small town in Ghaziabad.

Suresh Raina will continue to play for Chennai Super Kings, even after missing out on the 2020 edition of the Indian Premier League for personal reasons.

Earlier on August 15, Suresh Raina announced his retirement from international cricket on the same day as Mahendra Singh Dhoni. The power-hitting batsman from Uttar Pradesh has represented India in more than 300 international games including Test cricket, ODIs and T20s. He has also been a part of the Chennai Super Kings team, scoring more than 5,000 runs for the franchise. Raina left his mark with his best score of 100 against Kings XI Punjab in 2013.

Churches take precautions for Christmas

KANPUR (PNS): With the vision of arresting unprecedented surge in the number of novel coronavirus cases in the city during Christmas celebrations, the Kanpur district administration has guarded the entry of people within the Church premises by masks and sanitisers.

These items have been made mandatory to enter the parish and attend the midnight mass.

The merry-makings of Christmas this year will be mellowed, given the rampant spread of coronavirus infection.

Though the festival will be celebrated by observing all traditions, the pandemic has surely scarred the joys of Christmas festivities, eclipsing the glitter and pomp of the city's celebrations.

Chief Medical Officer Dr Anil Kumar Mishra said in a bid to prevent overcrowding at the city churches and to maintain the norms of social distancing, several churches have taken a decision to allow only parish members to physically attend the Christmas mass at the chapel, which will soon be locked after the service is concluded. These preventive measures are being implemented to eliminate the possibility of any laxity which may rekindle the spread of coronavirus in the city.

Man falls from roof, dies

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

A civil engineer died after he fell from a roof while talking on mobile phone on Wednesday morning. He was identified as Suraj Kumar (36), a native of Jharkhand. According to information from the people and police, the victim was talking on his mobile phone on the roof of his residence located in the fertiliser

factory premises on Wednesday morning when his foot slipped and he fell from there as a result of which he sustained serious head injuries. The people present nearby immediately rushed him to the Medical College here where the doctors on duty declared him dead. Meanwhile the Chiluatal police station was informed about the incident from the fertiliser factory premises at 9.30

am. Thereafter the police personnel reached the spot, took the body of Suraj Kumar into custody and sent it for the post-mortem examination. His family members have been informed about the matter. The police had started their investigation into the matter. SHO Chiluatal Neeraj Rai said the engineer died after he slipped and fell from the roof while talking on mobile phone.

Chhapra-Mathura spl to run from Dec 28

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The railway administration for the convenience of passengers will run the 05117/05118 Chhapra-Mathura-Chhapra triweekly superfast special train from December 28 every Monday, Wednesday and Friday until further notice. All coaches in this train will be of reserved category and passengers travelling in them will have to follow the Covid-19 guidelines, Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) Pankaj Kumar Singh said. The 05117 Chhapra-Mathura triweekly superfast special train will depart from Chhapra at 05.20 hrs, from Siwan at 06.05 hrs, from Bhatpar Rani at 06.30 hrs, from Bhatni at 06.44 hrs, from Deoria Sadar at 07.12 hrs, from Gorakhpur at 08.30 hrs, from Khalilabad at 09.10 hrs, from Basti at 09.39 hrs, from Maskanwa at 10.14 hrs, from Mankapur at 10.30 hrs, from Gonda at 11.05 hrs, from Barabanki at 12.20 hrs, from Badshahnagar at 13.00 hrs, from Aishbagh at 13.43 hrs, from Kanpur Central at 15.10 hrs, from Kanpur Anwarganj at 15.25 hrs, from Kannauj at 16.28 hrs, from Fatehgarh at 17.13 hrs, from Farrukhabad at 17.37 hrs, from Kaimganj at 18.01 hrs, from Kasganj at 19.20 hrs, Hathras City at 20.20 hrs and reach Mathura 21.30 hrs.

During the return journey, the 05118 Mathura-Chhapra triweekly superfast special train will depart from Mathura at 23.50 hrs, the second day from from Hathras City at 00.31 hrs, from Kasganj at 01.40 hrs, from Kaimganj at 02.37 hrs, from Farrukhabad at 03.15 hrs, from Fatehgarh at 03.31 hrs, from Kannauj at 04.15 hrs, from Kanpur Anwarganj at 06.00 hrs, from Kanpur Central at 06.20 hrs, from Aishbagh at 08.18 hrs, from Badshahnagar at 08.40 hrs, from Barabanki at 09.18 hrs, from Gonda at 11.00 hrs,

from Mankapur at 11.24 hrs, from Maskanwa at 11.40 hrs, from Basti at 12.25 hrs, from Khalilabad at 12.54 hrs, from Gorakhpur at 14.00 hrs, from Deoria Sadar at 14.54 hrs, from Bhatni at 15.15 hrs, from Bhatpar Rani at 15.30 hrs, Siwan at 16.00 hrs and reach Chhapra at 17.05 hrs. A total of 20 coaches, including two of SLRD, eight of general second class, seven of sleeper class, two AC third and one AC second will be attached in the train.

EXTENDED: The railway administration for the convenience of passengers has decided to extend the run of the following trains whose days of run, stoppage, timing and coach composition will remain the same. The run of 08311 Sambalpur-Manduadih puja biweekly special train has been extended from January 3 to 27, 2021. The run of 08312 Manduadih-Sambalpur puja biweekly special train has been extended from January 4 to January 28, 2021. The run of 01033 Pune-Darbhanga weekly special train has been extended from December 30 to January 27, 2021. The run of 01034 Darbhanga-Pune weekly special train has been extended from January 1 to 29, 2021. The run of 01079 Lokmanya Tilak Terminus-Gorakhpur weekly special train has been extended from December 31 to January 28, 2021. The run of 01116 Gorakhpur-Pune weekly special train has been extended from January 2 to January 30, 2021. The run of 01115 Pune-Gorakhpur weekly special train has been extended from December 31 to January 28, 2021. The run of 01116 Gorakhpur-Pune weekly special train has been extended from January 2 to January 30, 2021. The run of 01407 Pune-Lucknow Jn weekly special train has been extended from December 29 to January 26, 2021. The run of 01408

Lucknow Jn.-Pune weekly special train has been extended from December 31 till January 28, 2021. Likewise the run of 02031 Pune-Gorakhpur biweekly special has been extended from December 29 till January 30, 2021. The run of 02032 Gorakhpur-Pune biweekly special train has been extended from January 31 till February 1, 2021. The run of 02135 Pune-Manduadih weekly special train has been extended from December 28 to January 25, 2021. The run of 02136 Manduadih-Pune weekly special has been extended from December 30 to January 27, 2021.

BOY FOUND: The RPF NER makes constant efforts to protect passengers and provide them better travel facilities. In the same sequence a member of the RPF post, Gorakhpur, found an eight-year-old boy in unclaimed condition during patrolling at Gorakhpur railway station. After questioning, the boy was handed over to Child Line, Gorakhpur, CPRO PK Singh said. Likewise in train no 01016 a 16-year-old girl was found in an unclaimed condition by the escort party of RPF, Gonda. After questioning, the girl was handed over to Child Line, Gonda. Besides one person was caught with 12 illegal e-tickets from a shop by RPF post, Chhapra. After taking action under the Railway Act a case was registered in this connection. Meanwhile during patrolling at Gonda railway station the RPF post, Gonda, caught one person along with two illegal e-tickets. After taking action under the Railway Act a case was registered in this connection. In a joint operation of RPF post, Mau, and Crime Intelligence Branch (CIB), Varanasi, caught one person with 17 illegal e-tickets from a shop in Kusumha, Mau. After taking action under the Railway Act, a case was registered in this connection.

NPP board meeting held

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

During a meeting of Nagar Palika Parishad (NPP) board held at Laldiggi on Tuesday, a resolution was passed for the repair of buildings of primary schools from the fund available under 15th Finance Commission under the guidelines of the Urban Development department. From the fund of ₹2.53 crore available under 15th Finance Commission a resolution

was unanimously passed to strengthen the potable water system. After discussion of other agendas which were passed by the board, it passed a proposal to include

90 villages adjacent to the city under the periphery of seven kilometres. Chairman Manoj Jaiswal hoped that if the things go on well the city would get the status of nagar nigam soon. Prominent among those who were present during the meeting were Executive Officer Om Prakash, and members of the board, Shyam Sunder Keshari, Javed Ahmad, Ali Ahmad, Alankar Jaiswal, Ghata Tripathi and Sushil Musafir.

ARRESTED: The Katra Kotwali Police arrested three cheats and recovered ₹2,000 in cash from them on Tuesday. Reports said Anil

Mishra, a resident of Pura Kashinath under Laiganj police station, had lodged an FIR on December 13 in which he had said that his sister and brother-in-law had boarded a marshal jeep (UP-70/N-7057) in Bathua locality under Katra Kotwali police station for going to Aurai under the same police station in Bhadohi. After few hours his brother-in-law informed him on phone that he had been duped by the taxi driver and was dropped on the way on Shastri bridge. As per the victim, the driver gave sweets as 'prasad' laced with some intoxicating substance as a result of he along with his wife became unconscious. Taking advantage of it the driver deprived them of a gold chain, 'mangalsutra', two golden rings, anklets and ₹2,200 in cash. After the incident the victim tried to look for the taxi driver with the help of his brother-in-law but all their efforts ended in vain. On Tuesday during investigation the police raided Paharhia locality adjacent to railway campus and caught three suspects from the spot. During interrogation they confessed that the had duped the victim on December 13 and said that the money which they had got from selling gold items had been spent. They only had anklets with them along with ₹2,000 in cash. The police arrested them and sent them to jail. The accused were identified as Rajesh Srivastava, a resident of Jasara under Ghurpur police station, Prayagraj, Jamal, a resident of Brindava under Ghurpur police station Prayagraj and Islam, a resident of Koranv Gandhingar under Koranv police station in Prayagraj.

Tracksuits, woollens distributed

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

Superintendent of Police (SP) Ajay Kumar Singh exhorted the youths to work with the spirit to make the nation a superpower in the world. These views were expressed by him at a function organised under community policing in Belkhara village under Ahraura police station on Tuesday. On the occasion he appreciated the approach of the locals who helped the administration in checking the spread of Naxalism which had been a challenge for the government. Distributing tracksuits among the youth the SP made an appeal to get involved in sports activities and achieve laurels through competitions at national and international levels. Distributing woollen clothes as well as food among the needy the SP assured them to extend full



support in future too. He appealed to people to remain in touch with the administration and feel free to tell any problem which will be solved on priority. He made it clear that government machinery was active to thwart any effort by anti-social elements to misguide the locals. He said as per the availability of the fund from the government 400 people were being benefitted in the first stage and more would be done so in future. The programme started with the lighting of the ceremonial lamp by the SP in which residents of Judui, Padarwa,

Talar, Khoradeeh, Shiur, Jasawaan, Patwaai villages etc were present. It was also attended by CO (Chunar) Sushil Yadav, CO (Operation) Prabhat Rai, reserve inspector Gorakh Nath Yadav and SO Ahraura Rajesh Chaubey. Besides, the SP conducted combing in the Naxal-infested area along with heavy force to instil confidence among people. He interacted with people and told them to inform him about any activity of Naxals in the area. He assured them that police was available in every corner and round the clock so there was no need to fear the Naxals.

KDA asked to increase revenue collection

KANPUR (PNS): Kanpur Divisional Commissioner Raj Shekhar, while addressing a meeting with the officials of Kanpur Development Authority said the KDA working would be reviewed on 12 formats as directed by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. He expressed concern over the poor revenue collection by the KDA and asked its officials to ensure a minimum of 80 per cent revenue collection by March 2021. He added that the last two years' revenue collection was between 60 per cent and 70 per cent. The divisional commissioner said the One Time Settlement (OTS) scheme was in force till December 31 and around 326 applications were pending for disposal. He asked the officials to take

appropriate actions on these pending applications by December 31, 2020. Shekhar said there were around 2,900 individuals who had been identified for OTS scheme but they had not yet applied for OTS. He directed the zonal officers concerned to get in touch with these applicants and make them aware of the OTS scheme to motivate them to apply for one time settlement of dues.

The divisional commissioner said the revenue collection target was around ₹ 922 crore but the collection was Rs 402 crore. He said revenue collection percentage was 45 points and added that the progress was good and improved compared to the same period last year. Shekhar said the KDA had not per-

formed well in prevention of illegal constructions and added that there were 11,000 identified illegal constructions in the city and final action was taken only in 16 cases. He directed the officials to verify all 11,000 pending cases at ground level and also in the office record and update the data by February 2021 and then take serious action on the non-compoundable cases by March 2021. The divisional commissioner also sought performance data and details of all the officials of the KDA enforcement department by January 31, 2021 so that appropriate action could be taken to strengthen the enforcement and to stop illegal construction of buildings. He said it was a good and appreciable step that the KDA

had started biometric files handling system (BFHS) which could track the movements of every file. He said as it was started in the sales department from January, it should be extended to all departments soon. Shekhar asked the KDA vice chairman to examine the pending cases and issue allotment letters for all 219 plots of Transport Nagar by January 31, 2021. He said the KDA had 6,288 properties (apartments at 11 sites) which needed to be sold. He said these properties were worth around ₹1,822 crore but they were not being sold. He asked the KDA vice chairman to prepare a site-wise sales strategy by January 31 so that the revenue could be realised by selling these apartments.

₹59K-cr scholarship for SC to pursue post-matric studies



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a big push for education of students belonging to Scheduled Caste, the Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved ₹59,000 crore post matric scholarship for next five years.

The Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi estimated that this mega scholarship scheme will benefit more than four crore students for continuing their education from class 11. The Central Government will spend 60% of the programme which is estimated at ₹35,534 crore. The rest will be provided by the State Government.

“This replaces the existing ‘committed liability’ system and brings greater involvement of the Central Govt in this crucial scheme,” the Union Cabinet said in a statement.

Detailing the scheme, Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Thawarchand Gehlot said that as per the estimates, around 1.36 crore poor students from SC community could not continue their education beyond class 10 due to poverty.

“The Post Matric Scholarship scheme for Scheduled Caste students allows students to pursue any post-matric course starting from class 11 and onwards, with the Government providing the cost of education. The focus of the scheme would be on enrolling the poorest students, timely payments, comprehensive accountability, continuous monitoring and total

transparency,” said Gehlot.

“A campaign will be launched to enroll the students, from the poorest households passing the 10th standard, in the higher education courses of their choice. It is estimated that 1.36 crore such poorest students, who are currently not continuing their education beyond 10th standards would be brought into the higher education system in the next 5 years.

The scheme will be run on an online platform with robust cyber security measures that would assure transparency, accountability, efficiency, and timely delivery of the assistance without any delays,” said the Minister.

The States will verify the eligibility, caste status, Aadhar identification and bank account details of the applicants on the online portal. Transfer of financial assistance to the students under the scheme shall be on DBT mode, and preferably using the Aadhar enabled payment system, said Government in a statement detailing the mega scheme. Starting from 2021-22, the central share (60%) in the scheme would be released on DBT mode directly into the bank accounts of the students as per fixed time schedule, after ensuring that the concerned State Government has released their share.

The monitoring mechanism will be further strengthened through the conduct of social audits, annual third party evaluation, and half-yearly self-audited reports from each institution said the statement.

PM to release ₹18K cr as next part of PM-KISAN direct cash-transfer scheme

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid farmers protest over the farm laws which enters 29 days, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will release the next tranche of PM-KISAN the direct cash-transfer scheme, making payments worth ₹18,000 crore to more than 9 crore farmers.

The PM will also virtually interact with some farmers drawn from six different States on Christmas Day, which is also the birth anniversary of former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

According to Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, over two crore farmers have registered themselves for this online event in which PM Modi will be chief guest.

“PM Narendra Modi will release the next installment of financial benefit under PM KISAN Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) on December 25 via video conferencing. PM will

enable the transfer of more than ₹18,000 crores to more than 9 crores beneficiary farmer families,” the PMO said.

The PM’s outreach comes even as farmer unions urged the Centre to “abandon its stubbornness” and take the discussion forward with an “open mind and neat intention”.

According to officials, the Prime Minister will most likely ask farmers impromptu questions on how they have benefited from the scheme and “take a briefing from them on what they are growing and what else they want to see done for them ahead of the budget”, the official said. “The farmers will share their experiences with PM-KISAN and also on various other initiatives taken by the Government for the welfare of farmers. Union Agriculture Minister will also be present on the occasion”, an official said.

According to Tomar, the Government had earlier expected to enroll 14 crore farmers

under the scheme but only 11.4 crore listed so far. He thanks banks for bringing more farmers under the Kisan Credit Card scheme coverage during the coronavirus pandemic. “I would also like to thank banks, as they brought more than 1 crore farmers under Kisan Credit Card cover during the pandemic and gave farmers Rs 1 lakh crores in the last 8 months,” Tomar stated.

“Through various schemes, we will fill all gaps in the agriculture sector, which will benefit farmers and ensure they get the right price...Even during COVID-19 pandemic, we saw that work related to farming and agriculture wasn’t affected,” he added.

Under PM-Kisan, the Government provides income support of ₹6,000 a year to farmers with a valid enrolment, paid in three equal cash transfers of ₹2,000 — one every four months. It was launched on February 24, 2019.

NCDC ties up with Bangaluru-based S-VYASA varsity to set up yoga centres across country

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) has joined hands with Bangaluru-based Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthana (S-VYASA) university to inculcate habit of yoga among people by helping cooperatives to set up yoga wellness centres and naturopathy facilities across the country.

The move comes two months after the NCDC under the Union Agriculture Minister launched Ayushman Sahakar, a scheme aiming to involve cooperatives in creating healthcare infrastructure that include wellness centres, Ayush, homeopathy, drug manufacturing, drug testing, Ayurveda massage centres, and drug stores besides medical education initiatives.

While S-VYASA will provide technical help, the NCDC will make available working capital and margin money to meet operational requirements to the interested cooperatives for setting yoga wellness centres.



Speaking on the occasion after the pact was inked online, Union Minister for AYUSH, Shripad Yesso Nayak said that the initiative would benefit people in the rural areas. He observed that his Ministry supports such initiatives aimed at strengthening efforts in Indian health systems, including yoga, a global movement.

Parshottam Rupala, Union Minister of State for Agriculture felt that a new dimension has been added by NCDC to expand the welfare programmes for farmers under the NCDC Ayushman Sahakar scheme. He hoped that yoga wellness centres would make a good business model for cooperatives to strengthen the healthcare delivery system in rural areas.

Sundeep Nayak, MD of NCDC said that the

Ayushman Sahakar scheme with an outlay of Rs.10,000 crore aims at extending financial support to cooperatives. “The scheme has a comprehensive and holistic approach to finance healthcare infrastructure and services. It covers hospitals, healthcare infrastructure, medical education, nursing education, paramedical education, drugs manufacturing, digital health, laboratory services, health insurance and Indian traditional medical systems like Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy.”

Guruji Nagendra, Chancellor of S-VYASA said that a new dimension would be explored through cooperatives across the country.

