

**OPINION 8**  
ARE WE A CIVILISED  
SOCIETY?**WORLD 11**  
DANIEL PEARL'S SCAPEGOAT  
MURDERER RELEASED**SPORT 14**  
BCCI APPROVES  
10-TEAM IPL FROM 2022

LUCKNOW, FRIDAY DECEMBER 25, 2020; PAGES 14 ₹3

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12 VIVACITY

# UK Covid strain not in India, Govt allays fears

Only genome sequencing at Govt designated labs can confirm it, there is no proof of entry of new Covid strain yet, says Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry on Thursday allayed fears that new strain of the coronavirus has entered India and said that to be sure of its presence, it is necessary to establish a genome sequencing, which could be done only through designated labs identified by the Government.

"There is no proof that the new variant has entered India, and it is too early to jump to any conclusions," said a statement here by the Ministry even as new Covid positive cases of the UK flyers continue to be reported from various airports in the country.

The Ministry also said that the genome sequencing of passengers from the UK has not been completed yet.

"Genome sequencing has not so far been done in respect of the 15 passengers of the 590 who landed in Mumbai from the UK on December 22. Therefore, it's incorrect to say that the new strain of the coronavirus has entered India until it is established by a designated laboratory," it said.

Notably, as many as 22 passengers flying from the United Kingdom to different cities in India over the past few days have tested positive for coronavirus. As per experts, nearly 50 per cent of these UK travellers could be potential carriers of the new more infectious Covid-19 strain.

Meanwhile, the Health Ministry has reviewed the sta-



A health worker wearing PPE kit collects samples for the Covid-19 test at Sadaival Alal Samadhi as coronavirus cases surge across the national Capital in New Delhi on Thursday

PTI

tus of passengers coming from the UK to India and directed States and Union Territories to send samples of those found coronavirus positive to six laboratories identified for genome sequencing.

"The respective States and Union Territories have been advised to access the details of the passengers from the UK to India from the online portal AIR-SUVIDHA and Bureau of Immigration," said the statement.

The laboratories that have been identified for genome sequencing are, the CSIR-

Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology in New Delhi, the CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology in Hyderabad, the DBT-Institute of Life Sciences in Bhubaneswar, DBT-InStem-NCBS in Bengaluru, the DBT-National Institute of Biomedical Genomics in West Bengal and the ICMR-National Institute of Virology in Pune.

This week, NITI Aayog member (health) Dr V K Paul also said that there was no need to panic over the mutated variant of SARS-CoV-2. Paul said the mutated strain detected in

the UK will have no impact on the potential of emerging vaccines.

"As of now, based on our discussions, deep understanding of data available and our deep assessment, there is no need to panic but it is a cause to be more vigilant," he said.

So far at least 20 air passengers from the United Kingdom have tested positive for coronavirus in India. The swab samples of infected patients have been sent to Pune's National Institute of Virology, in order to check if anyone had been infected from

## Bharat Biotech seeks nod for emergency use

New Delhi: The Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech, which is developing the country's indigenous coronavirus vaccine in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), has again applied to the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) for the emergency use authorisation.

## Ready to store, give vaccine to 51 lakh in first phase: Kejriwal

New Delhi: The Delhi Government is fully prepared to receive, store and administer Covid-19 vaccine to 51 lakh priority category persons in the city in the first phase of vaccination, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Thursday.

a different virus strain.

On Wednesday, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan reviewed the status of travellers coming from the UK to India who were found Covid-19 positive before the temporary flight bans came into effect from December 23.

The States for which the detailed review was carried out included Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Goa, Punjab, Gujarat and Kerala.

## 5 +ve fliers from UK flee isolation wards, 2 nabbed

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Despite the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare issuing detailed standard operating procedures (SOPs) with regard to travellers from the United Kingdom, two passengers who tested positive on arrival from London at the IGI Airport in Delhi went missing from isolation centres and reached their hometowns in Andhra Pradesh and Punjab.

According to reports, five passengers went missing after landing from the UK, but three of them were traced by Tuesday night and admitted to Lok

Nayak Hospital in the national Capital.

According to officials, a 46-year-old woman, teacher by profession, arrived on Monday and tested positive for Covid in a Rapid Antigen Test at the Delhi airport. Her 22-year-old son tested negative. She was handed over to the Safdarjung Hospital. However, she fled from the hospital and reached Rajahmundry via the AP Special Express in the wee hours on Thursday.

Meanwhile, the process to bring back the passenger has started. Railway police and health officials took her straight

from the railway station to the hospital.

In the second case, a man who recently flew down from the UK and tested Covid-19 positive escaped from an isolation centre in Delhi and reached Ludhiana where he checked himself into a private hospital. He is from Amritsar's Pandori village. He was sent back to Safdarjung Hospital on Wednesday night.

When asked, Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain on Thursday said the State Government will speak to airport authorities.