The MoU also aims to promote skilling of students or alumni of S-VYASA through internship opportunities offered by NCDC under its scheme Sahakar Mitra, Nayak added. The NCDC set up under the Ministry of Agriculture has, till date since it was set up in 1963, financed various cooperative initiatives aggregating ₹1.57-lakh crore.

Army chief visits LAC forward areas to review op readiness



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

During the one day visit to the Leh based 14 Corps, Naravane also visited forward base Tara and interacted with the local commanders and troops. He was briefed on the operational situation by the 14 Corps Commander, Lt General PGK Menon

As the impasse persists at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh, Army Chief General M M Naravane on Wednesday toured forward areas there to review operational preparedness. He also took stock of the ground situation as more than one lakh troops from India and China are in a stand-off for the last nine months.

With several rounds of military and diplomatic level talks so far having failed to end the tension, the Indian army has made preparations for long haul during the winter months. Not willing to take any chances, additional troops trained in mountain warfare are also positioned at strategic locations all along the 1,700 km long LAC in Ladakh sector.

In this backdrop, the Army chief visited forward areas and reviewed the ground situation along the South bank of Pangong Tso where Indian Army had dominated several unoccupied peaks on the Indian side of the LAC in the end of August.

“Chief of Army Staff (COAS) visited forward areas of Fire and Fury Corps including Rechin La and undertook a first-hand assessment of the situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC),” the Army said. Naravane also undertook on the spot inspection of the state of habitat of troops on the forward line of defences at Rechin La.

The Army has ensured that enough prefabricated and heated huts are supplied to the forward areas in Ladakh to

enable the troops to withstand the harsh winters. Mercury has already dipped to minus ten and will plunge to minus 20 to 25 in the coming weeks.

In addition, sufficient stocks of winter clothing are in the stores at Leh and other key locations to provide comfortable and functional special clothes to the troops.

During the one day visit to the Leh based 14 Corps, Naravane also visited forward base Tara and interacted with the local commanders and troops. He was briefed on the operational situation by the 14 Corps Commander, Lt General PGK Menon.

Incidentally, the Army chief’s visit came days after the sixth round of diplomatic level talks between India and China last week. There was no breakthrough but both the sides agreed to continue dialogue for speedy disengagement of troops from the LAC.

The two delegations also agreed to soon hold the ninth round of Corps Commander level talks between the two armies. The last round was held on November 6. However, those talks also did not yield positive results.

Sources said the Army Chief reached Ladakh at 8:30 am on a day-long visit with an aim to review the ground sit-

uation in the region that is experiencing harsh winter.

The army said Naravane interacted with the troops deployed in forward areas and exhorted them to continue working with the same “zeal and enthusiasm”. He also distributed sweets and cakes ahead of Christmas.

Around three-and-half months ago, Indian troops had occupied a number of strategic heights in the Mukhpari, Rechin La and Magar hill areas around the southern bank of the Pangong lake in eastern Ladakh after the Chinese People’s Liberation Army attempted to intimidate them in the area on the intervening night of August 29 and 30.

“General MM Naravane #COAS undertook on the spot inspection of the state of #habitat of troops on the forward line of defences at #RechinLa. He appreciated the efforts made by the formation to make troops comfortable along the #LAC,” the Army said in another tweet.

The military face-off erupted on May 5 following violent clashes between the Indian army and the PLA in the Pangong lake area. The clashes were followed by a similar incident in North Sikkim on May 9.

ED provisionally attaches assets of Maharashtra-based Gangakhed Sugar & Energy Limited

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has provisionally attached assets worth ₹255 crores of Maharashtra-based Gangakhed Sugar & Energy Limited (GSEL), Yogeswari Hatcheries, Gangakhed Solar Power Limited under Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in an agricultural bank loan fraud case.

The attached assets include sugar plant and machinery of GSEL worth ₹247 crore, situated at Gangakhed, District Parbhani, Maharashtra, land worth ₹5 crores of GSEL, Yogeswari Hatcheries, Gangakhed Power Solar Limited situated at District Parbhani, Beed, Dhule Maharashtra, bank balance of ₹1.58 crores, investment in shares of ₹1.91 crores held in the name of GSEL.

The ED had initiated investigation in May 2019, under the provisions of PMLA on the basis of an FIR registered by Gangakhed Police against GSEL, Ratnakar Gutte chairman and others under IPC sections relating to cheating, forgery, criminal conspiracy and common intention for fraudulently availing agricultural loan in the name of poor farmers, on the basis of forged loan proposals submitted to the banks. CID Aurangabad has filed the chargesheet for embezzlement/misappropriation of the funds, the ED said.

Investigation revealed that the chairman of GSEL with the connivance of others misused the agricultural loan facility meant for poor farmers. The scheme of agricultural loan is formulated for financing the farmers coming under the command area of the sugar factory. Its aim is to meet the

financial needs of the farmers and it is given by the banks to the sugarcane farmers based on their land holding for raising their crop which includes among other things to purchase the seeds, fertilizers, manures, machinery, tractor, pump, harvesting and transportation of the crop, it said.

Investigation also revealed that the accused person created the data bank of the farmers, who supplied the sugarcane to the factory, by collecting their KYC at the time of purchasing the sugarcane from the farmers coming under the command area of the sugar factory. The said factory further made a tie up agreement with the banks for obtaining the agricultural loan for the farmers. By virtue of the tie up agreement, GSEL became the agent for the banks, whose responsibility was to do KYC verification of the farmers. During the period from 2012-13 to 2016-17, GSEL made forged agricultural loan proposals in the name of the farmers on the basis of farmers’ KYC and submitted them to the banks. Based on these forged loan proposals, the banks sanctioned the agricultural loan of around ₹772 crore, it said.

Investigation into money trail further revealed that using this modus operandi, around Rs 635 crores were disbursed by the banks in to the bank accounts opened in the name of the farmers and the funds were never utilised by the farmers and instead it was siphoned off to different bank accounts of GSEL on the basis of the forged Consent letter of the farmers. This ill-gotten money was utilised by the accused for purchase of the land, for erection and fabrication of the GSEL plant.

Farm laws: Petitioner seeks to implead over 40 protesting farmer unions as party in SC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

One of the petitioners, who has approached the Supreme Court for direction to the authorities to remove farmers protesting at several border points of Delhi against three new farm laws, has sought to implead over 40 farmer unions as party in the pending case.

A bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde, which had on December 17 said that farmers’ agitation should be allowed to continue “without impediment” and the apex court will not interfere with it as the right to protest is a fundamental right, had given liberty to the petitioner to serve the impleaded farmer unions.

Law student Rishabh Sharma, one of the petitioners in the case, has now filed an amended memo of parties in the top court in which he has impleaded over 40 farmer unions, including Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU), as respondents in the matter.

Some other farmers unions which are sought to be impleaded as respondents by the petitioner are – BKU-Sidhpur, BKU-Rajewal, BKU-Lakhawal, BKU-Dakaunda, BKU-Doaba, Jamhoori Kisan Sabha and Kul Hind Kisan Federation.

The top court had on December 16 permitted impleading of these eight unions as respondents in Sharma, in his petition filed through advocate Om Prakash Parihar, had sought a direction to the authorities to remove the protesting farmers from several border points in the national capital saying commuters are facing hardships due to the road blockades and the gatherings might lead to an increase in the number of COVID cases.

Illegal wildlife trade on the rise despite Covid curbs



ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Despite Covid-19 restrictions and the risk of animal to human disease transmission, illegal wildlife trade on social media networks continue to flourish, researchers noted after analyzing around 20,000 posts on Facebook on wild pet trade.

Ringling alarm bells, the researchers from Oxford Brookes University and the University of Western Australia have called for increased vigilance on social media sites in order to curb potential extinctions and reduce the risk of pandemics.

The researchers had examined advertisements on Facebook in Brazil and Indonesia. They found thousands of posts advertising wild animals, with a potential audience of over 200,000 people. “Indeed, only 0.44 per cent of over 20,000 online wildlife trade advertisements had any Covid-19-related content,” said the researchers in the study published in journal of Environmental Research.

Co-author Anna Nekaris, Professor of Primate Conservation at Oxford Brookes

University said: “We anticipated that we would see many posts mentioning Covid-19 regarding the potential dangers of wildlife trade or using it as a reason for a temporary cessation of sales. Instead, advertisements mentioning Covid-19 often stimulated wildlife trade, suggesting the pandemic was a great time to buy an exotic pet for companionship, for example.”

Strikingly, they found that no traders or consumers discussed the role of wildlife trade in spreading diseases. Instead, discounts were given, home delivery services were provided, and customers encouraged to spend larger amounts of time due to lockdown with the animals.

Co-author Thais Morcatty, at Oxford Brookes University, said, “clandestine markets often expand to supply the demand that still exists and in that case, not only does wildlife trade continue, monitoring it becomes nearly impossible.”

In India too, the situation is not very encouraging as has been found by a study conducted by TRAFFIC, a wildlife trade monitoring network. It found a significant increase in reported poaching of wild ani-

mals in India during the lockdown period. “Species are being systematically wiped out by organised trade networks, with new poaching techniques and trade routes emerging faster than we can respond to them. The pandemic, which is an important example of the negative repercussions of this exploitative trade, hasn’t deterred wildlife traders and this is only exacerbated by the increased demand for Traditional Chinese Medicines (TMC).”

“Many of the highest trafficked species are reptiles and amphibians like the tokay gecko, spiny-tailed lizard, tortoises and freshwater turtles, with data on this trade yet to be quantified,” said Trisha Ghose, project director, The Habitats Trust, an NGO working for protection and conservation of habitats and their indigenous species.

In fact, in the midst of pandemic, in June the Union Environment Ministry issued an advisory saying people importing “exotic live species” will have to make a voluntary disclosure following global concern about illegal wildlife trade and zoonotic diseases.

NSCN-K announces ceasefire, proposes Centre for peace talks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI / KOHIMA

Naga insurgent group NSCN-K, led by militant Niki Sumi, on Wednesday announced a ceasefire and said that it has contacted the central Government for initiating peace dialogue. The NSCN-K had signed a ceasefire with the Centre in 2001 but unilaterally abrogated it in 2015 when the then chairman of the group, S S Khaplang, was alive. Sumi is the prime accused in the killing of 18 Indian Army soldiers in Manipur in 2015 and the National Investigation Agency had announced a reward of ₹10 lakh for his head.

In a statement, Sumi said the NSCN-K has been striving all these years to achieve an honourable and acceptable political solution to the Naga issue and the group is also conscious of the overwhelming sentiments among the Naga people for an early solution to this long standing matter. It said that the NSCN-K is aware of the “sincere and genuine efforts” made by the central govern-

ment in the recent past to find a final and lasting solution to the Naga issue with the involvement of all the stakeholders.

“Therefore NSCN has resolved to strengthen and support the peace process at this crucial juncture. Our leaders have established contact with the officials of Government of India in this connection. To facilitate the process and keeping in view the desire of the Naga people particularly Naga civil society organisations and NGOs, the NSCN has further decided to revive the ceasefire with immediate effect by revoking the earlier decision of unilateral abrogation of the ceasefire in 2015,” the statement said.

The other dominant group - the NSCN-IM - had entered into a ceasefire agreement with the central government in 1997 and since then engaged in peace negotiations. The NSCN-IM had signed a Framework Agreement on August 3, 2015 in presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to find a permanent solution.

CBI files chargesheet against NDA Khadakwasla for fake appointments

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has filed a charge sheet against Principal, National Defence Academy (NDA), Khadakwasla, Pune (Maharashtra) before the Competent Court at Pune on the allegations of fraudulent appointments in the institution.

A case was registered on May 8, 2018, against Principal, of Dr Om Prakash Shukla and others on the allegations of fraudulent appointments to various posts of civilian facul-

ties at defence academy on the basis of false and exaggerated claims in respect of teaching/research experience and exaggerated API scores, the CBI said in a statement.

Searches were conducted on June 6, 2018, at the premises of the accused which led to the recovery of incriminating documents.

It was further alleged that during the period 2007-08, the accused fraudulently, secured an appointment as Professor in Economics at National Defence Academy (NDA), Khadakwasla, Pune.

People win in J&K

Gupkar Alliance wins big, proving that traditional leaders still have popular appeal; BJP makes inroads into Valley



Yes, democracy has won in Jammu and Kashmir. The massive win for the Farooq Abdullah-led Gupkar Alliance in the local body elections is vindication that traditional leaders are still the people's choice though the Narendra Modi Government had not spared any effort to demonise them as anti-nationals, separatists even, and as manipulators who smartly leverage the Indo-Pakistan dynamic. It even incarcerated them, knowing fully well that they would stand in the way of the abrogation of Article 370. That they won a mammoth victory in the District Development Council (DDC)

polls, winning over 100 seats despite the many limitations on campaigning coming their way, proves that old leaders, though out of sight for a greater part of the shut-down, are not out of people's mind. And for all the toxic tirade against them, local voters still trust them enough to be their fair representative despite the defanged status of Kashmir. So Article 370 or not, there's no dislodging whom the Kashmiris want to lead them. The seven-party alliance, which includes Abdullah's National Conference (NC) and Mehbooba Mufti's Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), has defied the script and won 45 seats in Jammu, pocketing the sensitive border districts of Poonch and Rajouri besides Kishtwar and Ramban. Clearly, this is as mainstream as it can get with Abdullah proving that his appeal is still intact in Jammu. Perhaps that's because land ownership resonates among local residents irrespective of religion or region. The new land rules, which allow outsiders to buy non-agricultural land, have agitated Kashmiris, who see this as an attempt at demographic colonisation of the Muslim-majority area. But the Dogras of Hindu-dominated Jammu and Ladakhis are not too happy about their local culture and privileges being swept away under the same clause, particularly when the Northeastern States are allowed autonomy under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution to protect tribal land. Much of this tidal verdict has got to do with the Modi Government undoing the trust the earlier Atal Bihari Vajpayee Government had developed with the NC as its ally and which the current regime continued with the PDP. Locking their leaders up has only united them and made them martyrs to a cause, much to the BJP's detriment, one that it could have avoided with mediatory posturing. Had the local parties contested separately, the Muslim votes would have been divided, which the BJP could have used to win more than the three seats it won in Kashmir. The force-feeding of its agenda of mainstreaming Kashmir neither encouraged a political climate even after a year of the abrogation nor helped the national party hoist a credible local alternative. It may have helped float the Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party (JKAP), drawing rejects from the PDP and NC but that has fared miserably in the polls.

The BJP, of course, has emerged the single largest party with 74 seats, mainly relying on the consolidated Hindu vote base in Jammu. But it has also debuted in the Valley, winning three seats in Srinagar, Bandipore and Pulwama. Enough for it to claim that its bold strategies in reintegrating Kashmir have rubbed off on the people a bit, if not completely. The seats it has won are significant in terms of the inroads it seems to have made on hostile ground. It, therefore, indicates a gradual acceptance of the larger reality of Kashmir's changed status. No wonder the BJP spokespersons crowed "The lotus has bloomed" in the Valley. In Jammu, the BJP won 71 seats, scoring along expected lines. Just as expected is the decimation of the Congress which has won 26 seats, hardly relevant when Independent candidates have picked up 49 seats and are perfectly poised to be kingmakers. Srinagar is the touchstone as Independents have won seven out of 14 seats here. Assuming the Congress ultimately decides to support the Gupkar alliance, the huge number of Independents is a catchment area for the BJP's future political laboratory. The Modi regime should have been prepared for the consequences and not pre-judged compliance by force but by gradual cooption. Of course, the BJP has got in seasoned politician Manoj Sinha as the Lt Governor, who used his acumen as a negotiator to get the political process going. But restoration of basic civil rights is still a long way off, patchy internet means the students and the new economy are left out of opportunities, unemployment is at an all-time high and the local economy is going down with a ₹40,000 crore plus deficit. Without addressing these issues, there is no way that the BJP can claim the higher ground. Or else it could risk Kashmir as being its costliest misadventure.

The lost year

As the Delhi Govt has put nursery admissions on hold, parents are worried about the risk of losing a second year of education



With the Delhi Government putting nursery admissions on hold, will a cascading effect of other States also shutting down pre-schools and admissions begin? That is the anxiety and fear that many parents of younger children are currently experiencing. 'Work From Home' is not a reality for everybody, even some white-collar workers. Not every family either has family support or the assistance of domestic help to manage children, and that is just among India's elite. Those less fortunate finally find themselves having to traverse a growing chasm that is the digital divide. Sure, the access to cheap over-the-air data has ensured that many do not get left

behind and further auctions of spectrum for higher-speed 5G services will definitely help but without access to proper devices and with families too financially stressed to pay school fees, the risk of millions of children falling behind the curve looms large in India. In many rural schools, indeed in areas barely 25 kilometres outside Delhi, schools are still shut and 'School From Home' is not an option available to those parents. West Bengal Education Minister Partha Chatterjee has already announced that the Board examinations for Classes 10 and 12 will be held in June, unlike the usual schedule as per which these exams are held between February and March every year. The thought of another lost year for these children and their parents is truly terrifying and one that the Central and State Governments must work overtime to redress. Because the problems will really come home to roost in two decades' time when a whole generation of children with partial education and poor social skills will join the workforce.

Sure, the best minds in the Government are working on how to deploy various vaccines to 1.3 billion people in a reasonable amount of time as they start rolling off the line. Hopefully, by the end of 2021 a significant number of Indians would have been inoculated against the COVID-19 pandemic. Other minds in North Block are working on how to jumpstart economic growth that has been chewed away by the virus. But we should start putting our best and brightest minds towards resolving the education issue because it will be the single biggest long-term impact of the Coronavirus, particularly in a nation where a large proportion of our population is still poor. We are often told that India is a country full of youth and that our young population will drive the nation's economic growth. That can only happen if this young population is educated and capable of gainful economic contributions; else India can be deemed to be sitting on a time bomb with its uneducated demographic milieu. And this is something that all political parties have to work on together because this has the potential to destroy our nation.

Pakistan's darkest day

A number of Army heroes, besides the inimitable Gen Sam Manekshaw, helped secure Lt Gen AAK Niazi's surrender in Dacca and liberate Bangladesh



MAROOF RAZA

Half a century ago, Pakistan's darkest day was the surrender of 93,000 Pakistanis in Dhaka on December 16, 1971. Nearly 81,000 prisoners of war (POWs) were from the Pakistani armed forces (with some Bengali soldiers who had chosen to remain with the Pakistan Army) apart from 12,000-odd civilians, including collaborators. And though everyone associates the fall of Dacca (as Dhaka was then known) to then Army chief General Sam (SHF) Manekshaw, who had no doubt a larger than life presence in South Block, a closer reading of one of the few accounts of how it all happened — since official records in Calcutta were shredded at Gen Jagjit Singh Aurora's orders — shows that credit must instead go to (then) Maj Gen JFR Jacob along with Maj Gen Inder Gill, who was then the Director of Military Operations (there was no DGMO then), and Lt Gen Sagat Singh, who was commanding IV Corps in Tezpur. Maj Gen JFR Jacob was the Chief of Staff of India's Eastern Army Command and was thus involved in planning and meticulous implementation of the operations in East Pakistan, which is detailed in his autobiography, *An Odyssey in War and Peace*.