Continued on Page 11

## Covid-19 IN INDIA

TOTAL

CASES: 1,01,45,006

DEATHS: 1,47,097

RECOVERED:

97,14,435

ACTIVE: 2,80,705



STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	19,09,951	49,058	18,04,871
Karnataka	9,12,340	12,038	8,86,547
Andhra Pradesh	8,80,075	7,089	8,69,124
Tamil Nadu	8,11,115	12,036	7,89,862
Kerala	7,26,688	2,915	6,60,445
Delhi	6,20,681	10,384	6,02,388
Uttar Pradesh	5,77,642	8,245	5,53,019
West Bengal	5,43,214	9,505	5,18,516
Odisha	3,27,542	1,903	3,22,972
Rajasthan	3,02,709	2,650	2,88,388
Telangana	2,83,556	1,524	2,75,217
Chhattisgarh	2,72,426	3,249	2,54,024
Haryana	2,59,745	2,854	2,51,908
Bihar	2,49,336	1,371	2,42,766
Gujarat	2,39,195	4,262	2,24,192
Madhya Pradesh	2,35,369	3,524	2,21,169

## Modi's virtual meet with 9 cr farmers in mega reach today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A day before Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to address farmers across the country, the BJP on Thursday claimed that "nine crore farmers" will listen to the Prime Minister and asserted that "barring a small section" most of the farming community is standing with Modi on the agricultural reforms.

As the stand-off between the agitating farmers and the Government runs into third-week and the confrontation seem to be intensifying, Union Ministers and BJP leaders have accused the Congress and other Opposition parties of "misleading" the farmers and "speaking with a forked tongue" on the farming reforms.

Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javedkar said, "the Congress is using farmers' and has 'always worked against their interests.'"



"I challenge Rahul for a debate on the issue...Congress gave farmers only ₹53,000 crore and that too through the banks whereas Modi delivered ₹1,20,000 crore directly in farmers bank accounts," said Javedkar.

BJP RS MP and spokesperson Sudhansu Trivedi in another Press briefing said Rahul is telling lies as it is him "who spoke about the need for doing away with the APMC system."

Continued on Page 11

## Open to discuss all issues: Centre to kisan unions

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

A day after the farmer unions remained resolute in seeking repeal of farm laws and asked the Government to send a concrete proposal for talks, the Centre on Thursday threw the ball back in the farmers' court and invited them for talks.

The Centre asked them to give the details of issues on which they want to have parleys. The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare has asked the farmer unions to give it a date and time for talks saying it is open to discuss all issues.

Joint Secretary of the Ministry and CEO PM-KISAN Vivek Aggarwal had written to 40 farmer leaders on Thursday reiterating the Government's commitment to reach "logical solutions".

He said the Government is ready to discuss whatever the farmer unions want in addition to all the issues which were on table during earlier rounds of talks. The Government has made it clear that it would not



be "logical" to include in the agenda any new demand related to minimum support price (MSP), which is out of the purview of three new farm laws.

In a three-page letter, Aggarwal said, "I again request you that the Government has been discussing all issues with open heart and good intention to end the protest and will con-

tinue to do so. Kindly suggest a date and time (for the next round of talks)."

"The Government has respectfully and with open mind held several rounds of talks," the letter further stated.

"The talks will be held at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi at a ministerial level," Aggarwal said. The letter comes a day after farmer unions, protesting for nearly a month now, wrote to the Centre, stating they were open to talks, but the Government must offer a concrete proposal first and no negotiations will take place till the Government "draws up a new agenda".

This time the letter was addressed to Samyukt Kisan Morcha, which is an umbrella body of 40 farm unions and not to Darshan Pal like an earlier letter by Aggarwal. The letter also talked about various objections raised by farmers, including the MSP and the points discussed between the two sides in five rounds of meetings thus far, including one each on December 1, 3 and 5.

Continued on Page 11

## 1,040 urban poor to get cheap flats in Lucknow

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will hand over flats of 415 square feet area to 1,040 poor urban people at the rate of just ₹ 4.75 lakh.

The total cost of the flat will be ₹ 12.59 lakh and out of this, ₹ 7.83 lakh will be given as a grant by the Central and the state governments.

The allotment of these flats will be done as per Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) guidelines and through the District Urban Development Authority (DUDA).

As many as 14 states had

applied to the Union Housing and Urban Affairs ministry for these EWS houses Under the Global Housing Technology Challenge India (GHTC India).

All preparations have been completed for the construction of the proposed light house project (LHP) in the Awadh Vihar Yojana along the Shaheed Path.

The light house project will be implemented in a 34.50 square metre carpet area.

Under this programme, 14 storey towers will be built and 1,040 flats will be given to people belonging to the weaker section.