Millions of refugees flooded across eastern India in 1971 into the States surrounding East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) after Pakistan's ruthless military clampdown there, which was ordered by Pakistan's dictator Yahya Khan following a pent-up demand for their rights after election results gave Bengali leader Sheikh Mujib a clear victory. It led to all their Chief Ministers insisting that India must do something to avert this humanitarian crisis. Indira Gandhi summoned the then Army chief Gen Sam Manekshaw for a meeting with her 'kitchen Cabinet'. She wanted the General to go to war and liberate enough territory in East Pakistan, so that the refugees could be sent back. However, Gen Manekshaw had apparently cautioned against haste since many factors were involved. They were then into the summer of 1971 and the harvested grain needed to be moved across the country. The trains and road transport could either ferry the grain or the troops to battle. And then monsoons would follow, which could hamper the movement of military units, especially in the riverine terrain of Bangladesh.

Indira, heeding the military's advice, decided to let the armed



forces do what they are best at, to fight a war and win it. Gen Manekshaw apparently promised her that given the time, he could help her "make history and even geography", as I recall him saying at the first Infantry lecture at Vigyan Bhawan in October 1994. Even as the armed forces began to prepare for what truly became a historic victory, Indira took up the job of winning the world's support for India's humanitarian initiative. By August 1971, New Delhi had signed the Indo-Soviet treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation with Moscow. Not only was it a significant departure from the Nehruvian obsession with non-alignment, it was Russia's support at the many sessions in the United Nations that stalled resolutions at the initiative of Washington to help Pakistan when Indian troops rolled down the plains of East Pakistan. But Jacob dismisses this story that Gen Manekshaw had often told — and which I too have heard the late Field Marshal narrate in 1994 — about how he stood up to Indira's demands to go to war in March 1971. The war officially started on December 3 though military operations along the borders of East Pakistan had started in the last week of November.

Apparently, India — fearing a UN ceasefire — was in a hurry to establish a free Bangladeshi Government in the port towns of Khulna and Chittagong. But as the operations unfolded and gathered momentum, Jacob went ahead with a plan to capture Dacca. This was done by doing what Pakistan's Generals hadn't expected India to do. As

the Pakistani army had fortified its garrison towns, some fierce battles were fought around them while there was a simultaneous drive to get to Dacca. A simple tactical lesson that is taught to every officer in the Army is never to re-enforce a failure and, therefore, the areas of resistance were bypassed. The Pakistani military dictator, the often drunk General Yahya Khan, was however confident that three factors wouldn't allow any worthwhile success to the Indian armed forces in East Pakistan. First, his well-armed military machine in West Pakistan would be enough to threaten India's strategic States of Punjab and J&K. Two, a Chinese military buildup along the Himalayas would tie down enough of the Indian Army. These two factors would be enough to deter India from any serious military adventurism in East Pakistan. And finally, he was banking on the US to intervene militarily if India's operations became difficult for Pakistan to contain.

But more forces were needed than Manekshaw was willing to release to implement an effective blitzkrieg towards Dacca. As Gen Manekshaw believed that the Chinese could spoil the party, he refused to release additional troops from the Sino-Indian border until much later. However, as there were no intelligence intercepts to back Manekshaw's claim, Jacob managed to get troops from the Himalayan formations moved — without Manekshaw's knowledge — but with help from Maj Gen Gill. Apparently when Manekshaw did learn of this, he gave Gill a dressing down but by

then things were moving so fast that the focus shifted to Dacca as the time was limited, with the US pushing the UN for a ceasefire. If that had happened, all the military gains would have been literally back to square one. The Indian Army, ably assisted by the Indian Air Force, raced to Dacca. The IAF literally bombed the daylight out of the Pakistani Air Force. Soon the skies were clear of any Pakistani fighters: They lay wrecked on their airfields. And then a heli-borne operation — the first of its kind since Independence — put troops across the vast Meghna river and many other rivers that had until then given Dacca a natural defence. This was followed by the first ever airborne drop of Indian paratroopers. By December 15, the Indian troops had surrounded Dacca.

During this lull in the battle, Maj Gen Jacob received a call from Gen Manekshaw, who said: "Jake, go and get a surrender." He then proceeded to Dacca to meet Lt Gen AAK Niazi, MC, the overall military commander in East Pakistan. Jacob saluted him, and asked him if he was willing to offer an unconditional surrender. A pompous Gen Niazi, enjoying an afternoon of beer and lunch — with all the silver laid out in their officers' mess — dismissed the proposition with a wave of his hand, saying: "Who said I am surrendering? You have come to discuss only a ceasefire and withdrawal as proposed by me." He was apparently still hopeful that a ceasefire ordered by the UN could save him and his army a humiliation. But Gen Jacob was adamant and told him that he had 30 minutes

and then he'd ask him thrice. If Niazi still didn't respond, he couldn't guarantee the safety of Pakistani families (as the Bengali rebels were waiting to lynch them all). Moreover, he'd ask for the resumption of bombings on Dacca. Then Jacob — unarmed and thus a little worried — went for a stroll and to smoke his pipe, giving Niazi time to ponder over the options.

Gen Jacob met Gen Niazi after 30 minutes and asked him thrice if he accepted the surrender document (even though the document's draft was still unapproved by New Delhi!). But since Niazi refused to respond, Maj Gen Jacob picked up the document and held it up to say: "I take it as accepted." Tears rolled down Gen Niazi's cheek and he hung his head in shame. Other Pakistanis glared at him in disbelief. Gen Jacob got up and asked Niazi to move for the surrender, which was done at the Dacca Race Course on a hastily arranged table and two chairs — as the crowds were shouting anti-Pakistan slogans — a tearful Niazi removed his badges of rank and handed his pistol to Gen Aurora before being whisked away by India's senior officers. He needed to be kept alive to tell the world that he wasn't mutilated to surrender, but did so — for the world to see — at the Dacca parade ground. This was achieved when there were 26,400 Pakistani soldiers in Dacca and only 3,000 Indian soldiers nearby. Niazi later admitted that Jacob had "blackmailed me into surrendering".

(The writer is a strategic affairs analyst. The views expressed are personal.)

SOUNDBITE

Our performance in the DDC elections in J&K is encouraging. In the polls, the BJP has got more votes than the NC, PDP and Congress combined.

Union Minister
—Ravi Shankar Prasad



The PTI Government has to perform at much higher levels in the remaining time of its five-year tenure. The Ministers must realise that the time for performance has arrived.

Pakistan Prime Minister
—Imran Khan



Four years sober today! Earlier it was malt, pink champagne & packed city bars. Now it is pink skies & deserted country roads. What an enriching journey it's been!

Filmmaker and actor
—Pooja Bhatt



Hopefully fans around the world will find inspiration in my story to commit to their craft no matter how hard the journey because everyone can achieve greatness.

Barcelona FC player
—Lionel Messi



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Winds of change

Sir — This refers to the news item 'Gupkar Alliance steals the show in Kashmir' (December 23). The celebrations that broke out in J&K, particularly in the Kashmir Valley, over results of the District Development Council (DDC) polls were a far cry from the past elections which were marked by allegations of rigging or criticism that they reflected the minority opinion due to abysmal turnouts.

For a change, hailing of the victories by even the BJP's rivals was not grudging by the Centre which saw it as a reaffirmation of the voters and candidates in the fairness of the eight-polls polls.

There was a time when India's defeat in a cricket match against Pakistan would spark celebrations on the streets of Kashmir. But the fact that the DDC polls not only witnessed good participation in the Valley but also that the results were welcomed by the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) constituents, Independents and other parties alike show that they all want grassroots democracy for enjoying the benefits of development.

N Sadhasiva Reddy
Bengaluru

Buyers feel the pinch of high LPG prices

I was shocked to read that the LPG cylinder price in the country will be changed every week from next year. Currently, these prices are fixed on a monthly basis but in view of the daily fluctuation in the price of petroleum products, oil companies are now planning to change the cylinder price on a weekly basis.

It may be noted that the prices of petrol and diesel are fixed every day due to which petroleum companies easily adjust any change in the global crude prices. However, since the price of LPG cylinder is fixed on a monthly basis, these companies have to bear the loss for the whole month. In the wake of this, the oil companies have for long been considering ways to change the prices effectively. Petrol and diesel prices are updated every day at 6 am, when the new rates come into effect. The prices of petrol and diesel almost double after adding excise duty, dealer commission and other taxes.

However, no announcement has yet been made regarding this decision. Under the new regime, the price of LPG cylinder has already been increased twice so far in December. But in the absence of any announcement, people did not get to know about it.

Stranded in the UK

Sir — The United Kingdom (UK) has identified a new, potentially more contagious Coronavirus variant linked to a recent surge in the pandemic in that country. The cases are spiralling in the UK amid fears that a mutated form of COVID-19 is lashing the country with a five-

fold increase in a fortnight.

Though the UK has rolled out Pfizer's vaccine to combat the pandemic, in the absence of any assured results almost the entire country is likely to be hit by Tier 4 restrictions. The UK Government has issued a "Do not travel" advisory following the surge in the cases. Multiple countries have now imposed

restrictions on travellers to and from the UK as the variant was said to be "out of control".

The Christmas euphoria is on the wane as thousands of people wanting to reach their native places are stranded at airports in the absence of flight operations.

Seetharam Basaani
Hanamkonda (Telangana)



As per the IOC's internal information, the cylinder rate was increased by ₹50 on December 2 and again by the same amount on December 15. A cylinder now costs more than ₹700 and it has become expensive to cook at home. The Government had pulled back cooking gas subsidy in September as a fall in oil prices and an increase in cooking gas rates brought parity in the market.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

Playing politics

Sir — Kerala Governor Arif Mohammad Khan has refused to give approval for a special Assembly session to discuss and pass a resolution against the three contentious Central farm laws. The move was aimed only at antagonising the Centre over its farm policies.

The decision to convene the one-day session was taken by the LDF Government at a Cabinet meeting presided over by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

The Kerala Government is trying to misuse the power vested in it by the people despite the fact that the farmers here are very happy with the benefits they get from the Government. However, the session would now not be held as the Governor did not choose to accord his sanction to the proposal.

The State Government had last December convened a similar session, which passed a resolution demanding scrapping of the controversial Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

MR Jayanthi
Kerala

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Quell over-the-top quarrels please

India must put in place a set of guidelines for content creators to follow when it comes to the depiction of military insignia



AKSHAT AGARWAL

As 2020 draws to a close, it is quite clear that this was the year of over-the-top (OTT) entertainment platforms. The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns forced people to stay indoors and stream content on their phones, tablets and smart televisions (TVs). But, as is normal, such dizzying success was accompanied by hurdles, too. One of the objections was over the depiction of military insignia and personnel on OTT shows. While the Armed Forces have often been depicted in Indian films and on TV shows, in recent times some of these portrayals have led to a backlash from a few quarters. This month, the Indian Air Force (IAF) objected to the trailer of a *Netflix* film. Though the movie itself is unrelated to the security forces, the promotion material included a clip of veteran Bollywood actor Anil Kapoor, dressed in an IAF uniform, using a string of expletives. The IAF's official Twitter handle pointed out that the uniform was "inaccurately donned" and that "the language used is inappropriate."

Earlier in June, *ALTBalaji* was panned for an episode of its show 'XXX' where an Army officer's wife is shown to be having an extra-marital affair, with her lover donning her husband's uniform in a steamy scene. A YouTuber filed a police complaint and hashtags like #AltBalajiInsultsArmy did the rounds on social media, while several veterans expressed their objection to the show. Perhaps it was this popular sentiment that prompted the Ministry of Defence to declare that web series and film content based on the Indian Armed Forces should be released only after a No Objection Certificate (NOC) is obtained from the Government. It is understandable why the Armed Forces and some retired personnel would be incensed by such content. In their eyes, it damages the public perception of the institution, which is something that most of them take great pride in. However, the bigger question this controversy has thrown up is this: Should the precious time and energy of the Defence Ministry and the Armed Forces, entrusted with the daunting task of protecting the country, be spent on relatively minor issues like these? Instead, isn't it time that India put in place a set of guidelines for content creators to follow when it comes to the depiction of military insignia?

Such a move would be beneficial on three counts. First, content creators would become more sensitive to the need to uphold the honour and prestige of the military and calibrate their artistic freedom accordingly. Often, mistakes in portrayal are not products of malice but simple ignorance of established protocol such as ranks, uniforms and so on. Second, the Army, the Navy and the IAF will not have to expend their energies on comparatively minor issues when India's international borders require their urgent attention. Finally, it will insulate the military from the pressures of populist sentiment.

Worldwide, countries have put in place guidelines on how military insignia can be depicted on screen. Clause 772F of the Title 10 US Code, says that, "While portraying a member of the Army, Navy, Air Force, or the Marine Corps, an actor in a theatrical or motion picture production may wear the uniform of that armed force if the portrayal does not tend to discredit that armed force." In Germany, displaying symbols of Nazi rule such as the swastika and the runic insignia of the Schutzstaffel, a paramilitary organisation, is a crime that comes with a three-year prison term. However, Section 86 of the German Criminal Code does allow these to be used to "promote the arts or science, research or teaching, reporting about current or historical events or similar purposes."

A feature common to both, the German and American guidelines is their broad character. Neither of them list precise rules that content creators have to follow nor do they prescribe things they can or cannot show on screen. As a result, these guidelines allow creators to push the boundaries of artistic expression while, at the same time, being sensitive to public sentiment. It is important to balance between institutional pride and constitutional rights that allow free expression within the bounds of the Constitution.

In India, the lack of similar guidelines or protocols means that the Armed Forces and content creators have no common standard to evaluate content by, leading to unpredictability where creators cannot be certain where their creative freedom ends. This is by no means uniquely a product of the OTT era either. Back in 2006, the IAF had objected to certain scenes in the coming-of-age movie '*Rang De Basanti*', despite the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) clearing it for release. A prolonged deadlock ensued during which both sides stuck to their demands and the film's release was delayed. The impasse broke only after Pranab Mukherjee, the then Defence Minister, saw the film. '*Rang De Basanti*' went on to become a major hit, an iconic film for the Indian youth and the incident is long forgotten. However, the moral of that story is still relevant: The Government of India and the Armed Forces are meant to defend the country and not to involve themselves in the business of content creation. Broad guidelines that balance artistic freedom and the sentiments of the military will ensure just that.

(The writer is an Associate at Koan Advisory, New Delhi. The views expressed are personal.)

WEST BENGAL HAS SLIPPED IN MANY DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS AND BECOME NUMBER ONE IN CORRUPTION, EXTORTION AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE.

—UNION HOME MINISTER

AMIT SHAH



ACCORDING TO THE NCRB DATA, POLITICAL KILLINGS, OTHER CRIMES AND RAPES HAVE DECREASED DURING THE TMC'S RULE.

—WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER

MAMATA BANERJEE

The future of work

The Work From Home culture and the gig economy that the socio-economic impact of the outbreak has necessitated, are here to stay. Even the Govt is facilitating this transition



BALWANT MEHTA



NIDHI MEHTA

The Work From Home (WFH) culture that has become the new normal due to the Coronavirus pandemic and the gig economy that the socio-economic impact of the outbreak has necessitated, are here to stay. Even the Government is facilitating this transition in the workplace. However, this is not the first time that the world is seeing a paradigm shift in work ethics and culture. The intensification of the industrial revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries brought about profound changes. People started leaving their homes and toiling in an outside work environment. This transformation gave birth to a new movement of skilled workers and was the beginning of the 9 AM to 5 PM work schedule in the office. This meant working in an inflexible and regimented environment with tools or equipment provided by an employer.

Despite the advent of work opportunities outside the house, some people still continued to work from their residences. The development of public transportation brought further changes in the office culture as it enabled workers to travel easily. Consequently, the 20th century workforce turned into a commuting one, leading to a rise in employment opportunities in offices and factories engaged in manufacturing and the service economy. In this setting, companies largely controlled the means of production, manufacturing, office equipment and other work staples which were expensive or not portable enough to be utilised by individuals working from their homes.

The nature of office work further changed in the early 20th century with the advent of the telephone, telegraph and typewriter, which were considered as precursors to remote work. Though by the early 1960s a majority of the workforce was a commuting one, the beginning of the '70s saw several key changes that pushed remote work to the forefront. Especially after the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries' (OPEC's) oil embargo and the clean air Act in the US. In view of the high oil prices and shortages, the rise of the information economy, environmental concerns and gridlock commutes, companies began their experiment to formalise remote work for employees.

In fact, *The Washington Post* published an article and suggested that remote work could have eased the gas crisis. The adoption of WFH increased manifold in the late 20th and early 21st century with the emergence of information and communication technologies such as personal computers, the internet, email, broadband connectivity, laptops, smartphones, cloud computing and videotelephony. Remote work is not new in India too. For about two decades it has been in trend in the information technology (IT) industry in the country.

COVID-19 and WFH: Now, when the world is grappling with the COVID-19 outbreak, resilience is being displayed by many employers. They are exploring new ways to ensure seamless ways to continue their business even as the contagion shows no signs of abating. The pandemic has compelled industrialists to think of innovative work solutions in order to get the best out of their employees while keeping them safe. Even though the crisis raises questions on the current work practices, thanks to digital platforms, employees from all over the world have smartly managed their operations remotely.



THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT HAS ANNOUNCED SIMPLIFIED GUIDELINES FOR OTHER SERVICE PROVIDERS LIKE BPOs, KNOWLEDGE PROCESS OUTSOURCING AND ITES AMONG OTHERS TO REDUCE THE COMPLIANCE BURDEN FOR THE INDUSTRY AND FACILITATE WFH AND 'WORK FROM ANYWHERE'. THE GOVERNMENT HAS REMOVED SEVERAL REPORTING AND REGULATORY COMPLIANCES FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS SUCH AS DEPOSIT OF BANK GUARANTEES, REQUIREMENT FOR A STATIC INTERNET PROTOCOL ADDRESS, PUBLICATION OF NETWORK DIAGRAM AND PENAL PROVISIONS



This can be seen as both, a return to the pre-industrial revolution work routines and advancement towards the future of work. According to the International Labour Organisation, around 68 per cent of the world's total workforce, including 81 per cent employers, are currently living in countries with recommended or required workplace closures.

According to the job search site Indeed, since the outbreak, searches for remote work have increased by over 261 per cent. Similarly on LinkedIn, remote job posting nearly tripled since March, ranging from 1.5 times in Canada to 4.9 times in Brazil. Another global research report by Lenovo revealed that 72 per cent of the respondents globally agreed that they would WFH more than they did before the health emergency hit. HFS Research reports that the global IT industry showed a remarkable shift in the way it operated by enabling over 75 per cent of the workforce to WFH. It ranges from 62 per cent in the Philippines, 72 per cent in the UK, 77 per cent in India to 93 per cent in China.