## HOLIDAY NOTICE

The Press and offices of The Pioneer will remain closed on Friday, December 25, 2020, on account of Christmas. The next edition of the newspaper will appear on Sunday, December 27, 2020.

## Cong, Left finally stitch alliance for Bengal polls

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/KOLKATA

Congress and Left Front on Thursday finally stitched an alliance for the upcoming Assembly elections in West Bengal next year.

Today the Congress high command has formally approved the electoral alliance with the Left parties in the impending election of West Bengal. West Bengal Congress chief Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury took to Twitter to announce the major political development in the State where the BJP has started a high pitched poll battle.

While the CPI(M) central committee had announced in October that it was ready for alliance with the Congress to fight against ruling the

Trinamool Congress and an aggressive BJP, the process was delayed due to Bihar Assembly elections and as the Congress leadership went incommunicado in this regards.

In 2016 Bengal Assembly polls, the Left Front and the Congress together had won 76 out of 294 seats in West Bengal after garnering about 38 per cent vote share. The Left Front received 26 per cent of the votes, while the Congress got only 12 per cent. Despite such a low vote share, the Congress won 44 seats, while the Left Front managed to bag only 32.

In the meeting last month, the State Congress leaders had unanimously argued for the alliance. The Congress high command took special note of the party's decimating vote

share in Bengal, which was down to 6.29 per cent in 2019, while the BJP's was 40 per cent and the TMC was 43 per cent.

CPI(M) central committee had decided in October that the party and the Left front would have an electoral understanding with the Congress to fight against the ruling TMC and an aggressive BJP in West Bengal, where both the CPI(M) and Congress have been facing an existential crisis.

In November, after Rahul Gandhi's online meeting with Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury and other State party leaders, sources had said the party would begin seat-sharing talks with the Left Front after Congress president Sonia Gandhi gives the green signal.

Continued on Page 11

## India challenges ₹22K cr Vodafone arbitration ruling in Singapore court

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India has challenged in a Singapore court a verdict of an international arbitration tribunal that overturned its demand for ₹22,100 crore in back taxes from Vodafone Group Plc, sources said on Thursday.

An international arbitration court had on September 25 rejected tax authorities' demand for ₹22,100 crore in back taxes and penalties relating to the British telecom giant's 2007 acquisition of an Indian operator.

Two sources privy to the tax development said India had 90 days to file an appeal against the tribunal award, and the same was done in a Singapore

court earlier this week.

This appeal also sets the stage for the Government to challenge the order of a three-member tribunal at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague that asked India to return \$1.4 billion to British oil and gas company Cairn Energy plc.

The Government had used a 2012 law, that gave tax authorities the power to reopen past cases, to seek taxes from Vodafone and Cairn over alleged capital gains made several years ago.

Both Vodafone and Cairn had challenged the tax demands under bilateral investment protection treaties and initiated the arbitration.

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**V. Bhavani Subbarayan**  
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## Probe begins into IFFCO gas leak

**Allahabad (PNS):** Deputy director of industries and two other experts from Kanpur and Noida arrived in Prayagraj on Thursday to conduct an inquiry into the IFFCO Phulpur ammonia leakage tragedy. Chief Minister Yogi

Adityanath had ordered an inquiry into the accident and the three officials were sent to the IFFCO's Phulpur unit. The officials, Abhay Chandra Gupta, DP Singh, and Ram Bahadur, visited the accident site and gathered information from the workers. According to them, this accident took place owing to a broken coupling rod. The rod has been sent to IIT, Kanpur for a thorough examination. The inquiry report will probably be submitted within a couple of days. On the other hand, the employees union of IFFCO, Phulpur levelled allegations of negligence against the organisation and said that this was not the first ammonia leakage in the plant.



### NOTICE

I, Army No. - 7788189 W RANK - SEP SANJEEV, R/o VIII-Kerwari, PO-Devapur, Teh- Mariyahu, Distt- Jaunpur (UP). My mother name wrongly written in my service record Smt. LALMANI. Her correct name is Smt. LALMANI YADAV for all future purposes.



### NOTICE

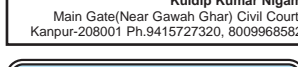
I, Army No. - 7788189 W Rank - SEP SANJEEV, R/o VIII-Kerwari, PO-Devapur, Teh- Mariyahu, Distt- Jaunpur (UP). My father name wrongly written in my service record LAL BAHADUR. His correct name is LAL BAHADUR YADAV for all future purposes.