Similarly, as per the Lenovo survey, 81 per cent of the respondents from India agreed to shift to WFH after the pandemic abates. An Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) report reveals that 74 per cent of regular workers would like to continue with some form of a WFH arrangement in a post-Corona world. The survey results show that around half of the remote workers in the country are from the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) and the Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES) sector followed by IT software, education, e-commerce, publishing, banking, financial services and

the insurance sectors. Since the beginning of the lockdown in March, almost 90 per cent of the 4.3 million IT/BPO/ITES sector workforce moved to the WFH model in India.

Advantages: Remote working and the virtual way of life have benefited employees, employers and all stakeholders, allowing them to pause, think, and balance their work, social, physical, mental and digital wellness. The employers' benefit is in the reduction or elimination of real estate costs. They can hire and use talent globally while mitigating immigration issues. Firms reap productivity gains while workers are enjoying geographical flexibility which eliminates commutes, giving them a better work-life balance.

In particular, flexible workspaces allow women to restore a work-life balance. A study published in the *Lancet* found that WFH not only benefits public health but also helps with sustainable travel. It helps cities lower their carbon footprint and reduces traffic congestions that lead to air pollution. As a result, employees and employers are spared many of the hidden costs associated with going to the workplace.

Disadvantages: However, as in all things, there is a flip side of the coin too. WFH poses the unique challenges of social and professional isolation, technological issues, monitoring and evaluation of work, the quality of virtual interactions, feedback from clients and colleagues. The people working from home are vulnerable to longer working hours, frequent interruptions, cyber security challenges, lack of peer support, lack of motivation for team work and in some cases even greater stress. Lack of a proper work space at home too has created problems for some, while inappropriate working conditions

led to health issues for others. Face-to-face interaction vital to nurturing relationships and facilitating collaboration, has been absent, leading to reduced mental well-being. It is harder in industries that require physical location or presence for manufacturing activities. WFH is least suitable for drivers, construction workers, shop sales professionals and domestic helpers, as their occupations requires high human proximity.

The way forward: The Indian Government has announced simplified guidelines for other service providers like BPOs, Knowledge Process Outsourcing and ITES among others to reduce the compliance burden for the industry and facilitate WFH and 'Work from Anywhere'.

The Government has removed several reporting and regulatory compliances for service providers such as deposit of bank guarantees, requirement for a static Internet Protocol address, publication of the network diagram and penal provisions.

According to the Labour Secretary, the Ministry proposes to frame guidelines for workers employed in the services sector, such as work flexibility and an explicit WFH provision for companies. These steps are important for the future of work, not only in the IT sector but for other service sectors, too. This would help to promote a new work culture and provide the much-needed boost to the emerging gig economy, which has a huge potential to generate new employment opportunities for the unemployed men and women in India.

(Balwant is Senior Faculty at the IHD and Nidhi is Director at The Vision, New Delhi. The views expressed are personal)

Justice delayed is justice denied

What prevents our courts from speeding up the litigation process and coming to a conclusion within months of a case being filed?



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

With the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) Special Court Judge K Sanal Kumar pronouncing the verdict in the Sister Abhaya murder case in Thiruvananthapuram, sentencing Sephy and Thomas Kottoor to life imprisonment, an important chapter in this sensational murder case has been closed. However, this is just temporary as the accused are likely to appeal against the verdict in the Kerala High Court and then in the Supreme Court.

It was a drawn out case because Sister Abhaya, a novice in the Saint

Pius X Convent at Kottayam in Kerala, was found dead under mysterious circumstances in a well on the convent premises on the morning of March 27, 1992. The Kerala Police which probed the case initially, concluded that it was a clear case of suicide. To substantiate their findings, police officials alleged that Abhaya was from a family which was prone to mental distress and which had a history of suicides. Though it has been more than 28 years since Abhaya was found dead, no journalist could substantiate the claims of the Kerala Police. Apart from pronouncing the death as suicide, the local police as well as the Crime Branch unit were competing with each other to destroy the evidence. A local photographer who was hired by the police to take the pictures of Abhaya's body destroyed irrevocably most of the photographs which showed nail marks on her neck.

A murder which took place in 1992 has come to a conclusion after nearly three decades thanks to the

perseverance of two individuals, Joemon Puthenpurackal, a social activist, and Raju, a petty thief who witnessed the entire drama live while hiding in a tree in the convent.

A lot could be written about Abhaya's murder but the issue before us should not be confined to this case alone. There is a dictum "justice delayed is justice denied." If we follow this principle, Abhaya has been denied justice. Not only Abhaya, there are thousands of people in India who have been denied justice. What prevents our courts from speeding up the litigation process and coming to a conclusion within months of a case being filed?

The first time I heard a speech by Narendra Modi was in January 2009 when he flew down to Chennai to deliver a keynote address at the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas. Modi, who was the Chief Minister of Gujarat at that time, centred his speech more on the development initiatives his Government was taking. He had said that his mission was to ensure a

"zero backlog" of cases in all courts in the State by 2010. It is hard to tell what the current situation in Gujarat courts is. But if instances like the Abhaya murder case are any indication, India is light years away from reaching a zero backlog. This has had a detrimental impact on the lives of many.

A prime example of this is the case of the late MKK Nair. The senior bureaucrat, who belonged to the first batch of Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers in the country, had his wonderful career cut short by fake cases slapped against him by a CBI officer in Kerala.

Eventually, the trial court found that all charges against Nair were trumped-up but the damage had been done by then. Nair should have retired as a Cabinet Secretary in 1977; instead, he was suspended from service in 1973. It took more than a decade for the court to acquit him of all charges. It cannot be said that he got justice. Plus, the country lost the

services of a visionary who was the architect of Udyogmandal in Kerala that contributed a lot to the Green Revolution.

Similarly, AIADMK candidate Manoj Pandian, a legal luminary who contested the Assembly election from Cheranmahadevi constituency in 2006, was defeated by P Veldurai of the Indian National Congress. Pandian challenged the election in the court and it took five years for the apex court to declare Veldurai's election as illegal, null and void. The verdict came on the day when the people of Tamil Nadu were on their way to elect the new Assembly!

In the 2009 election, P Chidambaram, the Congress candidate from the Sivaganga Lok Sabha constituency, was declared defeated initially. But the counting was stopped for a few hours and then it was announced by the Returning Officer that he had won the election, defeating his nearest rival Raja Kannappan by 3,000 votes. Though Kannappan challenged the result in the Madras

High Court immediately after the poll, the Madras High Court is yet to pronounce the verdict, though the country witnessed two Lok Sabha elections (2014 and 2019) since then.

However, it is not just cases related to elections that get delayed in the courts. What happened to the 2G Spectrum Scam which was broken by *The Pioneer* in 2007? The Coalgate scam? *The National Herald* case initiated by Subramanian Swamy or the illegal telephone exchange case? Why are we plagued by this inordinate delay in our courts? It is no wonder that kangaroo courts are flourishing in Tamil Nadu and even people who have reached the age of superannuation have enrolled as students in law colleges in and around Chennai. It is a sad state of affairs that justice keeps on getting delayed and hence denied in the country. Hopefully, the new year will bring a renewed effort to clear the backlog of court cases in India.

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



FOREIGN EYE



A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

The High Court was correct to halt a disturbing trend among clinicians in the UK to assume those as young as 10 were fit to make life-altering decisions about gender identity. Children are not pawns to be deployed in adult debates about identity. Keira Bell's bravery has paved the way for a verdict that gives children the protection they deserve. (Observer editorial)

₹50L/m turnover firms to pay 1% GST in cash

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Businesses with monthly turnover of over ₹50 lakh will have to mandatorily pay at least 1 per cent of their GST liability in cash, the Finance Ministry said as it moved to curb evasion by fake invoicing. The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has introduced Rule 86B in Goods and Services Tax (GST) rules which restricts use of input tax credit (ITC) for discharging GST liability to 99 per cent.

“... The registered person shall not use the amount available in electronic credit ledger to discharge his liability towards output tax in excess of 99 per cent of tax liability, in cases where the value of taxable supply ... In a month exceeds ₹ 50 lakh,” the CBIC said.

While calculating the turnover threshold, sales from GST exempt goods and zero rates supply would not be

included.

However, this restriction will not apply where the managing director or any partner have paid more than ₹1 lakh in income tax or the registered person has received a refund amount of more than ₹1 lakh in the preceding financial year on account of unutilised input tax credit.

EY Tax Partner Abhishek Jain said the government has put restrictions on seamless input credit utilisation with introduction of Rule 89B, which blocks utilisation of ITC beyond 99 per cent of the output liability, for businesses having taxable turnover of more than Rs 50 lakh per month.

“With the government providing reasonable exceptions to this rule, the idea remains to prevent misutilisation of credit by businesses taking fake credits,” Jain added.

Further, the CBIC has amended GST rules restricting filing of outward supply details

in GSTR-1 for business that have not paid tax for the past periods by filing GSTR 3B.

So far, until now, non-filing of GSTR 3B resulted in blockage of e-way bill but will now result in GSTR 1 blockage as well.

Abhishek Jain, Tax Partner, EY said, “The government has now restricted filing of outward supply details in GSTR 1 return for businesses who have not paid tax for the past periods by filing GSTR 3B.

“The government’s idea here seems to be to curb input tax credit passing by businesses which have otherwise not paid their GST liability,” Jain added.

AMRG & Associates Senior Partner Rajat Mohan said, “These changes indicate that government is grappling with lower tax collections and high tax evasions, burden of which will again be on honest taxpayers”.

RETRO TAX ARBITRATION

India ordered to pay up to \$1.4 bn to Cairn Energy

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India has been ordered to return up to USD 1.4 billion to Cairn Energy plc of UK after an international arbitration overturned tax demanded retrospectively - an award the government indicated it may challenge.

The three-member tribunal, which also comprised of a nominee of the Indian government, unanimously ruled that India’s claim of ₹10,247 crore in past taxes over a 2006-07 internal reorganisation of Cairn’s India business was not a valid demand.

India, it said, “failed to accord the Claimants’ (Cairn Energy’s) investments fair and equitable treatment” under the bilateral investment protection pact the nation had with the UK, it said in a 582-page order.

The tribunal ordered the government to desist from seeking such a tax and return

the value of shares it had sold, dividends seized and tax refunds withheld to recover the tax demand.

The government was asked to compensate Cairn “for the total harm suffered” together with interest and cost of arbitration, according to the order. While the order does not contain a provision for challenge or appeal against the award, the government said it will study the arbitration award and “will consider all options and take a decision on the further course of action, including legal remedies before appropriate fora.” Cairn, according to people aware of the matter, can use the arbitration award to approach courts in countries such as the UK to seize any property owned by India has overseas to recover the money if the award is not honoured.

In a statement, Cairn Energy said it had been awarded USD 1.2 billion damages

plus interest and costs.

Sources said including USD 200 million of interest and USD 22 million of arbitration cost, the total amount payable by the Indian government is USD 1.4 billion (about Rs 10,500 crore).

This is the second loss the government has suffered in three months over the retrospective levy of taxes. In September, UK’s Vodafone Group won an international arbitration against the demand of Rs 22,100 crore in taxes.

However, Cairn was the only company against which the government took action to recover retrospective taxes. During the pendency of the arbitration, the government sold Cairn’s near 5 per cent holding in Vedanta Ltd, seized dividends totalling Rs 1,140 crore due to it from those shareholdings and set off a Rs 1,590-crore tax refund against the demand.

Benchmarks extend gains for 2nd day; IT, FMCG stocks sparkle

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Sensex and Nifty defied gravity for the second straight session on Wednesday as investors scooped up IT and FMCG shares amid a firm trend in global markets.

A recovering rupee and global drugmakers’ assertion that their Covid-19 vaccines will work against a new coronavirus strain the UK further shored up investor confidence, traders said. The 30-share BSE Sensex rallied 437.49 points or 0.95 per cent to close at 46,444.18. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty surged 134.80 points or 1 per cent to 13,601.10, HUL was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, spurring 2.67 per

cent, followed by Infosys, M&M, SBI, ITC, IndusInd Bank, Bajaj Finance, Asian Paints, Bharti Airtel and TCS. Only four index components closed lower -- Titan, PowerGrid, NTPC and HDFC, shedding up to 0.81 per cent. Global markets were largely positive after drug companies like BioNTech, Moderna and AstraZeneca exuded confidence that their COVID-19 vaccines will be effective against the new virus strain reported in the UK. However, gains were capped after US President Donald Trump hinted at vetoing the USD 900 billion economic aid package passed by the Congress due to the “ridiculously low” USD 600 aid for individuals.

Govt’s decision for 20-year DTH licence to provide certainty to industry: Tata Sky

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Leading direct-to-home (DTH) player Tata Sky on Wednesday said the government’s decision to grant licences to the operators for a longer 20 years would provide certainty to the industry. The

Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a revision in the guidelines for providing DTH services in the country under which licences would be issued for 20 years.

Currently, the licence is valid for 10 years for DTH players.

RBI Guv asks banks to strengthen lending capacity by raising capital

PTI ■ MUMBAI

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das has asked banks to take proactive measures to strengthen

their resilience and lending capacity by raising capital, the central bank said in a statement on Wednesday.

During a two-day meeting

with heads of banks, including the private sector lenders, the governor emphasised on the need to remain vigilant and make provisions against bad

loans proactively.

Das had held similar meetings in May as well. He had also met with representatives of other financial institutions like

NBFCs and microfinance lenders.

The RBI, in its statement, said Das held meetings with the MD & CEOs of public

sector banks and select private sector lenders on Tuesday and Wednesday, respectively, through video conferencing.

NIFTY 50						
SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE	
NIFTY50	13473.50	13619.45	13432.20	13601.10	1348	
WIPRO	374	387.6	371.7	384.95	20.75	
CIPLA	796.35	827	792.25	824.9	20.9	
TATASTEEL	599	624.2	596.3	621.8	24.45	
TATAMOTORS	165	169.7	163.4	169.5	4.55	
HINDUNILVR	2320.00	2377.30	2303.25	2373.00	62	
INFY	1238.00	1258.85	1230.55	1252.00	31.5	
M&M	693	715	688.25	712	16.95	
INDUSINDBK	841.95	861.95	832.75	860.8	20.1	
HINDALCO	231.35	237.9	227.5	237.4	5.5	
SBIN	256.95	263.9	255.6	263	5.55	
ITC	203	208.25	202	207.6	4.2	
BAFINANCE	5000.00	5166.00	4970.35	5095.00	83.6	
UPL	444.5	452.7	438.3	451.9	7.25	
BAJAJ-AUTO	3281.00	3318.95	3261.00	3315.00	49.7	
ASIANPAINT	2604.00	2650.00	2604.00	2638.15	37.35	
GRASIM	886.1	909	881.35	897.35	12.15	
JSWSTEEL	361	367.7	357.75	366.85	4.9	
BHARTIARTL	500.3	509.5	498.4	507	6.7	
TCS	2876.05	2919.00	2865.45	2907.15	34.65	
HDFCLIFE	641.25	649.00	637.75	648.85	7.6	
DRREDDY	5161.45	5247.00	5131.25	5217.90	56.1	
SUNPHARMA	570	576.55	566.1	574.6	4.6	
ICICIBANK	499	505.5	496.55	505	4.7	
NESTLEIND	18555.05	18812.00	18514.95	18720.00	166.45	
HCLTECH	920	935	914.8	921.9	8.1	
KOTAKBANK	1901.00	1934.80	1892.50	1919.5	17	
BAJAJFINSV	8900.00	9140.00	8880.00	9006.10	67.25	
MARUTI	7400.40	7555.60	7394.00	7450.00	54.6	
AXISBANK	589	594.5	584.3	594	4.25	
ONGC	90.5	91.3	88.3	91.2	0.65	
BPCL	373	377.2	369.4	374.8	2.3	
RELIANCE	1930.00	1951.45	1920.65	1947.00	10.3	
HDFCBANK	1367.50	1380.95	1361.05	1378.00	4.9	
ADANI	1268.00	1271.30	1248.35	1266.95	4.25	
ADANIPORTS	467.15	467.7	462.5	470	1.35	
SBIIFE	855.5	859	847.65	856.4	2.45	
TECHM	946.55	959.75	941	968.6	2.15	
IOC	88.2	88.6	86.75	88.15	0.2	
SHREECEM	23916.70	24240.00	23830.90	23950.00	33.3	
HDFC	2398.00	2419.65	2376.75	2405.90	2.25	
BRITANNIA	3641.60	3668.35	3605.25	3632.90	2.5	
EICHERMOT	2446.00	2474.95	2410.70	2447.00	0.3	
ULTRACEMCO	4999.60	5075.00	4980.25	5021.00	-0.3	
GAIL	115	119.5	116.65	118.45	-0.05	
COALINDIA	135	136.7	134.1	135.45	-0.05	
POWERGRID	191.5	191.7	189	190.1	-0.2	
NTPC	99.05	99.4	97.8	98.75	-0.15	
TIITAN	1504.70	1519.80	1478.05	1491.00	-7.8	
DIVISLAB	3709.60	3715.00	3660.00	3695.00	-25.95	
HEROMOTOCO	3046.60	3073.50	3012.00	3020.00	-29.1	

NIFTY NEXT 50						
SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE	
NIFTY NEXT 50	31499.55	31994.95	31342.45	31949.80	522.5	
PEL	1354.00	1432.95	1341.40	1424.00	88.55	
TATACONSUM	577.8	606.85	573.05	606.6	30.6	
ADANITRANS	411.3	429.6	406	428.85	20.55	
INDIGO	1566.00	1658.90	1547.25	1650.00	79.05	
BIOCON	462.2	487.75	459.1	482.55	20.1	
DLF	220.45	230.5	217.7	227.8	8.45	
UBL	1099.00	1145.00	1092.95	1116.15	40.85	
AUROPHARMA	859	882	851	887.3	30.25	
BANKBARODA	58.8	60.8	58.35	60.65	1.85	
BHENDIPINT	716	736.25	710.35	735	22.15	
IRIDIUM	235	241.5	232.55	239.55	7.15	
ITI	3575.00	3698.50	3553.00	3669.75	96.75	
GICRE	137.65	144.5	136.75	140.6	3.6	
SIEMENS	1513.00	1553.80	1499.00	1545.70	37.65	
PFCE	112.2	115.25	111.05	113.7	2.6	
BAJAJPHLDG	3030.00	3087.50	3010.00	3079.95	64.05	
TORNTPHARM	2743.95	2805.00	2735.00	2800.00	56.4	
HDFCAMC	2880.00	2982.80	2855.25	2940.00	58.95	
HAVELLS	880.5	897.9	876.1	897.9	17.35	
ABOTEC	398	408.35	395.35	406.5	7.6	
MARUTIINDIA	15643.50	15900.00	15526.00	15790.00	279.9	
ADANIGREEN	1035.00	1050.00	1012.10	1048.00	18.1	
MOTHERSUMI	149.45	152.4	146.6	151.4	2.5	
CONCOR	388	399.8	382.55	392.25	5.95	
MCDOWELL-N	556.6	568.2	555.75	564.3	8.5	
DMART	2650.00	2675.00	2621.30	2660.00	39.25	
INDUSTOWER	233.9	238.2	236.7	236.2	34.5	
DABUR	505	512.5	502.3	511.5	7.25	
COLPAL	1541.00	1572.00	1531.90	1567.55	20.75	
CADILAH	467.25	479.25	465.05	474	4.95	
PGHL	1100.00	1119.15	1095.95	1101.20	108.15	
ACC	1547.00	1583.00	1541.00	1580.00	15.05	
LUPIN	957.4	969.7	948	962.2	8.65	
OFSS	3139.00	3157.85	3098.45	3139.00	26.2	
BANDHANBANK	395.9	402.65	391.55	400	3.3	
AIKEM	2852.00	2880.00	2829.40	2877.00	23.4	
MUTHOOTFIN	1183.00	1212.45	1177.65	1192.45	9.55	
PIDILITIND	1734.00	1778.00	1716.15	1731.00	12.3	
BOCHITD	12640.00	12729.95	12529.05	12690.00	68.15	
ICICIPRULI	483.95	490	482.5	485	2.5	
ICICI	249	250	245.25	249.15	1.25	
SICRAD	828	840.5	820	836	3.7	
GOIDEPC	717	719	706	715.5	2.9	
NAUKRI	4600.00	4679.00	4581.10	4638.40	13.75	
NMDC	112.2	112.5	108.75	111.5	0.3	
ICICIGI	1460.00	1474.75	1442.10	1459.00	1.2	
HINDPETRO	2108.5	2141.5	2083.5	2108.5	0	
AMBUJACEM	234.9	238.75	231.5	237.05	-0.55	
IGL	496	496	483	487.9	-4.9	
PNB	32.1	32.75	31.7	31.85	-1.55	