### NOTICE

**Public Notice**  
This is for notification of general public on behalf of my client AADHAR HOUSING FINANCE LTD CHUNNI GANJ KANPUR. One of customer of my client (Applicant) Mr. Satish Kumar Sahu S/o Bholu Nath and Co. Applicant Bholu Nath W/o Satish Kumar Sahu both of R/O H.No.327 Ews Daheli Surajpur Kanpur, is availing a loan against property from my client on property situated in H.No.327 Ews Phase 16 2, Phase 39 Daheli Surajpur Kanpur Owned by Satish Kumar Sahu which boundaries are NORTH-H. No.328, SOUTH-H.No.326, EAST-H.No.346, WEST-04 mtr Road. The original Allotment letter 17/03/1989 letter no. 3198/D/ Bhu, and original possession letter and original page no.02 of un-Registered Hire purchase tenancy agreement Date 19/10/1995 all documents in favour of Subhadra Devi is lost and can not be retrieved. In this regards in any individual, Bank, Finance Institution have any objection on this mortgage or having any sort of claim can inform as below given address in writing within 7 Days of this publication. Any claim or complaint after the specified time will not be entertained.

Kuldip Kumar Nigam  
Main Gate(Near Gawah Ghar) Civil Court,  
Kanpur-208001 Ph.9415727320, 8009968562



### NOTICE

My name in my earlier records is written as Shreyashree Singh but now I have changed my name to Shreya Arora. Hence, from now I would be known as Shreya Arora. R/o H.No.-318, Type-III, IIT Kanpur.



### NOTICE

MY Husband (HARENDRA SINGH) ARMY No. - 6494360 RANK LNK VILL. Ghankada, Post - Ghogor Ghankana Rohatas Bihar. Hearby declare that in my husband Service Record my name is inadvertently mention SHEEMA DEVI While my correct name is SEEMA DEVI may be recorded in service records.



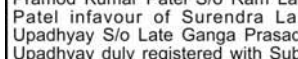
### NOTICE

My original deed number 5414 book number 1 section number 293 page number 383/394 date 5 07 1993 seller Mr. Ashok Kumar Choudhary S/o Mr. Ram Dulare Chowdhary resident house number - 4968 / 82, Chota Chandganj, Lucknow. Buyer Mrs. Rani Nigam wife Mr. Anil Nigam resident house number 251/145, Terhi Bazaar Rakabganj Police Station Wazirganj, Lucknow actually date 15.12.2020 has fallen somewhere. Rani Nigam W/o Anil Nigam.



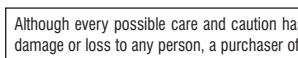
### NOTICE

I, Army No-15339007L Hav Yajuvendra singh, Unit-56 Engr C/o 56 ARO, R/o-VIII-Ramgarh, P.O.-Nagwan, Teh-Sandila, Hardoi declared that in my service record my wife name wrongly mention as Mithilesh Devi. His correct name Mithilesh Singh.



### NOTICE

A sale deed dated 20-03-2007 executed by Shiv Shankar Mishra S/o Late Ram Nihor Mishra R/o Chandapur, Pargana-Shivpur, Tehsil & Distt.-Varanasi in favour of Sitara Begum W/o Fakrull Inam R/o C. 124, Jaypur, New Pan Dariba, Chetganj, Varanasi regarding the sale of S.M. Plot No. 433 Kh having an area 126.39 sqmt. Vill.-Chandapur, Pargana-Shivpur, Tehsil & Distt.-Varanasi duly registered with Sub Registrar Office Varanasi in Book No.1 Vol. No. 2852 on pages 111/140 as D.No. 1028 dated 20-03-2007 has been last away. If any person/institution have any objection or information regarding this sale deed please inform within 15 days on 9451525826. Harishchandra Rai, Advocate, Chamber No. 110, Banarasi Bar Building, 11nd Floor, Civil Court, Varanasi.



### NOTICE

A sale deed dated 01-10-2009 executed by Geeta Tripathi w/o Bharat Tripathi R/o L. 96E, Stadium Colony, NER, G.T. Road Varanasi in favour of Aarti Devi W/o Karuna Singh R/o Babhnauli, PS.-Laar, Distt.-Deoria regarding the sale of S.M. Plot No. 323 having an area 1529 sqft. Vill.-Parshurampur, Pargana-Shivpur, Ward-Samath, Tehsil & Distt.-Varanasi in Book No.1, Vol. No. 2366 on pages 255/284 as D.No. 4316 dated 01-10-2009 has been last away. If any person/institution have any objection or information regarding this sale deed please inform within 15 days on 9451525826. Harishchandra Rai, Advocate, Chamber No. 110, Banarasi Bar Building, 11nd Floor, Civil Court, Varanasi.

## UP govt's varasat campaign a big hit among rural people

**Lucknow(PNS):** The succession of land and property (varasat) campaign of the Yogi Adityanath government has proved to be an instant hit with the rural population as over 1.35 lakh applications have been received so far in the first eight days. The varasat campaign began on December 15 and will

continue till February 15, 2021. It aims to end the long-pending land disputes, especially in the rural areas, and will also put a check on land mafia who generally target disputed land, especially in the rural areas.

The campaign will also put a check on the irresponsible behaviour of lekhpalas, who generally do not take interest in land-related matters and are ignorant about land disputes

It may be mentioned here that on every Tehsil Divas, most of the complaints relate to land disputes and in the police stations also most of the cases and complaints in the rural areas are related to land disputes.

"Out of the total 1,08,920 revenue villages, revenue officials have already visited 51,804 villages and have gone through the land records (khatauni). As many as 1,35,686 applications related to natural succession (varasat) of lands and properties have also been received," a Revenue department official

said. In the campaign, the date of receiving applications is from December 15 to December 30 and a provision has been made to examine and report the cases received by the lekhpal concerned from December 31 to January 15, 2021. From January 16 to January 31, 2021, the revenue inspector will arrange a

meeting of the village revenue committee to organise and pass the orders. "For any kind of information, the applicant can contact the helpline number 0522-2620477 or the Chief Minister's Helpline number 1076 and can also send a mail to abhiyanvarasat@gmail.com," the official said.

## Record cane payment in Yogi government

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Claiming the Bharatiya Janata Party government to be farmer-friendly, Sugarcane Development and Sugar Mills Minister Suresh Rana said that during the tenure of the Yogi Adityanath government, a record payment of cane price of more than Rs 1,12,829 crore had been made.

"So far, it is the highest payment in such a short period. This payment of Rs.1,12,829 crore is Rs.59,462 crore more than the combined cane price payment of the previous three years. Even, this cane price payment made during the tenure of the present government is Rs.17,614 crore more than the combined cane price payment of the previous five years, which was of Rs.95,215 crore," Rana said in a statement here on Thursday.

He said sugarcane farmers were even paid Rs.5,954 crore during the lockdown period.

"Due to lockdown, when most of the sugar mills of other states were closed, all the sugar mills of Uttar Pradesh continued their operations. For the prevention of coronavirus and to ensure social distancing after declaration of the lockdown, 100 per cent

cane purchase was ensured through 'SMS Gannaparchies' in place of printed ones," the minister said

"In this tough time, the government ensured employment generation by re-opening two closed sugar mills in Pipraich (Gorakhpur) and Munderwa (Basti) of the cooperative sector along with 27 megawatt capacity co-generation plants," he said.

Both these mills will produce high quality sugar and this sugar will fetch more price which will facilitate cane price payment.

"In the previous years, 30 sugar mills were closed while this government started operation in three closed mills, including private ones," the minister said. Rana said that the sugar mills of the state crushed a record 3,262 lakh tonnes of sugarcane in the last three years, which was 355 lakh tons more than total sugarcane crushing of the previous four years.

"In the last three years, the average sugarcane productivity of the state increased from 72.38 ton per hectare to 81.10 ton per hectare. Now the farmers are getting additional production of 8.72 metric ton per hectare," he said, adding that even there was a record production of 365 lakh ton of sugar in three years.

## Priyanka asks UPCC leaders to camp and spent time in villages

**Lucknow (PNS):** To galvanise the party workers and strengthen the Congress base in the rural areas, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Thursday asked party office-bearers in Uttar Pradesh to spend at least 20 days in districts assigned to them. Vadra made this call while addressing the UPCC executive meeting through video-conferencing. Besides UP Congress president Ajay Kumar Lallu, AICC secretaries Dheeraj Gurjar, Zubair Khan, Sachin Naik, Bazirao Khade and Rohit Choudhary, and over 800 party members and workers attended the virtual meeting.

Stressing that building up the party organisation was the primary responsibility of every office-bearer, Vadra asked them to start spending time in districts from January 3 and stay there for 20 to 22 days. She said the first and foremost aim of the leaders should be to ensure they added more people in the party and built the cadre stronger in order to fight elections. Vadra said that each office-bearer would be given charge of one district. Sources said that the office-bearers would be accountable for the organisation in the district allotted to them.

## BSc student gang-raped in moving tempo in Etah

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a sensational incident, a BSc student was raped by some unknown boys in a moving tempo in Etah.

The local police registered a case and sent two accused to jail on a complaint filed by the victim's family.

According to reports, the student took a tempo for her college on Wednesday morning along with some girls accompanying her.

As the tempo reached college, all the other girls left the vehicle along with the victim but suddenly the boys pulled her back into the tempo and sped away. Later, the boys gang-raped the girl in the moving tempo.

In the meantime, the other girl students accompanying the victim informed their teachers about the abduction. Subsequently, the tempo was chased and intercepted about 5 km ahead. The girl was rescued and admitted to a hospital while the two boys were nabbed from the tempo and handed over to the police.

Police arrested both the accused and sent them to jail for allegedly raping the girl.

In Rae Bareilly, a woman was sexually exploited on assurance of marriage.

Reports said that a woman hail-

ing from Unchahar town of Rae Bareilly lodged a report with the local police, alleging that her neighbour Narendra Kumar Yadav had cheated her in the name of marriage and raped her.