BSE 500

	Open	High	Low	LTP	SUNTV	478.7	490	470.9	488.05	HAWKINCOOK	5429.95	5429.95	5200	5272.25	GALAXYSURF	1880	1952.6	1874.45	1932.75	UCOBANK	12.26	12.54	12.19	12.48
IDEA	9.49	10.68	9.41	10.56	OFFSS	3120.45	3156.1	3100	3143.2	POLYCARB	1019.9	1039	1004.45	1037	SOMANYNCERA	309.35	332.75	309.35	327.35	MRPL	33.4	34.15	33.3	33.85
NAUKRI	4620	4677	4590	4663.45	HONAUT	34800	38176.95	34799.837439.55		POWERINDIA	1283.55	1400	1273.95	1363.95	VENKYS	1587.65	1646.85	1584.65	1630.25	MIDHANI	198.7	198.7	192.65	197.3
INFY	1242.95	1259	1231	1252.95	NTPC	99.15	99.5	97.75	98.55	MUTHOOTFIN	1193.4	1211.65	1179	1191.15	HUDCO	37.9	39.6	37.55	39	TCIEXP	885.95	932.05	884.75	910.25
SUPREMEIND	1656.75	1709.95	1656.75	1667.15	HINDPETRO*	211.9	211.9	208.4	210.3	ICICIPRULI	484.85	490	482.8	484.45	CSBBANK	224	226.5	215	225.75	ITKPRESTIG	5685.3	5775	5685.3	5742.8
TATAMOTORS	165.7	169.7	163.35	169.2	CADILAH	468	478.95	464.9	474.75	SWOLAR	235	238.25	221	224.25	AAVAS	1650.15	1739.9	1650.15	1739.9	JTEKTINDIA	88.3	88.3	83.95	87.15
BAJFINANCE	5020	5168.5	4972.2	5088.55	BATAINDIA	1534.85	1587.65	1522.15	1582.45	KTKBANK	51	54.5	51	54.05	SHOPERSTOP	197.75	211.15	197.1	204.65	SIS	435	447.65	429.95	440
IBULHSGFIN	187.6	205.5	184.05	202.9	IDBI	34.2	34.25	32.7	32.9	RECLTD	131.85	133.6	129.7	131.85	KRBL	247.8	250	244.55	246.8	QUESS	460.2	471.5	459.4	469.05
JKCEMENT	1967.95	1967.95	1893.3	1928.3	BALKRISIND	1558	1585.85	1545	1561.4	POWERGRID	191.05	191.05	189.15	189.8	NIACL	119	127.35	119	126.05	CSCHNEIDER	85.9	85.9	80.5	82.1
VEDL	139.6	151.1	137.6	150.45	HEROMOTOCO	3054.7	3071.55	3008.75	3045.8	GUIGAS	367	367	348.2	343.5	CARERATING	501.15	516.45	501.15	513.4	COVINTECH	349.3	358.45	349.3	355.1
RELANCE	1932.8	1951.2	1920	1943.8	BRITANNIA	3631.5	3666	3605.6	3623.7	KAJARIACER	655	709.5	655	702.9	INDIACEM	140	143.6	139.3	142.5	PRSMJOHNSN	85.95	90	85.95	88.25
HDFCBANK	1375	1381.1	1361.05	1375.75	BANKINDIA	48	48.9	47.4	IDFC	IDFC	37.1	37.8	36.15	37.5	EIHOTEL	90	92.9	89.4	92.35	ALLCARGO	131.6	133.85	130.5	132.4
ICICIBANK	499	505.4	496.3	503.6	DISVLISAB	3719	3719	3661	3689.45	ITDC	283	307	270.9	303.1	FOCUSCONSUMER	7.99	8.22	7.87	8.22	BRIGADE	242.85	248.55	238.2	241.15
GLTCLTECH	923.7	934	915.15	922.5	FSL	76.8	80.5	76.8	79.85	VBL	910	944.4	880	903.05	ABFRL	151.5	156.5	150.9	155.6	3MINDIA	21352.9	21490	21006	21073
SBIN	257.6	263.85	255.5	263.05	ACI	1558	1585.5	1538.2	1579.65	EXIDEIND	184.15	188.15	183.4	185.35	MASFIN	911	966.5	896.85	911.6	ZYDUSWELL	1897.95	1920	1880.5	1904.2
WIPRO	374.15	386.6	370.25	385.4	IBREALEST	68.45	72.35	67.8	71.1	CENTRALBK	13.4	13.88	13.31	13.79	GMDFCLTD	47.9	50.1	47.8	49.95	PTC	57.5	59.05	57.4	58.95
INDUSINDBK	840.75	861.35	830	856.85	EICHERMOT	2452.1	2475.25	2416.6	2446.1	MGL	1047	1065.3	1035.5	1055.95	ITI	123	126.5	122	125.3	TASTYBIT	12478.05	12589	12013.45	12287.05
CPIA	32.4	32.75	31.7	31.8	PAGEIND	27969.6	28400	27641.22671.05		WHIRLPOOL	2210.05	2280.5	2166.4	2261.75	WESTLIFE	424.4	436.95	423.8	428.8	BLUEDART	3849.4	3900	3810.65	3853.45
KOTAKBANK	1860	1924.92	1860	1921.9	AUOPHARMA	864.95	892.45	848.6	889.9	CHENNPETRO	101	101.75	96.55	92.75	RADICO	452	460	447.55	449.7	ASTERDM	171	171.1	168.6	169.5
RBLBANK	209.1	223	206.95	221.3	DMART	2660	2672.65	2625	2662	FINEORG	2385.15	2385.15	2334	2360.4	MMTC	21.6	23.6	21.6	23.4	GETRD	113.8	114.5	110.4	113.9
HDFC	2397.1	2420	2377.05	2400.7	BEMIL	896	927	861.1	918.6	NAVFLINFOR	2567.8	2587.35	2504.7	2529.4	ABB	1196.65	1235	1194.75	1199	CIRSLI	1911	1931.2	1890.15	1891.95
TATASTEEL	600	623.9	596.05	621.5	RAYMOND	325.75	342.25	325.75	339.35	ASTRAL	1540.1	1605.85	1533.6	1589.55	BDL	318	325	316.15	322.35	ARVINDFASN	147	153.3	147	151.35
TCS	2889	2918	2866.05	2907.2	IPCALAB	2173	2320	2146	2156.55	FORTIS	155	155.25	153	154	JKLAKSHMI	320.3	343	320.3	342.3	GRSE	186	196	186	195.15
INDIGO	1541	1658	1541	1649	WOCKPHARMA	467	493.75	466.8	491	AVANTI	516	521	502.4	511.1	INOXLEISUR	273.2	280.95	265.5	280	ORIENTELEC	210.5	221.5	215.05	218.65
SPICEJET	89.6	97.95	89.05	97.95	NBC	28.5	30.1	28.1	29.95	WABAG	192	210.7	192	208.9	APLTD	1056	1080.9	1053.2	1062.95	VAIBHAVGL	2116	2150	2102	2134.75
LT	1270	1271	1249	1264.4	SOUTHBANK	8.32	9.03	8.3	8.95	HATHWAY	30.5	33	30.5	32.9	SPARC	176	180.5	175.9	179.65	PHOENIXITD	740.55	754.25	728.25	738.25
BSOFT	234.5	267.3	233	261.9	CENTURYTEX	358	394	358	391.55	COLPAL	1548	1572.4	1533	1567.2	DEEPAKPERT	151.5	156.5	150.75	157.5	VSIND	3763.65	3780.3	3698.35	3736.15
TATAELXSI	1661	1801	1641.2	1786.1	CUB	172.25	186	172.25	180.3	SBILIFE	852.4	858.35	847.45	856.65	CYIENT	517.8	524.5	514.6	518.2	TCNSBRANDS	462	467.55	448.5	453.55
MARUTI	7390	7550	7380	7448.9						ABBOTINDIA	15910	15910.05	15511.15	15757.8	FORCEMOT	1327	1337.35	1263.05	1314.55	GARIBRIS	2117.6	2218	2117.6	2183.4
BHARTIARTL	501.5	509.4	498.5	507.35						CROMPTON	368.5	368.5	349.1	352.25	LAXMIMACH	4657	4849.5	4655.4	4793.7	LUXIND	1578.6	1605.2	1578.6	1599.65
JUBLFOOD	2789	2804	2707	2753.95						JYOTHYLAB	139.5	145.65	136.6	144.9	VRLMG	195.7	197.45	191.5	194.6	CERA	3194.4	3328.95	3194.4	3260.55
CANBK	115.7	121.55	114.5	120.8						HEIDELBERG	206.1	212.85	206.1	211.1	JAICORPLTD	87.95	91.25	87.95	90.25	GODREJIND	439	439	426.9	431.35
BAJAJFINSV	8940.1	9143.75	8875.1	9010.15						CAPPL	482	506	478.5	495.8	TORNTPOWER	315.35	326.85	313.95	325.35	INFIBEAM	828	85.5	82.8	83.75
ITC	203.7	208	202.1	207.7						LIJHSAR	131.55	148.4	130.45	144.8	JSL	667	72.2	66.2	71.35	MAHLOG	398	407.5	396.35	405
DISHTV	13.99	16.3	13.83	15.57						GJM	356.5	3635	3540	3575.55	RAJESHXPO	497	497	472	485.65	NH	423	429	412.4	426.6
MPHASIS	1444	1628	1435.05	1573.2						BALRAMCH	1699.95	176.7	167.85	176.1	REPCOHOME	231	243.8	229.9	238	BASF	1530	1579	1530	1570
AMBUJACEM	235.45	238.65	231.65	237.35						MARICO	399	407.5	396	405.35	MOIL	136	138.8	134.1	135.05	AKZOINDIA	2213.8	2249.95	2199.1	2210.55
ONGC	91	91.25	88.05	90.8						TRIDENT	8.95	9.4	8.8	9.28	IRB	102	106.3	101.65	105.45	MAHINDCIE	157.65	162.5	156.95	160.05
MINDTRE	1535.2	1608.35	1530.15	1605.35						INDIANB	81.5	86	81.3	85.35	ORIENTCEM	84	84.1	81.8	83.75	SYMPHONY	934.95	934.95	915.95	926.35
TATACONSUM	577	606.85	573.35	595.95						VINPD	33.3	34.65	33.09	34.85	PARAGMIL	105.5	112.95	105	111.9					
FEDERALBNK	62.15	64.75	61.3	64.2						GRANVESCO	79.5	84.25	79.5	82.85	HIMATSEIDE	136.2	149	136.2	146.2					
PEL	1340	1432.05	1340	1424.15						SHREECEM	23899.45	24233	2385023897.95		RTES	263.1	270	263.1	266.6					
IOC	88.8	88.95	86.3	88.2						TAKE	48.65	50.6	48.25	49.15	ZNESARTECH	236	241.75	231	236.25					
DLF	219.75	230.5	217.55	228.7						AMARAJIABAT	923.95	952.15	919.15	946.35	GILLETTE	5725.05	5850	5725.05	5826.15					
BAJAJ-SAIL	57.15	59.7	54.95	59.05						JSWSTEEL	68.5	70.65	67.65	68.95	SUDARSCHEM	465.5	473.95	453.4	469.5					
BAJAJ-AUTO	3276	3318	3261.75	3309.2	DELTA	156.15	158.9	153.35	155.85	ADVENZYMES	317.45	326	315.85	324.1	BTIC	1248	1287.75	1239.2	1275.9					
PIDILITIND	1730	1778.85	1715.75	1731.45	DELTA	605.85	623.7	598.2	615.85	PCJEWELLERY	24.25	26	24.15	25.75	GUJALKALI	350	363.35	350	354.8					
DRREDDY	5151.45	5235	5128.05	5221.4	RAIN	117	122.5	116.3	121.3	SUMICHEM	29.25	30	29.11	29.7	EIDPARRY	319.9	325.85	317.65	324.25					
ZEEL	214.95	218.25	210	217.1	TATACHEM	476	481.2	471.85	473.85	RELAXO	792.2	802.4	773.7	781.4	MINDAIND	397.9	402	387	399.35					
ASHOKLEY	92.15	95.5	91.9	95.2	BHARATFORG	516.7	542.45	512	538.85	RAMCOCEM	786	796.7	783.35	790.9	SIVN	25.25	25.7	24.9	25.1					
M&M	693	714.35	689	711.35	JUBLILANT	794	828.25	783.7	821.95	JKPAPER	105.5	108.9	105.5	108.05	KNRCON	336.35	339.15	327	333.5					
TECHM	948	960	941.25	947.95	ICICI	1460	1478.4	1444.2	1457.6	PETRONET	247.75	250	245.25	249.15	MINDACORP	84.8	85.8	83.15	85.45					
ESCORTS	1238	1288.6	1237.1	1269	CONCOR	388.55	392.8	382.75	391.65	HSCIL	42.25	43.2	42.25	42.6	BAJAJHLDNG	3034.25	3087.75	3011.1	3069.25					
GODREJPROP	1299.95	1385	1288.4	1376.7	JUSTDIAL	628.95	633.25	615.3	621.05	WELCORP	126	127.5	122.75	126.35	GODFREYHLDG	938.95	957.65	930.3	947.65					
LI	3575	3698	3551.95	3673.95	HAVELLS	880.9	896.95	877.7	893.15															

Prachanda picked as parliamentary leader

Kathmandu: Nepal Communist Party's executive chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' was on Wednesday elected as the ruling party's new parliamentary leader, replacing Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli.

The 66-year-old leader's nomination was proposed by senior leader Madhav Kumar Nepal, who was earlier named as one of the two chairmen of the party, at a parliamentary party meeting of the Prachanda-led faction at the Parliament Building in New Baneshwar, My Republica reported.

Oli, 68, was removed from the post of party's chairman on Tuesday by a central committee meeting of the Prachanda-led faction, which also decided to take disciplinary action against him for dissolving the House of Representatives



unconstitutionally. Prachanda said that his first priority would be to restore the dissolved House of Representatives and form a new government.

"I will unify all the democratic forces and political parties to keep the hard-won political system and parliament lively and functioning," he said.

He thanked lawmakers for electing him as the parliamentary leader and said that he has been handed over a huge responsibility during this chal-

Nepal's apex court forwards petitions against Parl dissolution to Constitutional bench

Kathmandu: Nepal's Supreme Court on Wednesday forwarded all writ petitions challenging Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's move to abruptly dissolve the Parliament to a Constitutional bench, amid intensified struggle between the two warring factions of the Nepal Communist Party to wrest control of the ruling party.

Chief Justice Cholendra Shumsher Rana's single bench passed the order after a preliminary hearing on the 12 different writ petitions filed against the dissolution of the House of Representatives, according to court sources.

The Constitutional bench will start the hearing on Friday. The bench is led by Chief Justice Rana and will have four

other justices who will be picked by him.

During the preliminary hearings on Wednesday, senior lawyers citing Constitutional provisions argued that Prime Minister Oli has no right to dissolve the House so long as there is a possibility of forming an alternative government.

It was a coup against the Constitution itself, said senior advocate Dinesh Tripathi, one of the petitioners.

As per the Constitution, if the majority government is dissolved, there is a provision to form an alternative government by two or more political parties and a minority government could also be formed before going to the people for fresh mandate, he pointed out.

lenging time.

Earlier in the day, the Supreme Court forwarded all the writ petitions against Prime Minister Oli's move to dissolve Parliament to a Constitutional bench.

Chief Justice Cholendra SJB Rana's single bench passed the order after a preliminary hearing on the 12 different writ petitions filed against the dissolution of the House of Representatives, the paper reported.

The Constitutional bench will start the hearing on Friday. The bench is led by Chief Justice Rana and will have four other justices who will be picked by him.

Although the petitioners demanded an interim order against the decision, the apex court has refused to issue any such order.

Meanwhile, leaders of the Prachanda-led faction have told the Election Commission that they hold a two-thirds majority in the party and therefore they must be granted official recognition by the election body, the paper said.

Silent protest held in Lanka over cremation of Muslim victims of coronavirus

Colombo: A silent protest was held in Sri Lanka's capital Colombo against the government's policy of cremating the bodies of Muslim victims of COVID-19 pandemic despite the World Health Organisation (WHO) approving burials.

Sajith Premadasa, the main Opposition leader, led the protest, which was also attended by civil society groups.

Muslim groups allege their community's coronavirus victims were being forcefully cremated against their religious

belief. They say some of them have been buried secretly.

The process of cremation is forbidden within Islam and Judaism, which require members of the faiths to be buried.

The authorities claim that burials may lead to further spread of the pandemic. The Government has appointed an experts' panel to make recommendations on the issue of burials, but it has yet to come up with any recommendations even after 9 months, the Muslim civil society groups say.



Smoke rises from a fire at Lipa migrant camp in Bosnia on Wednesday

UK mulls even tighter curbs as Covid infections hit record figure

London: More parts of the UK could be placed under the strictest level of lockdown as ministers hold talks on Wednesday after the country registered 36,804 positive coronavirus cases, the largest daily number of infections recorded at any time during the pandemic.

UK Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick said the new mutation of coronavirus is behind the spike to a large extent but it remains "very concentrated" in London and the south-east of England, where Tier 4 stay-at-home lockdown measures are already in place.

"The new variant is much less prevalent elsewhere, but there is rising evidence that you can find it in a range of other parts of the country. So the question is, whether we should take action to try to head that off," he explained.

"The tiered system was designed before we knew the full ferocity of the new variant, and so we do have to make sure it's sufficiently robust to be able to withstand this and to stop cases just rising at the very worrying levels they are now in parts of the country," he said.