A case was registered and the accused was arrested.

In Shamli, one Shameem, sexually exploited a 16-year-old minor girl after calling her to his house. When the girl, who is mentally retarded, objected, the accused assaulted her and threatened her with her life. The local police nabbed the accused on Thursday and sent him to jail.

Meanwhile, a case of honour killing was reported from Deoria.

Reports said that Pankaj Mishra (25), hailing from Darauli area of Siwan in Bihar, was having an affair with a local girl but her parents were against it.

Finding no other way to end the affair, the girl's parents married her to a youth hailing from Nonarpandey hamlet of Bankata in Deoria.

On Wednesday evening, the girl called her lover Pankaj to her in-laws' house. However as the in-laws caught them together, they brutally assaulted Pankaj till he died.

Later, when Pankaj's father Anil Mishra learnt about the incident, he

lodged a report against the girl and half-a-dozen of her in-laws, including her husband. The police sent the body for post-mortem and were making further investigation.

Meanwhile, an alleged gangrape victim in Shahjahanpur accused a police sub-inspector of raping her when she went to a police station to get her complaint lodged. ADG, Bareilly, Avinash Chandra has ordered an inquiry on the complaint of the woman, who met him on Wednesday.

The 35-year-old woman, a resident of a village under the Jalalabad police station, told reporters on Thursday that on November 30, while she was on her way to Madanpur on foot, five men came in a car, forcibly dragged her to a nearby field and raped her.

She alleged that when she went to the Jalalabad police station, a sub-inspector present there took her to his room and raped her.

The woman said after failing to get her FIR registered, she met the ADG who ordered an inquiry into the incident.

Circle Officer Brahmopal Singh said he had been asked to probe the matter and an FIR would be lodged if the charges levelled by the woman were found to be true.

## MSME poised to become UP's growth engine: ACS

**Lucknow (PNS):** With the micro, small and medium enterprise (MSME) sector poised to become a growth engine in terms of providing jobs, self-employment and in turn giving a boost to the economy, the Uttar Pradesh government claimed that employment opportunity would be provided to about one crore people by allocating loans to 20 lakh MSME units by March 2021.

"The MSME sector has been a major booster for overall growth of industrialisation and implementation of infrastructure projects. The government will be giving loans to 20 lakh MSME units through which employment for one crore people can be generated by March 2021," Additional Chief Secretary (MSME and Export Promotion) Navneet Sehgal said here on Thursday.

Speaking at an event organised by Taleem-e-Tarbiyat, Sehgal said that every man was an entrepreneur in himself. "If a person has ideas, training and capital, then anyone can start a business. The idea could be about ODOP (one

district one project) but if one works according to his idea then he will be able to generate employment," he said.

The additional chief secretary said that the UP government had been providing loans on easy terms and conditions.

"If the entrepreneur has feasible project ideas he can come for loans as the government is facilitating the same through banks," he added.

Mentioning the immense potential of livelihood in the tourism sector, Union Tourism Ministry's Additional Director General Rupinder Brar said that this potential would be further expanded after ongoing augmentation of infrastructure and after the end of COVID-19 pandemic. "The Central and state governments would together make Ayodhya the most beautiful city in the world," he said. Avadh University Vice-Chancellor Prof Ravi Shankar Singh emphasised the need of financial literacy. He said financial literacy was a new type of educational revolution and Uttar Pradesh is constantly moving in this direction.

## CITYBRIEFS

### CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS

Various campuses of City Montessori School celebrated Christmas with fervour and enthusiasm on Thursday. At Rajajipuram Campus I, several presentations delighted the audience. CMS founder Jagdish Gandhi was also present on the occasion. St Joseph Inter College (Thakurganj) organised a programme to celebrate Christmas on Thursday. DPS, Indiranagar, also hosted fun-packed Christmas and new year celebrations for students of pre-nursery to class II. The students were divided into six groups. Their excitement was evident as they participated in the fun games held on the spot. SKD Academy also celebrated Christmas Day Atal Bihari Vajpayee's birth anniversary at all its five branches. Due to Covid pandemic, only a few students were present in the school premises.

### GOLD MEDAL

Nolita Meghwani, a class VII student of City Montessori School, Indiranagar Campus, was awarded a gold medal in the national-level inter-school online competition called 'Brainbrain Wonderkid-2020', bringing laurels to the institution.