A delivery rider cycles down an unusually quiet South Molton Street in London on Wednesday

It comes as the new variant, named VUI-202012/01 and with much higher transmissibility, led to several countries including India cutting off transport links with the UK in an effort to try and contain its spread outside Britain.

The backlog of lorries built up on the UK border with France has now begun to gradually clear up after an agreement was reached.

France agreed to lift its ban on UK arrivals on the condition of a negative coronavirus test. However, there have been reports of scuffles on the UK-France border as truckers face days ahead before the nearly

1,500 lorries can start moving towards their destinations.

During what is an annual festive and holiday period in the UK with Christmas and New Year, millions in the country have had their plans to meet friends and family scuppered after UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson abandoned a planned five-day "Christmas bubble" as scientists confirmed the new Covid variant was spreading more rapidly.

Under the revised rules, only people living in tiers one to three are permitted to socialise in a bubble of three households on December 25 for Christmas Day.

Violence a threat ahead of Central African Republic's vote

Bangui (Central African Republic): Violence threatens Central African Republic's presidential and legislative elections on Sunday, and some opposition candidates have pulled out of the race amid growing insecurity.

President Faustin Archange Touadera and his party the vote will go ahead after government forces clashed with rebels in recent days as the United Nations' peacekeeping force tried to prevent a blockade of Bangui, the capital.

Rwanda, which sent in soldiers after its peacekeepers came under threat, and Central African Republic have blamed

the confrontation on former President Francois Bozize, alleging an attempted power grab ahead of a vote from which he is barred from participating. Russian forces also have arrived to help with security.

Parties in the Democratic Opposition Coalition known as COD-2020 this week said seven of its candidates will pull out of the election, citing the violence. The parties had wanted the vote to be delayed, alleging poor preparations and an electoral body influenced by the president. A delay would allow more time to work toward a national unity government, the parties said.

Experts warn of a strong chance of further violence if the opposition doesn't accept the election results. "A contested outcome may lead to a post-electoral crisis that armed groups could use to further weaken the state," the International Crisis Group noted.

Sixteen candidates are running for president, including three women and Touadera. There are more than 1,500 candidates for 140 seats in the national assembly. More than 1.86 million voters are registered, but more than 598,000 refugees in neighboring countries will not vote, according to the UN.

200 Chinese nationals moved amid violence in Central African Republic

AP ■ BEIJING

China evacuated more than 200 nationals to a safer area after eight Chinese mining company vehicles were stolen during armed conflict ahead of an election in the Central African Republic, its embassy said Wednesday.

A statement on the embassy website said the situation is now under control with the help of UN peacekeeping forces, though there is

still sporadic gunfire.

The conflict followed a December 3 court decision to bar former President Francois Bozize from participating presidential and legislative elections on Sunday.

Bozize, in response, gathered rebel groups to march on the capital city Bangui.

They have been engaged in conflict with government forces in the Yaloke area since December 15, according to the embassy statement.

UAE Islamic body OK's vaccines even with pork

AP ■ DUBAI

The United Arab Emirates' highest Islamic authority, the UAE Fatwa Council, has ruled that coronavirus vaccines are permissible for Muslims even if they contain pork gelatin.

The ruling follows growing alarm that the use of pork gelatin, a common vaccine ingredient, may hamper vaccination among Muslims who consider the consumption of pork products "haram", or forbidden under Islamic law.

FROM PAGE 1

TALKS ONLY SOLUTION: GOVT TO KISAN

The Minister also received six boxes of letters with signatures of 3,13,363 lakh farmers from 20 States, including Punjab through NGO CNRI in support of the farm laws. Of these, 12,895 farmers from Punjab have signed in favour of the laws, while 1.27 lakh such farmers are from Haryana. Minister of State for Agriculture Kailash Chaudhary and Agriculture Secretary Sanjay Aggarwal were also present in the meet.

ATTEMPT TO BREAK MOVEMENT, FARMERS' UNITY, ALLEGE UNIONS

"Farmers urge the Government not to repeat those meaningless amendments which we have rejected but come up with a concrete proposal in writing so that it can be made an agenda, and the process of negotiation can be started as soon as possible," stated the letter.

Shiv Kumar Kakka, the national president, Rashtriya Kisan Mazdoor Mahasangh, said farmers urge the Government to create a conducive atmosphere for a fruitful dialogue as the Supreme Court had also said that suspend implementation of farm laws.

Several farmers on Wednesday also visited Kisan Ghat to pay tributes to Chaudhary Charan Singh on his birth anniversary while a havan was also performed at Ghazipur border protest site. Meanwhile, farmers continued their relay hunger strike on Wednesday against the new farm laws.

Sheoraj Singh, president of Bharatiya Kisan Union (Lok Shakti), camping at the Dalit Prerna Sthal in Noida, on Wednesday wrote a letter in blood to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, demanding the repeal of the three new farm laws that have stoked protests by farmers' unions in north India.

"Take back the agriculture bill, make law to ensure guarantee on minimum support price (MSP) and form a kisan aayog (farmers commission)," he wrote in the letter. Traffic remained disrupted in bordering areas of the national Capital as protest by farmers entered 28th day.

The Delhi Traffic Police said the Chilla and Ghazipur borders are closed for traffic coming from Noida and Ghaziabad to Delhi. It advised people to take alternative route for coming to Delhi via Anad Vihar, DND, Apsara and Bhopra borders.

Singhu, Auchandai, Piau Maniyari, and Mangesh borders are also closed and commuters have been advised to take routes through the Lampur, Safiabab and Saboli 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-Baighera, Palam Vihar and Dundahera borders.

According to the traffic police, Tikri, Dhansa and Ghazipur borders are also closed for traffic but the Jhatikara border was open only for two-wheelers and pedestrians.

COVID VACCINE TO IMMUNISE AGAINST NEW STRAIN: EXPERTS

These are CSIR-Institute of Genomics and

Integrative Biology, Delhi; CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad; DBT-Institute of Life Sciences, Bhubaneswar; DBT-InStem-NCBS, Bangalore, DBT-National Institute of Biomedical Genomics, Kalyani, National Institute of Virology, Pune.

More such designated labs would increase over time and their details would be shared with the States/UTs, said the Ministry's statement.

Gauri Agarwal, founder of the Genestrings Diagnostic Center, which is handling coronavirus testing of all passengers at the IGI airport, said that 11 passengers on four flights from the UK were found positive for COVID-19 when tested on arrival at the Delhi airport. Agarwal also said 50 passengers of the aforementioned four flights have been put under institutional quarantine.

"Testing was done comprehensively, as directed, irrespective of any existing reports or exemptions. A total of 950+ inbound passengers from London were tested at our lab at T3 terminal, IGI (Indira Gandhi International) Airport and 11 of them tested positive," Agarwal explained. On Tuesday, at least 20 passengers from the UK were reported to have tested positive for COVID-19 at various airports across the country, including Delhi, Kolkata and Ahmedabad.

Following the declaration of the new strain, India on December 21 had suspended flights from UK from December 25 while tightening the RT-PCR norms. The new variant is said to be 70 per cent more transmissible than earlier versions of the coronavirus, as has also been pointed out by the latest Standard Operating Procedure issued by the Union Health Ministry. On Tuesday itself, 22 people -- including six from Delhi -- tested positive for the virus, and their samples were sent for genome sequencing.

Dr Anurag Agarwal, director of the Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (IGIB), one of the CSIR labs sequencing Sars-CoV-2 genomes said though the virus has found to be more transmissible, what brings relief is that the transmission could occur only if people were not wearing masks.

He said that some Reverse Transcription-Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) kits that use the particular gene where the mutation has happened for detecting virus may give out false negatives. "We need to recalibrate our tests. The -PCR usually uses two genes to detect the presence of the virus, we might not insist on a double gene positive to give a positive report," said Agarwal.

If precautions are not followed, the new variant may lead to super spreading events, the WHO too has indicated.

"We have had a much higher (contamination rate) at different points in this pandemic and we've got it under control," WHO's emergencies chief Michael Ryan said.

Dr Shahid Jameel, virologist and director of Trivedi School of Biosciences at Ashoka University, opined that "it is likely that the new variant may have already come to India, you will find it only if you are looking for it. This is the reason why we need to scale up the number of genomic sequencing that we are doing. India has the second highest number of Covid-19 cases in the world and it is likely that some variant like it might have generated within the country too."

NITI Aayog member Dr VK Paul said at a presser recently that India will use its network of laboratories under the Indian Council of Medical Research, Department of Biotechnology, and Council of Scientific and Industrial Research to sequence more samples, especially from the travellers from UK who

test positive.

"Our labs have been asked to prioritise the recent virus samples and send them for genetic sequencing. The ICMR, CSIR, and DBT labs have been doing it so far but it will be scaled up. The positive specimen from passengers from UK in the last few days will also be sequenced," he said.

Dr Agarwal added, "The vaccine produces many antibodies and even if some do not bind, the vaccine remains effective. Other than that, there is T-cell immunity that is generic and a mutation in the binding site does not change that."

J&K PICKED BJP AS 'LARGEST' PARTY, BEAT SEPARATISTS: SHAH

The Law Minister said the BJP (4,23,364 votes) received more votes in the DDC polls than the NC (2,22,514), PDP (56000) and the Congress(1,49,382) together.

"Kashmir ghati main 'kamal' apne vajood par khila hai", said the Law Minister pointing to three success of the party in the Kashmir Valley, including in Srinagar where Congress State president's son lost his election.

The senior BJP leader said elections are the victory of people of Kashmir who have "rendered a resounding slap in the face of extremists, terrorists, separatists and their sympathisers".

Prasad pointed out the success of elections in the "hotbeds of terrorists" like Shopian (with 17 per cent voting), Pulwama (7.4 per cent), Bandipura (51 per cent) and Gandharbal (43.4 per cent).

Prasad said NC chief Farooq Abdullah was elected to the Lok Sabha with only 7 per cent voting in his LS constituency.

"People have voted for the development...the change has been effected following the abrogation of the Article 370 and Prime Minister Modi saying 'let us go to the people'," said the Law Minister.

"This is a new beginning that has started with the elections of sarpanchs and now that of DDC... Kashmir is turning a new page", he claimed.

GUPKAR ALLIANCE MEMBERS CELEBRATE WIN SEPARATELY

"We also accept it (that democracy has won). When did we say that we do not trust democracy? It is another thing that you do not trust us. We have been saying this from day one that we will fight for our rights but not unlawfully or unconstitutionally. We are not for disturbing the atmosphere in this State, but to make it better," Omar said.

Omar said the results of the DDC elections have proved that the BJP will not be able to "bury" the NC.

"The next elections in J&K are very far because of the defeat of the BJP in this election. I do not think they will have the Assembly elections here anytime soon. If they believed in democracy, they would have sounded the bugle of the Assembly elections," he said.

Emotionally surcharged National Conference (NC) president Farooq Abdullah in his brief address to the party workers said he will not bow before anyone. Farooq is currently facing an ED probe in connection with the Jammu and Kashmir Cricket Association (JKCA) money-laundering case. Last week, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) attached assets worth Rs 11.86 crore of Farooq in connection with the JKCA scam.

In Jammu, BJP's DDC polls in-charge Anurag Thakur said the election results are a befitting reply

to Mehbooba Mufti who had refused to unfurl the Tricolour. "Independent candidates have polled more votes than the Congress and the PDP. The same Mehbooba Mufti who'd refused to unfurl the Tricolour has got a befitting reply today," Anurag Thakur said.

In Srinagar, PDP president Mehbooba Mufti accused the Government of India and BJP of "terrorising her family" in the name of investigations stating that BJP must fight her politically and not involve her family, friends and party colleagues in the "battle".

Addressing a press conference at her Gupkar residence, Mehbooba said that today's press conference may be her last one given the BJP's approach and the way agencies like "CBI, NIA and ED are being used against her."

"Irony is that these agencies that are supposed to probe cases of sensitive order are probing where from PDP got money for Late Mufti Muhammad Sayeed's graveyard at Anantnag. Not just this, they are investigating my mother's bank accounts and have sought property details of my sister, who is a doctor by profession," the PDP chief said.

In an obvious reference to the BJP, she said that Gof should fight her politically. "The BJP won't gain anything by using agencies against me. If they want to face me, they should fight me politically," she said, adding the poll result has shown that people have rejected the abrogation of Article 370.

KHALISTANI ULTRA NIJJAR HIDING IN CYPRUS HELD ON ARRIVAL IN DELHI

Investigation further revealed that as part of the conspiracy of separate "Khalistan State" accused Gurjeet Singh Nijjar, accused Harpal Singh and accused Moin Khan used to post videos and images containing praises of militant Jagtar Singh Hawara (a convicted accused in assassination of Beant Singh, former Chief Minister of Punjab), images and videos of Operation Blue Star of 1984 and pro-Khalistani posts related to proscribed organisation Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) with sole intention to motivate likeminded Sikh youths and others to join the Khalistan "movement", it further said.

Investigation further revealed that Moin Khan was in Tihar jail from 2013 to 2016 and during this period he developed contact with Jagtar Singh Hawara, and shown his willingness to work for him and shared his contact number with him. Subsequently, as planned, Khan sent friend request to Facebook ID "Khalistani Jindabad Khalistan" from his Facebook account. By joining this Facebook account, Moin Khan came in contact with Harpal Singh and Gurjeet Singh Nijjar, it said.

Accused Gurjeet Singh Nijjar motivated Khan by discussing about atrocities committed against the Muslims and Sikhs in India and convinced him to work for separate "Khalistan State". In furtherance of conspiracy, accused Gurjeet Singh Nijjar directed Khan to purchase a pistol and ammunition in 2018 and to carry out their nefarious designs, it said.

On May 23, 2019, the NIA had filed the charge sheet in the NIA Special Court against wanted accused Gurjeet Singh Nijjar, accused Harpal Singh, Moin Khan and Sundar Lal Parashar.

Accordingly, a Look-Out Circular (LOC) was issued against him. On Monday, wanted accused Gurjeet Singh Nijjar was detained at Indira Gandhi International Airport here and he was arrested by NIA. His transit custody shall be obtained from the Competent Court and he shall be taken to Mumbai for further investigation, it added.

103 bird species found in first of kind avian count in Kamala bird sanctuary near Mumbai

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In the first of its kind bird count jointly undertaken by a citizens' body and the State forest department, as many as 103 bird species — including those like Alpine Swift, Indian Scops Owl, Indian Eagle Owl and Indian Pitta — were sighted at the Karnala Bird Sanctuary (KBS) located near Mumbai.

Located within the Mumbai metropolitan region (MMR), the KBS is the first and one of the oldest bird sanctuaries in the country. It was declared a bird sanctuary way back in 1966.

Spread over 12.48 sq km in Panvel tehsil in the adjoining Raigad district, this bird sanctuary is a nearly two hour drive from downtown Mumbai. It is very popular among nature lovers, trekkers, fort and heritage enthusiasts.

In all, 27 bird enthusiasts participated in the day-night survey - called the Karnala Bird Count. The participants were divided into 9 teams that covered all types of habitats in the sanctuary. Each team comprised bird experts, photographers, ebird users, GWT members and forest guards.

The bird count was conducted jointly by the Maharashtra Forest Department (MFD) and Green Works Trust (GWT) on December 19-20, 2020.

"This was the first-of-its kind of a scientific survey in the Karnala Bird Sanctuary. This was also the first of its kind of night bird count in Maharashtra. Through this survey, we wanted to document bird population and avifaunal diversity in this sanctuary. During the survey, we sighted a total of 103 species of birds," GWT's founder Nikhil Bhople said. According to Bhople, the survey followed two types of bird count sampling methods viz. Line Transect and Point Counts. There were 9 line transects and 5 point counts were done to cover the sprawling sanctuary area.

Trend Slazer

Anil pens a note in father's memory

Bollywood star **ANIL KAPOOR** has penned a note in memory of his father, late producer **Surinder Kapoor**, on his birth anniversary, saying he continues to live on in his mind and heart.

The actor took to Instagram to share his note along with a black and white picture. "I like to believe that my father lives on in me. In the lessons he taught us, in the love he showered on us, but most importantly in the values I believe in, that I recognise as his loyalty, honesty, humility, empathy," Anil wrote.



'Other than readings, trials and look tests that will be taking place, my preparation for my character in

Made in Heaven 2 mainly involves extensive physical training. So, I am just working on my physical fitness with my trainer Samir Jaura. I am mainly focusing on weight training, but my workout also consists of cardio, functional and HIIT.'

—Arjun Mathur

MANUSHI CHHILLAR is a vocal and conscious citizen. She has been roped in by United Nations Women (The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) for a global initiative called #OrangeTheWorld to raise awareness on gender-based violence.

The annual international campaign calls for the elimination of violence against women and girls.

"Women are most susceptible to violence in various forms and they face it almost everywhere. Women across all age groups are at constant risk and it is heart-breaking to feel this as a woman myself," says the young actor.



Arnold talks about daughter's marriage

Hollywood star **ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER** says he never thought his daughter

Katherine, now married to actor **Chris Pratt**, would walk down the aisle with someone from the same profession.

During an interview, Schwarzenegger spoke about raising his children on film sets. "I never, ever thought that my daughter is going to marry an actor," Schwarzenegger said.

Talking about his son-in-law Pratt, he said he is a "fantastic guy" and so easy to get along with.



BEHIND THE FAME

Actor **RICHA CHADHA** tells **SAKSHI SHARMA** that her new film *Shakeela* explodes myths about the Southern adult film star and delves into her human side

Actor Richa Chadha doesn't seem happy about promotions happening remotely via Zoom and phone calls. Maybe that's because she doesn't like things too easy and casual, contrary to how she essays most of her characters. "Everything is remote, so it's much easier than real promotions," says she.

Richa plays the role of an adult star, *Shakeela*, in an eponymous biopic based on the life of the actor who ruled the South Indian film industry for over two decades. The actor was a controversial star back then as most of her adult films were perceived as soft porn. The film delves deep to understand her as a person and not only as an adult film star. Excerpts:

◆**What were your initial thoughts when the offer to play *Shakeela* came your way? Were you aware of her journey before?**

I didn't meet her in person before the role was offered. Growing up in Delhi, I had little to no exposure to her and her films. But of course, I had read about her in a national magazine cover in the early 2000s. I remember, as a kid I was intrigued about her because the magazine said a lot of things about her personality — How fierce she was, how she was always on the darker side and an unlikely superstar. So, during the initial stage I was basically trying to understand the phenomenon of *Shakeela*.

◆**How does it feel to portray the person you were intrigued to during your childhood?**

Sometimes you get to work with people you had idealised, and honestly, this is a great feeling for any actor. When I worked with Manoj Bajpayee, I recalled seeing him as a kid in *Satya* (1998). And when I played his wife in *Gangs of Wasypur* (2012), that was very special and different... I learnt so much from him.

◆**What made you say 'yes' to the role?**

Shakeela's life was very cinematic, full of ups and downs. There's a lot of betrayal and drama in her journey. When I first heard her story, I was quite surprised that nobody had made a film on this subject till now. So I took it as an opportunity to bring her story out with all the necessary things that had to be shown.