Sl. No.	Name and Address of Borrower / Guarantor and Security agreement with brief description of securities/N.P.A. Date & Outstanding Amount as per Demand Notice
1.	<b>Borrower :</b> M/s Maa Gayatri Aroma, Proprietor : Shri Krishan Kumar Singh S/o Shri Tulsiram, Address & R/o : Village & Post Jakhauli, Distt. Jalaun. <b>Guarantor :</b> (1) Shri Krishan Nand Niranjan S/o Late Ram Das, R/o : House No. 5114, Mohalla Patel Nagar, Tehsil - Ora, Distt Jalaun. & Also at Village and Post Ghantaulli, Distt. Jalaun. (2) Shri Krishan Bihari Niranjan S/o Shri Moti Lal Niranjan, R/o : Mohalla Subhash Nagar, Konch, Distt. Jalaun & Also at Before Sacred Heart School, Inside from Ora to Konch Road, Ora, Distt. Jalaun <b>Property :</b> (1) House at Municipal No. 5114, situated at Mohalla Patel Nagar, East side of Ora Club, Tehsil - Ora, Distt Jalaun in the name of Krishan Nand Niranjan S/o Late Ram Das, <b>Area :</b> 122.63 Sq. Mtr., <b>Bounded-North :</b> House of Shri Jabar Singh & BSNL Office , <b>South :</b> House Shri Ram Shanker Guberele, <b>East :</b> 4.58 Mtr. Way, <b>West :</b> 4.58 Mtr. Way <b>Property :</b> (2) Open Plot Situated Mauza at Ora before Sacred Heart School, Inside from Ora to Konch Road, Ora, Distt. Jalaun in the name of Shri Krishan Bihari Niranjan S/o Shri Moti Lal Niranjan, <b>Area :</b> 65.09 Sq. Mtr., <b>Bounded-North :</b> Plot of Amit Sharma, <b>South :</b> Open Plot of Tapas Sharma, <b>East :</b> 9 Mtr. Way, <b>West :</b> Open Plot of Sunni Babu • <b>N.P.A. Date :</b> 31-12-2018 • <b>Demand Notice Date :</b> 05-12-2020 <b>O/s Amount as per Demand Notice :</b> Rs. 24,20,251.86 + Intt. + Others Charges
2.	<b>Borrower :</b> M/s Singh Filling Station, Address : 83A/4A, Juhri Khurd, Kanpur & Also at Jainpur Industrial Area, Nabipur, Kanpur Dehat. <b>Partners :</b> Shri Uday Bhan Singh S/o Late Digvijay Singh and Smt. Bindu Chauhan W/o Shri Uday Bhan Singh, R/o : Nabipur, Tehsil-Akbarpur, Distt. Kanpur Dehat & Legal Heirs of Late Uday Bhan Singh (1) Shri Shailendra Singh - Son, (2) Smt. Renu Tomar - Daughter (3) Smt. Meenakshi Singh - Daughter, (4) Smt. Sakshi Singh - Daughter, All R/o : Nabipur, Tehsil-Akbarpur, Distt. Kanpur Dehat. <b>Property :</b> Land & Building situated at Arazai No. 131 at Kanpur Jhansi Road, Mauza Nagin Jasi (Nabipur) Tehsil Akbarpur, Kanpur Dehat in the name of Shri Uday Bhan Singh S/o Late Digvijay Singh. <b>Area :</b> 1020 Sq. Mtr., <b>Bounded-North :</b> Land of UPSIDC, <b>South :</b> Land of UPSIDC, <b>East :</b> National Highway 23, <b>West :</b> Land of UPSIDC • <b>N.P.A. Date :</b> 31-12-2018 • <b>Demand Notice Date :</b> 07-12-2020 <b>O/s Amount as per Demand Notice :</b> Rs. 16,47,027.34 + Intt. + Others Charges

**Date :** 25-12-2020 **Place :** Kanpur/Kanpur Dehat / Jalaun **Authorised Officer**



# Christmas: Hazratganj a 'no vehicle zone' today

## Emphasis on adherence to Covid protocols

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Heavy security arrangements will be in place on Christmas and New Year eve. For Friday (December 25) celebrations, the focus area will be Hazratganj, which has been made a 'no vehicle zone'. No vehicles will be allowed between Hazratganj crossing and Parivartan Chowk. Besides, roads linked to Hazratganj will remain barricaded.

Joint Commissioner of Police Naveen Arora said pink mobile vehicles of police will continue to move on the road. "Around 1.5 lakh devotees/visitors throng the Cathedral Church and 34 other churches across the city. Huge police force has been deployed in and around religious places, crowded places, cinema halls and multiplexes. The police control room will remain alert and fully operational on Christmas day," he said.

He said there would be an announcement system to make



visitors aware about Covid protocols. "We have got pamphlets and stickers which will be pasted at public transport and other vehicles ferrying passengers."

He said there would be re-deployment of PRV, polygons and pink mobile vans from December 25 to 26 and from December 31 to January 1.

"We will try to lessen the time of response which is 10-11 minutes at present. Seven companies of PAC will be deployed in all zones of Lucknow," he said.