◆**When you play a lead in a biopic, the responsibility is huge, especially when it's about a controversial figure. How did you prepare yourself?**

I knew I would have to do some homework, apart from the physical preparations of gaining weight and so on. Of course, that feeling of doing justice to the role was there but I wasn't much apprehensive about it because I knew that that is in my control. I knew what I was getting into. I just want her (*Shakeela*) to be happy with the final product. This is the only thing I am worried about because I haven't seen the final film because of the pandemic. We'll all see it together.



I want her to live with dignity after the film releases. I spent a lot of time with *Shakeela*, trying to understand her point of view... I asked a lot of rough questions. And to her credit, she answered everything really well. Basically, I wanted to observe her and her world which helped me carve myself into the role well. She was very candid, more than how she was in the films or is in public. It was a great time working with *Shakeela*.

◆**'Shakeela's life was very cinematic, full of ups and downs. There's a lot of betrayal and drama in her journey. When I first heard her story, I was quite surprised that nobody had made a film on her till now'**

◆**Now that you have studied her and know her deeply, do you think she has a side that the world doesn't know yet?**

She is somebody with a really good heart. She is not bitter about anything, be it her family, friends or the superstars who tried to ruin her life. So in that sense she is very victorious. No one has managed to break her spirit. I feel that she deserves love and recognition for everything that has happened to her. I always see her as a victim in this scenario, somebody who has been wronged.

◆**Why do you think so?**

This is because I've heard and known about her story closely with her parents, family and how some stars tried to sabotage her career, which is a big topic in the film too.

◆**Even though people have been watching *Shakeela's* film (mostly adult), they are often slut shamed and labelled by society at large. Do you think this reflects hypocrisy?**

Hypocrisy is there in every aspect and not just adult films. The whole

film industry suffers from it. For instance, in Mumbai, it is tough for actors to get a house on rent and at the same time everybody is always watching films. You know what I mean?

This is an issue but I think there are changes in society now and people have become much more accepting. Now, a proper porn star can conduct a film with dignity here. So, we have come a long way.

◆**Your characters vary from each other largely. What factors influence your decision while choosing a role?**

Sometimes the reason is purely commercial, sometimes I want to explore something as an artist, sometimes it's the relationship with my co-actors and directors. So, the reasons keep changing with the project. But one consistent thing is that I try to take at least one project a year that can challenge me and help me grow as an actor.

◆**How has your work helped you evolve as an actor?**

Each project gives you something if you work hard on it. If you don't, then it takes a longer time to learn. However, it's good to learn on the job because cinema is a great learning for actors. Although people are always reminding actresses of their marriage or 'what next' in life but the truth is that as you grow old, you become a better performer and learn from your experiences. This, in turn, helps you shape your life and take better decisions.

(The film releases on December 25.)

DECK THE MALLS

As people can't travel to their loved destinations, various malls have tried to recreate an international feel through their decor to keep spirits up for Christmas



Larger than life majesty at Pacific mall, Tagore garden



Celebrate the festival with a Santa that moves and sings at Vegas mall, Dwarka



A glimpse of Paris at Airia mall, Gurugram

One of the most eagerly awaited visual is Christmas displays every year. With December and the year-end approaching, malls across Delhi are slowly getting into the festive spirits despite what a turbulent year it has been. The year-end Christmas shopping this year will witness a glimpse of the dazzling festive decor that has been put up across malls.

Karmic Events has contributed heavily in decking up the malls for the festive season. All the malls mentioned are decorated by this company. Its MD, Gunwant Singh, says, "We bring ideas to create experiences and larger than life innovations in retail spaces. Every year, we bring decor and installations. This year too, we have tried to give some great experiences when people couldn't travel to their most loved destinations. We've tried to bring cities to life from around the globe to imbibe the spirit of festivity and joy in malls this Christmas. During these tough times, it is imperative to spread positivity and cheer and indulge in some remarkable experiences."

HIGHLIGHTS AT DIFFERENT MALLS:

Nexus mall

Nishank Joshi, CMO says, "We have introduced a way to shop that fetches you reward this Christmas and New year. Known for humongous installations; be it a 20 feet tall polar bear at Elante Mall, Chandigarh, or the tallest Christmas Tree in Seawoods Grand Central Mall in Navi

Mumbai and not to forget, spreading joy through our Candyland themed decoration at The Pavilion, Pune; we have tried to push the envelope of creativity and out of the box designs to make our patrons go awestruck at their destination of recreation and shopping, keeping in mind the safety and hygiene quotient at the malls."

Pacific mall

Abhishek Bansal, Executive Director, Pacific mall, Tagore garden says, "Christmas is a synonym for festivities, joy and holidays across geographies. Every year we make an attempt to take our patrons around the world by re-creating one of the seven wonders. This Christmas also, we bring in "Christ the Redeemer" to celebrate the festival in its glory. The installation soars over 34ft in height, as we have tried to capture the larger than life majesty of the actual statue. We welcome our patrons to enjoy and experience the festive decor with us, as they do every year."

Vegas mall

Harsh V Bansal, Director, Vegas mall, Dwarka says, "We give you something to remember. A Santa larger than life, magnanimous Santa that moves and actually sings for you, is definitely a first. Moreover, to enhance your experience this Christmas, we have added several elements of joy viz a first of its kind Santa Museum, Christmas Flea Market, Santa Parade and so much more to explore. We have pushed the envelope of festivities and celebrations with

innovative experiments."

Airia mall

Sanjeev Kumar, Centre Head, Airia mall, Gurugram says, "This Christmas, visit Paris in the heart of Gurgaon! The vibe of Christmas and the spirit of festivities now join hands at our mall. The holiday mood has got an elevation with a 64 feet tall installation of the Eiffel Tower, just a small drive away from the comfort of your home. The hype about Eiffel Tower fits aptly to the European feel of Christmas this year. When you can't travel around to see the architectural wonder, we have brought it right to you.

Come visit the joy and warmth of Paris here."

The Elf Town

This Christmas, the Elf Town square welcomes you to the Delhi Airport. The quintessential cuckoo clock has been given a Christmas makeover and the nutcrackers are guarding the beautiful gifts and trees to keep them safe for Christmas. They take the visitors on a tour of the Santa's Toy Factory where all the action takes place. The setup shows Elves at work, moving pulleys, a toy train at the Elf Town station and a giant gift box Christmas tree. Certainly, a treat to the eyes!

Notice Inviting e-Tender

No. SSA/IE/Pre-Primary/Ka-sreni/224/2020/3559 Date: 22.12.2020
Mission Director, Axom Sarba Siksha Abhijan Mission, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, Assam invites tender through e-Tendering process from reputed manufacturer of manufacturer of Play materials for supply of Play materials.
To participate in the tender process through e-procurement document, bidder should have valid Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) and have to register in the portal <https://assamtenders.gov.in> by themselves.
The Bidder who have downloaded the tender schedules containing the tender details, terms and conditions, from the website shall submit their tender on-line on the website <https://assamtenders.gov.in>, with proof of payment of non refundable tender processing fee of Rs. 5000/- (Rupees five thousand) only in the form of demand draft/Bankers Cheque drawn in favour of Mission Director, Axom Sarba Siksha Abhijan Mission, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, Assam, from any nationalized/Scheduled Bank and payable at Guwahati. The tender should be submitted on-line as per date and time of submission as per prescribed schedule.



Sd/-Executive Director,
SSA, Assam
Kahilipara, Guwahati-19

NAFED AGM TAKES STOCK OF PROFITS

The 63rd Annual General Meeting (AGM) of National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd (NAFED) was held. Welcoming the participants Bijender Singh, chairman of NAFED, thanked the Union Minister of Agriculture, Narendra Singh Tomar, MoS for Agriculture, Parshottam Khodabhai Rupala, Secretary (A&C), Additional Secretary (A&C) and other senior officers in the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare for their constant guidance and support to NAFED. He assured the government that NAFED would strive hard to accomplish the tasks assigned by the government to the best of its ability.

The chairman of NAFED informed that with the government's support at all levels and right policy decisions at the level of the Board of Directors, support of the member societies and hard work put in by the Managing Director, officers and employees, the federation is now continuing on the path of progress both financially and in providing better services to the farming community by implementing various schemes of the government of India.

He further informed the general body that NAFED has been generating profits for the last three years accumulating to ₹670 crores, which is a remarkable achievement. It was possible with the support from all concerned and various new initiatives taken by NAFED during these years.

He also announced that the Board of Directors has approved the



highest ever dividend of 20 per cent to the member federations, societies for the first time in the history of NAFED.

Sanjeev Kumar Chadha, Managing Director, tabled a brief of activities carried out by the federation during 2019-20. During the year, it achieved a turnover of ₹16,280.98 crores with a net profit of ₹165.65 crores. The federation continued to be one of the central nodal agencies of the government for procurement of oil seeds and pulses under price support scheme, in addition to maintaining buffers of pulses on its behalf. During 2019-20, a quantity of 33,03,157 MT of oil seeds and pulses valuing over ₹16,066 crores was procured, which was relatively lower as compared to last year due to lower arrivals at PSS procurement centers



on account of firming up of prices. Similarly, NAFED procured a quantity of 1,11,697 MT of pulses valuing over ₹648 crores to maintain

buffers on behalf of the government to serve any emergent requirement in the country. NAFED also continued supplying milled pulses to the Army,

Central Para Military Forces and to states under different welfare schemes such as PDS, MDM and ICDS.

The MD of NAFED informed that supplies of various agri-commodities, household items, articles towards humanitarian aid/emergency relief material were also made to countries such as Iran, Namibia, Myanmar and Bangladesh worth over ₹15.50 crores at the behest of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.

During 2019-20, NAFED undertook seed business worth over ₹27.44 crores, which was distributed to states across the country under various schemes.

The federation also procured 58,288 MT of onion valuing ₹76 crores for creating a buffer stock under PSF in the states of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Telangana. During the year, NAFED also stepped in and procured 15,589 MT of apples of different varieties with a value of ₹69.38 crores in Jammu and Kashmir under Market Intervention Scheme (MIS).

He added that NAFED was also made part of the National Animal Disease Control Programme (NADCP) for eradicating the Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and Brucellosis prevalent in livestock and was appointed as Programme Logistic Agency (PLA).

The Managing Director thanked all concerned, especially the Minister of Agriculture and Farmer Welfare and Secretary, Agriculture, for the valuable guidance and cooperation, which enabled NAFED to achieve new heights.

IN SHORT



A mass promotion-cum-pipping ceremony of CISF personnel was organised at CISF headquarters. Total 3,711 non-gazetted personnel have been promoted all over India. Kumar Rajesh Chandra, Director General of CISF, Sudhir Kumar Saxena, SDG (HQs),

PS Phalnikar, ADG (APS), Prateek Mohanty, IG (Pers) and other senior officers of CISF were present during the ceremony. The ceremony witnessed immense pride and enthusiasm among the promoted personnel. The DG congratulated all the promoted sub-officers and personnel. He said that regular promotions to the personnel go a long way in enhancing our capabilities and also motivates other personnel to improve and aspire for similar promotion.



NTPC DBF-HQ organised a communication workshop for senior executives through Microsoft teams. Inaugurating the workshop, KK Singh, RED (DBF and Hydro) highlighted the importance of rightful communication within the organisation. For better communication skills, he further emphasised that we have to inculcate the habit of listening. Swami Chidrupananda, of Chinmaya Mission, Noida, dwelled upon the art of communication through examples from our ancient scriptures that how it can be applied in our day to day working even today. He further explained that our inability to communicate properly in any situation may lead to a lot of problems both in personal and professional lives.



Celebrating its 57th Anniversary Day, Sashastra Seema Bal displayed a show with impressive demonstration of parade. Following all COVID-19 related guidelines, the campus of 25 Battalion, SSB Ghitorni, New Delhi was jubilant as Director General, SSB, Kumar Rajesh Chandra attended the occasion as chief guest and took salute. In his speech, Rajesh Chandra highlighted the role of SSB in maintaining the sanctity and security of India's international border with Nepal and Bhutan. He laid special emphasis on maintenance of peace, tranquility and security atmosphere in AOR of SSB.

Rajasthan Housing Board discusses 54 proposals

The Housing Commissioner Pawan Arora discussed 54 proposals in the 244th meeting of the Board of Directors under the chairmanship of Bhaskar A, chairman of Rajasthan Housing Board.

The commissioner said it was decided that a committee would examine the issues related to the procurement of land. After this, his proposal will be sent to the government. The useful land will be given to the Mandal through an agreement.

Arora informed that the



Rajasthan Housing Board Regional Sweep Centre, the Election Commission of India and the Chief Electoral Officer will work to build the office building for Rajasthan. This building will be built in an area of 3,368 sqm in Indira Gandhi Nagar Residential Scheme located in Jaipur. He informed that the approval has been given to implement Rajasthan Building Regulations-2020 in Rajasthan Housing Board.

Now the auction will be done according to the circular of the Urban Development

Department. He informed that the circular has been accepted in the auction cases by the board. According to this circular, the auction of the plot should not be rejected if the bid exceeds the minimum bid. The commissioner said that Rajasthan Housing Board has been struggling with the shortage of personnel of various cadres for a long time. In such a situation, recruitment will be done on 573 posts of different cadres. The proposal in this regard will be sent to the state government.



Telangana State Information Centre organises a workshop

Within a short span of six years of the formation of the state, Telangana has stood first in the country in several matters. The state had made rapid strides in all the sectors, marching towards progress and development," said Arvind Kumar IAS, Principal Secretary to Government (MA&UD) and Commissioner, I&PRD, Government of Telangana.

The Telangana State Information Centre, New Delhi, has organised a one day workshop — *Know Your 29th State of the Country*.

Arvind has addressed the gathering through virtual mode from his office in Hyderabad. He has briefed on the initiatives of Telangana

state government, functioning of the department of Information and PR, welfare schemes for journalists, state government efforts in combating COVID-19.

Dr Gaurav Uppal, IAS, Resident Commissioner, Telangana Bhavan, has introduced the state with its rich history, flagship programmes and functioning of the Telangana Bhavan. He has interacted with the officials with regard to their role in Delhi.

The basic idea of this programme is to unify the public relations professionals working for various state governments in Delhi, to raise professional standards, share knowledge and tackle common problems.

ESIC Hospital to the rescue

Santosh Kumar Gangwar, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Labour and Employment, laid the foundation stone of 100 beds at ESIC Hospital, Srinagar. Manoj Sinha, Lt Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, was the chief guest of this function.

While addressing the gathering, Gangwar informed about the various initiatives taken by the government of India to provide better care and services to the workers of our country.

During his address, he also shared about the recently passed three labour codes. He emphasised that with the passage of these bills, more workers will get the benefits of social security. He further informed that these bills will also ensure the ease of doing business.

He said that the ESIC has been working continuously since its inception to provide social security to its insured persons, who are low income workers. Now its reach is going to



increase many folds from present number of approximately 13 crore beneficiaries base, as with passage of social security code, the ESI scheme will be implemented in the entire country.

The Minister informed that ESIC has taken number of measures to provide financial relief and health protection to the insured workers as well as general public during the pandemic. He further intimated that the rate of unemployment relief payable under

Atal Bimit Kalyana Yojna has been enhanced from 25 per cent to 50 per cent. Also, there has been given relaxation in the qualifying criteria to the insured workers,

who became unemployed due to COVID-19-induced lockdown for a further period of six months i.e. upto June 30, 2021. Further, ESIC is actively contributing in the management of COVID-19. A total of 21 ESIC Hospitals across India functioned as COVID-19 Dedicated Hospitals to exclusively provide COVID medical services to the general public.

Gangwar shared that ESIC has collaborated with PMJAY — Ayushman Bharat for providing medical services in those areas where facilities of ESI Scheme are not available. He also informed that a new scheme *Aatmanirbhar*

Bharat Rojgar Yojana has been launched to incentivise creation of new employment opportunities.

The Lt Governor lauded the efforts being undertaken by Central Government to develop the Union Territory. He further stressed upon the commitment of Central Government to provide quality medical care to the people of J&K. He assured full cooperation of state government in running the forthcoming hospital.

The project is expected to be completed in one and a half year. This hospital will be built in five acres of land with an approximate cost of ₹160 crores.

DoPPW grants annual life certificates

The Department of Pension & Pensioners' Welfare, in a major relief to all Central Govt Pensioners has extended the date of giving Annual Life Certificate, which is mandatory for continuity of pension, from November 30, 2020 to February 28, 2021.

The department this year roped in the India Posts and Payment Bank (IPPB) under the Department of Posts for Digital Life Certificate. The IPPB is now fulfilling the major initiative of DoPPW, viz. DLC from home by roping in 1,89,000 postmen and *Gramin Dak Sevaks* and obtaining Digital Life Certificate from pensioners' home. DoPPW was also instrumental in roping in an alliance comprising 12 public sector banks which does "Doorstep Banking" for its customers in 100 major cities under Ease of banking reforms.

Earlier DoPPW had started a pilot programme "DLC from home campaign" in 2018 in 7 cities through Pensioners' Associations. The objective of the campaign was to extend support to aged and infirm pensioners in submission of Life certificate digitally from home. In 2019, this project was expanded to cover 24 cities and has con-

tinued in 2021 as well with the help of Registered Pensioners' Associations. The department came to know that some inconvenience was being experienced by the super senior citizens because of their changing biometrics due to age. Accordingly, vide its OMs dated September 11, 2020 November 23, 2020 DoPPW advised all the Pension Disbursing Banks to adopt the Video based Customer Identification Process (V-CIP) as an additional facility. UCO bank has become a pioneer in this area and has already collected video based life certificates for their 6546 pensioners.

The department is now on the verge of a major technological leap by enabling face recognition technology to submit DLC through an android phone (without attaching any biometric device) which has been developed by Meity. As per this facility, the identity of a person will be established through face recognition technique. The UIDAI server will identify the same and DLC shall get generated. Various checks are being incorporated into the system to avoid any malfunctioning. However, as of now trials are on for this digital facility.

TRIFED signs MoU with MoFPI

TRIFED has been exploring convergences and partnerships with like-minded organisations to create synergies together with the main aim of tribal empowerment. The organisation has aligned with the Minister of Food Processing (MoFPI). MoFPI is implementing the Prime Minister Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PM-FME) scheme, which is a landmark initiative under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan to support micro-level food entrepreneurs, FPOs, SHGs and co-operatives. An important component of this scheme is the tribal sub-plan.

A communique, to define the convergence mechanism in implementation of this scheme, was signed between



Deepak Khandekar, Secretary Minister of Tribal Affairs and Pushpa Subrahmanyam, Secretary, Ministry of Food Processing in the presence of Arjun Munda, Minister of Tribal Affairs, Narendra Singh Tomar, Minister of Agriculture and Food

Processing, Thawar Chand Gehlot, Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, Rameswar Teli, MoS, MoFPI and Pravir Krishna, Managing Director, TRIFED.

Other than the communique, an MoU was also

signed between TRIFED and MoFPI to detail the key areas of the collaboration.

With the necessary funding under the PM-FME scheme of MoFPI, the TriFood range of tribal food products would be developed, branded and packaged by TRIFED. It has also been agreed that the SHGs working under the *Van Dhan Yojana* would be provided support for handholding, training, capital investment and working capital. As a part of capacity building, it has been decided that MoFPI under PM-FME scheme would also provide necessary funds to TRIFED to undertake training, capacity building of tribals engaged in food processing. In addition, funds would be provided to TRIFED for product develop-

ment and improved packaging for tribal food products.

As a part of taking tribal welfare and development to the next logical phase, other convergences with various Ministries, Departments and expert institutions such as Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), DMF, ICAR Ministry of AYUSH are being planned with the aim of improving sustainable livelihoods and income opportunities for these tribals.

With the successful implementation of this collaboration and many more forthcoming convergences, TRIFED hopes to transform the tribal lives and livelihoods across the country.

BHEL EXTENDS SUPPORT TO MSMEs

The Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) has been spearheading the Make In India movement with a special focus on contributing to the *Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan*. Towards developing self-reliance in manufacturing, BHEL has taken the lead in reaching out to local industries including MSME vendors as potential partners. As a step in this direction, the company has organised a series of interactive workshops, titled *BHEL Samvaad*, under the guidance of the Department of Heavy Industry (DHI).

The workshop aimed at fostering better utilisation of assets for development of technologies and products.

The Secretary (HI), in his

keynote address, lauded BHEL's move for developing local suppliers and taking forward the *Aatmanirbhar Bharat* initiative. Expressing concern over the pandemic's impact on economies across the world, Arun Goel, Secretary (HI), said that the lockdown across geographies have resulted in massive supply chain disruptions and this has made many countries rethink on over dependence on imports and the need for being self-sufficient. He said that while BHEL has already been leading the movement for Make In India, *BHEL Samvaad* is a welcome move for initiating discussions with MSMEs and the local industry with an intent to get imported items manufactured in India.

The plenary address by DK Singh, Additional Secretary and Development Commissioner, Ministry of MSME, highlighted the strength of the MSME ecosystem in India. He mentioned that it was heartening to see BHEL come forward with a collaborative approach for the domestic industry — both in terms of sharing and offering many items, and also setting the platform for innovation.

DPIIT which was represented by Rajesh Gupta, Director, DPIIT, shared the highlights of the policies formulated by Government of India to ensure fair and equal opportunities to local industries in their pursuit towards *Aatmanirbhar Bharat*.

Big challenge to keep Pujara quiet: Lyon

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Australia's "in-depth" planning to subdue Cheteshwar Pujara worked out well in the opening Test but spinner Nathan Lyon says it would be a massive challenge to keep the "world-class" batsman quiet through the remainder of the series.

Lyon said the home team has a couple of more surprises lined up for the Pujara, who is considered crucial in the Indian batting line-up for his doggedness. The second Test begins on Saturday in Melbourne.

"I can't reveal secrets, to be honest with you. But, obviously Pujara is a world-class batter and he is going to be a big challenge for us for the rest of the series," 33-year-old Lyon said at a virtual press-conference on Wednesday.

"We spoke about him (Pujara) in depth before the series started, it was good to see a couple of plans come off in Adelaide, but we have got a couple more things.

"So, hopefully if he does get in, we can put into play...It is always fun challenging yourself against the best players in the world and Pujara is definitely one of those guys," added the senior spinner but refused to elaborate on his plans.

Lyon had dismissed a well-set Pujara for 43 in the first innings of the Adelaide Test, which Australia won by eight wickets.

Lyon also said India have got enough players to fill in the "big hole" left by talismanic skipper Virat Kohli, who has returned to India for the birth of his first child.

"...Ajinkya Rahane and (Cheteshwar) Pujara, just to name a couple. But you still got the likes of (KL) Rahul and (Mayank) Agarwal, who have been exceptional as well, so there is (are) enough guys in that squad to fill Virat's shoes," he said.

"It is going to be a big challenge for us again and we will start our preparation really well and make sure we are prepared to take on India again on (the) Boxing Day, it is going to be another big challenge for us," added Lyon, who has 391 Test wickets to his credit.

Lyon also feels that Indian batsmen will try and attack him once again, a strategy that he is both familiar and comfortable with.

"...When you look at the quality



Australia's Matthew Wade, bottom, dives in attempt to catch out India's Cheteshwar Pujara off Nathan Lyon's delivery during 1st Test

AP

Can't compare myself to Ashwin: Lyon

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Ace Australian spinner Nathan Lyon says he and India's R Ashwin are similar yet different type of bowlers, so comparisons should not be made between the two.

Lyon spoke highly of Ashwin, who he says stands out with his variations.

"Ashwin is a world-class bowler, to be honest. I have watched him a lot especially when I had gone to tour India and the subcontinent to try and learn of him. But he is a very cagey bowler, he has got all the variations," Lyon said on Saturday.

"He's very cagey with the way he changes his pace, so he is a very talented bowler. We are similar in a way but we are very different as well, so I can't really compare myself to him. I think his records speak for his own,



so hats off to Ashwin," said the 33-year-old off-spinner.

Ashwin has been India's premier off-spinner, who has taken 370 wickets from 72 Tests.

Lyon himself is close to touching the milestone of 400 Test wickets. He

has taken 391 wickets from 97 Tests.

Asked if he would have any preferable choice for his 400th Test wicket, Lyon said that it doesn't matter to him.

"Doesn't worry me, if it's (Mayank) Agarwal or (Jasprit) Bumrah, or whoever, batter of bowler, doesn't worry me whatsoever, just it would be nice feather in the cap to get there," he said.

Lyon also dubbed the current Australian attack as the best in the world and said it is a privilege to be part of it.

"I have said many times before in my eyes, this is the best bowling attack in the world. We are all, best mates and there is no day goes by when there is not a banter being thrown around in the WhatsApp group," he said about the chemistry among the teammates.

Warner, Abbott to miss MCG Test

Melbourne: Star opener David Warner and pacer Sean Abbott were on Wednesday ruled out of the second Test against India, beginning at MCG from Saturday, because of a mix of injuries and Covid-19 protocols.

Both Warner and Abbott were outside the team's bio-secure hub to get treatment for their respective groin and calf injuries.

"While neither player has been in a specific 'hotspot' on Sydney's northern beaches as outlined by NSW Health, Cricket Australia's biosecurity protocols do not allow them to rejoin the squad in time for the Boxing Day test," CA said in a statement. "The pair travelled from Sydney to Melbourne to continue their rehabilitation given the changing public health situation in Sydney at the time."

Warner still hasn't recovered fully from the groin injury, sustained during the ODI series, while Abbott has recovered from a calf strain but he is unlikely to break into a playing XI that beat India last week.

PTI



Jasprit Bumrah prepares to bowl as India head coach Ravi Shastri watches him during India's net session at Melbourne Cricket Ground on Wednesday

BCCI/Twitter

India begin preps for Boxing Day Test

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Determined to leave behind the embarrassing defeat in the series-opener, the Indian team, under stand-in skipper Ajinkya Rahane, switched its focus to red-ball cricket on Wednesday with Shubman Gill and others grinding it out during a net session ahead of Boxing Day Test.

Gill, who was not considered for the opening Test despite scoring 43 and 65 in the pink-ball warm-up match, looked in good nick as he along with Mayank Agarwal honed his skills at the nets, indicating that the duo could be the opening combination for the second Test.

The 21-year-old Gill also opens for Punjab in the Ranji Trophy and could be favoured over struggling Prithvi Shaw, who returned with scores of 0 and 4 in the two innings at Adelaide.

KL Rahul, who received the backing from the legendary Sunil Gavaskar for the opening slot, too had a long stint at the nets.

Also back at the nets was spin all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja, who had missed the first Test due to concussion.

Jadeja went for an hour-long spell at the nets during which he bowled to his Saurashtra team-

mate Cheteshwar Pujara. He again returned for a second stint later, an indication that he could be included in the playing XI for the Boxing Day Test.

With skipper Virat Kohli returning home for the birth of his first child, Rahane will now have to take the onus of inspiring the team to script a turnaround.

The practice session begun with head coach Ravi Shastri giving a pep talk to the team members, who stood in a circle at the MCG.

"We are in Melbourne and now as the red-ball Tests start, it is time to regroup. #TeamIndia," BCCI wrote on its Twitter handle.

Shastri also had a chat with Rishabh Pant, who came out to bat at the nets ahead of Wriddhiman Saha.

With Mohammed Shami ruled out of the remainder of the series with a fractured forearm, Mohammad Siraj and Navdeep Saini were seen bowling to Rahane alongside Shardul Thakur as the trio look to stake claim for the third pacer's slot.

Batting coach Vikram Rathour, meanwhile, had a word with young Shaw, who is under tremendous pressure to retain his place in the XI after his below par show in Adelaide.

SINGLES

KARTHIK TO LEAD TN IN MUSHTAQ ALI

CHENNAI: Out-of-favour India player Dinesh Karthik will lead Tamil Nadu in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 tournament, to be held in Kolkata from January 10. All-rounder Vijay Shankar has been named Karthik's deputy. However, the team will be without the services of R Ashwin, Washington Sundar and T Natarajan, who are on national duty. Medium-pacer Aswin Crist returns to the state side after a gap of three years due to injuries while Sandeep Warrier, who has shifted from Kerala, is also a part of the team.

TRIPPIER BANNED FOR 10 WEEKS

LONDON: England and Atletico Madrid defender Kieran Trippier was banned from football for 10 weeks and fined 70,000 pounds on Wednesday for breaching betting rules in a punishment from The English Football Association that applies worldwide. The misconduct denied by Trippier happened in July 2019 — the month he left Spurs for Atletico. The ban takes effect immediately and comes with Atletico top of the La Liga.

ICA NOMINATES PRAGYAN OJHA TO IPL GC

NEW DELHI: The Indian Cricketers Association (ICA) on Wednesday nominated former India spinner Pragyan Ojha as its representative to the IPL governing council, a day before the BCCI's Annual General Meeting. The BCCI will hold its 89th AGM in Ahmedabad on Thursday. The association was earlier represented by former India player Surinder Khanna, as according to the BCCI constitution, the ICA is required to send a member to the IPL governing council every year.

SHADAB OUT OF 1ST TEST DUE TO THIGH INJURY

TAURANGA: Pakistan all-rounder Shadab Khan was on Wednesday ruled out of the opening Test against New Zealand due to a thigh injury, which he sustained during the third T20I in Napier. Left-arm spinner Zafar Gohar, who was preparing with the Pakistan Shaheens for Sunday's T20 match against the Northern Knights, was named as his replacement in the squad for the first Test, beginning at Mount Maunganui on Saturday.

UNION BERLIN, HOFFENHEIM OUT OF DFB OKAL

BERLIN: Liverpool loanee Loris Karius endured a miserable competitive debut for Union Berlin on Tuesday as his side crashed out of the German Cup in the second round following a surprise 3-2 home defeat to second-tier Paderborn. Fellow Bundesliga side Hoffenheim were also on the receiving end of an upset, as they lost on penalties to second division outfit Greuther Fuerth.

MOMOTA BACK FROM CAR CRASH WITH A WIN

TOKYO: Japan's badminton world number one Kento Momota shrugged off nerves to make a winning return to competition in Tokyo on Wednesday, nearly a year after suffering serious injuries in a car crash. Momota beat Koshiro Moriguchi 21-12, 21-14 in the first round of the All-Japan championships, marking his return from the accident that left him fearing his career might be over after fracturing an eye socket.

MOUSSA DEMBELÉ BREAKS ARM IN TRAINING

LYON: Lyon striker Moussa Dembélé, off to a slow start with just one goal this season, broke his arm during a training session, coach Rudi Garcia said. Dembélé won't be available when second-place Lyon hosts Nantes on Wednesday. "We'll see what the course of action is with him, but for now he is unavailable," Garcia said, without giving a timetable for Dembélé's return.

KOHLI IMPROVES TO 7TH IN T20I RANKINGS

DUBAI: KL Rahul retained his third position, while India skipper Virat Kohli improved a rung to the seventh spot in the ICC men's T20I batsman rankings. In fact, Rahul and Kohli are the only two Indians to feature in the top-10 list of players in all three categories.

Agencies

Sydney offers to host 2 Tests

PTI ■ SYDNEY

In a bid to save its New Year fixture between India and Australia, the Sydney Cricket Ground Trust has offered to host the Brisbane Test too, if the Queensland Government refuse to grant exemptions to the teams returning from New South Wales.

Cricket Australia (CA) was put on high alert earlier this month after an outbreak of the Covid-19 virus in the northern beaches in Sydney, which is scheduled to host the third Test from January 7.

Even though the situation in northern beaches has improved, there are concerns that Queensland may close its border with New South Wales, which will mean players and broadcasting crews will not be able to travel from Sydney to Brisbane between the third and fourth Tests.



"We can run two Tests if necessary, no problems at all," Sydney Cricket and Sports Ground Trust chairman Tony Shepherd told *The Age*.

Under the circumstances, Melbourne, which will be hosting the Boxing Day fixture from December 26, has emerged as the frontrunner to host the third Test as well.

However, CA has asserted that the SCG remains its preferred venue for the third Test.

"We've made it very clear to Cricket Australia we're flexible and would be very, very disappointed to lose the Sydney Test. And that's with the support of the NSW Government," Shepherd said.

Rahane is bowler's captain: Ishant

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Stand-in skipper Ajinkya Rahane is a "bowler's captain" whose calm demeanour and clear communication with players should help him lead the team well in remainder of the Test series against Australia, says India fast bowler Ishant Sharma.

With regular skipper Virat Kohli returning home for the birth of his first child, Rahane will lead India in the remaining three Tests of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

Ishant, who missed the Australia tour due to a side strain injury, said Rahane has ability to nicely play the leadership role.

"He's very quiet and confident and I must say he's a bowler's captain," Ishant told *ESPNCricinfo*.

"Whenever we have played together and Virat has not been



around on the field, he'd ask me 'What kind of field you want? When you want to bowl? If you want to go on (bowling)?' "He's a bowler's captain. He's not someone who'd say 'do this or do that ... He is very clear about what he wants from his team."

Rahane has led India to victories both the times he had captained the side in absence of Kohli against Australia and Afghanistan.

"You can see what kind of person he is in his captaincy. He is very calm and composed. I can't say he does not have a sense of humor. He jokes around with us," Ishant said.

"Jinx (Rahane) spreads calm energy in a pressure situation. There won't be any tension, he'd communicate with the bowlers very well."

Talking about Kohli, the 32-year-old pacer said: "If there's a partnership growing and it's a flat phase when fielders are just going through their motions, one player's energy level can change the scenario, he said.

"The kind of energy Virat brings to the table ... Not everyone can match that."

India can still script turnaround, warns Lehmann

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Former Australia coach Darren Lehmann feels India have some quality players in their ranks to still effect a turnaround in the ongoing four-match series Down Under, despite a drubbing in the opener in Adelaide.

"It will be hard now for them, but they've actually got some quality players if they can get on a roll," Lehmann told *SA Sportsday*. The 50-year-old former Australia batsman opined that India have a potent bowling attack and if their batsmen cope with the bounce well, then the tourists could stage a comeback in the series.

"They can certainly cause some trouble with the ball, it's just whether the batsmen can cope with the bounce. The MCG pitch will suit them a bit better because it's a bit flatter."

"So we'll see if their batsmen can bounce back and make some runs, especially in the first innings. That's going to be the key for them," Lehmann said.

LOCAL EVENTS

DOUBLE DELIGHT FOR AASHNA

Aashna Siddiqui bagged two gold medals in the under-20 category on the third day of the District Athletics Championships at KD Singh 'Babu' Stadium on Wednesday. Aashna bagged the shotput and discus throw golds with throws of 8.43 m and 19.80 m respectively. Meanwhile, Amit Kumar Yadav won the 100m gold while Ritu Bharti emerged victorious in the girls's event. Ashok Kanaujia clocked 56:42:38 seconds to claim the 10,000 m walk gold. Shivani Kashyap won the 5,000 m girl's walk event.

STATE UNITED FC ENTER FINAL

State United FC edged past Brayen XI 4-3 in a tie-breaker to enter the final of the 6th District Football League at La Martiniere ground on Wednesday. State United will now take on the winner of second semi-final to be played between Sunrise FC and Excellia FC.

LDACC BEAT SOUND IMAGES

LDACC defeated Sound Images by five wickets in a league match of the 3rd Sagar Khayyami Cricket Tournament at Chowk Stadium on Wednesday.

BRIEF SCORES:

SI: 130 (Adeel Baqar 33, Himanshu 31, Prashant 20; Rohit 28/4)
LDACC: 134 (Samast 38, Rahul 27, Manoj 26; Sonu 28/3)

KOOH CLUB ENTER CRICKET

Kooh Sports Cricket Club beat DYA by nine runs to enter the semi-final of the 16th BBD 'B' Division League at AR Jaipuria ground on Wednesday.

BRIEF SCORES:

KSCC: 130 (Arvind 40, Himanshu 33; Abhinav 15/5, Sunil 18/2)
DYA: 121 (Rishi 44, Premprakash 23; Omkar 13/3, Yashvardhan 29/3).

Juve suffer first league defeat

AFP ■ TURIN

Ten-man Juventus crashed to their first Serie A defeat of the season 3-0 at home against Fiorentina on Tuesday in a nightmare final game before Christmas.

The defeat came hours after the champions learned they must play the match against Napoli which was cancelled on October 4 after Napoli decided not to travel to Turin

because of coronavirus cases.

On Tuesday, Napoli won their appeal to the Italian Olympic Committee (CONI) after being handed a 3-0 defeat and a one-point deduction.

As a result Juventus, who had started the day with 27 points, finished it with 24.

Juventus are fourth, tied on points with Napoli and Roma, and seven points behind leaders AC Milan, who play Lazio on Wednesday night.

Notice Inviting e-Tender

No.SSA/Spl.Trang/Procurement/04/333/2020/3561 Date: 22.12.2020

Mission Director, Axom Sarba Siksha Abhijan Mission, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, Assam invites tender through e-Tendering process from reputed manufacturer/authorised dealer of manufacturer of water purifier for supply of Supply and installation of water purifier.

To participate in the tender process through e-procurement document, bidder should have valid Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) and have to register in the portal <https://assamtenders.gov.in> by themselves.

The Bidder who have downloaded the tender schedules containing the tender details, terms and conditions, from the website shall submit their tender on-line on the website <https://assamtenders.gov.in>, with proof of payment of non refundable tender processing fee of Rs. 5000/- (Rupees five thousand) only in the form of demand draft/Bankers Cheque drawn in favour of Mission Director, Axom Sarba Siksha Abhijan Mission, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, Assam, from any nationalized/Scheduled Bank and payable at Guwahati. The tender should be submitted on-line as per date and time of submission as per prescribed schedule.

Sd/-Executive Director,
SSA, Assam
Kahilipara, Guwahati-19

Janasanyog No. CF/3487/20