The JCP said the multilevel parking would be used to



(Top) Girls light candles at Cathedral church, all decked up on Christmas eve. (Above) Review of security arrangements at the church

fullest capacity to minimize traffic load on roads in Hazratganj. He said the church had been asked to make an announcement regarding the Covid protocols.

Commissioner of Lucknow DK Thakur said all the DCPs, ADCPs, ACPs and SHOs have been asked to keep a close watch around religious places, churches and other crowded places. "Cops in civvies will also be deployed to keep a close on mischief-mongers to prevent incidents of eve-teasing. There will be deployment of the bomb disposal and dog squad while senior officials will conduct a checking drive," he said.

The CP asked the police to prevent drunken driving as the cops have been provided with breath-analysing machines.

Meanwhile, the state capital was all decked up for the Christmas festivities on Thursday evening. St Joseph's Cathedral in Hazratganj held a holy mass at 10 pm, which was presided over by the Bishop of Lucknow, Dr Gerald John Mathias, and other priests. The mass is normally held at midnight.

Chancellor and spokesperson of Catholic Diocese of Lucknow Dr Donald HR DeSouza said that only about

200 people will be allowed entry at one point of time during Christmas celebrations. "We will also be holding prayers tomorrow morning," he said. He added that a little over 200 people will be allowed in the compound.

He said in view of the Covid-19 protocols, representatives of various communities participated in the holy mass and also in the divine services. The Cathedral compound was

tastefully decorated on Christmas eve.

Dr Herbert Abel from Central Methodist Church said they will be holding a prayer service on Christmas morning with 150 people. He said they cancelled their programmes meant for senior citizens and young kids in view of the pandemic. "We have started a token system in which we distribute tokens at 10 am and 11:30 am and for the entire

week people come to take these tokens for the services on Sunday. If the tokens finish, the entry is also not allowed," he said. He added that in the choir, which they hold during Christmas, only eight people will stand with social distancing. People visited hotels for dinner on Christmas eve. Incidentally, majority of people opted for ordering online as they celebrated Christmas with family and friends at homes.



## CM Yogi stresses on vigilance at airports

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has instructed officials to maintain more vigilance in view of the new strain of the coronavirus and said that there should be more alertness at airports and other such places in view of the new strain of the virus. The chief minister, who was presiding over an unlock review meeting at Lok Bhawan here on Thursday, also directed officials that keeping in view the new strain of the virus, all the laboratories of the state should be upgraded.

"The Medical Education and Health departments should also be proactive and update their technologies," the chief minister said and emphasised on developing necessary expertise in the state in view of the new strain of the virus.

"A list of all such people who have come from abroad should be made and their testing should be ensured. Until the results of the tests are received, all such people should be kept in home isolation as the per rules," Yogi said.

The chief minister also directed officials to take all necessary steps to increase the recovery rate in the state and to ensure this, the system of contact tracing and surveillance be made more effective.

"Adequate availability, including back-up of medicines, medical equipment and oxygen should be maintained in the Covid hospitals," he said.

Instructing officials to conduct the Covid testing work at full capacity, the chief minister said the number of rapid antigen tests should be increased.

The chief minister said that the establishment of medical colleges in the state was the priority of the state government and directed officials to speed up the process for setting up all the 14 medical colleges. "There should be no laxity at any stage in the developmental works in the state," he said.

## 264 came from UK between November 23 and Dec 20

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

There have been 264 arrivals at the state capital from the United Kingdom from November 23 to December 20, raising concern amongst health authorities in the wake of the mutated strand of coronavirus reported recently. The Health department swung into action soon after getting the final list and tested 32 travellers from the UK and 58 of their contacts on Thursday. Additional CMO MK Singh said as per the guidelines, 130 travellers who have arrived from the UK after November 23 will be put under surveillance for 28 days from the date of arrival while 134 who have come after December 9 will be tested (RT-PCR) along with their contacts and will also be put under surveillance from the date of arrival even if they test negative. He said that samples of those who test positive will be sent to NIV (Pune) for genome sequencing. Singh said the arrivals from the UK have been divided into two parts and there are separate guidelines for both. "They include those who arrived between November 23 and December 8 (130 persons) and others who have arrived between December 9 and December 20," he said.

He added that most of these travellers were stationed in all parts of the city, including Gomtinagar, Indiranagar, Chowk, Aliganj, Vigyanpuri, Golakhara, Manasnagar, Niranagar, LDA Colony etc. Singh said they tested 32 UK travellers, 58 of their contacts and also those living with them. "Testing of the remaining travellers will be completed by Friday morning," he said. Regarding the 130 travellers who arrived from the UK after November 23, Singh said as per the guidelines, these travellers will be called from the Integrated Control and Command Centre everyday.

"They will be asked about their oxygen levels and temperature, the way that it is done with those in home quarantine. They have also been requested to immediately contact the Integrated Control and Command Centre if they have any symptoms. They will be tested if they develop any symptoms," Singh said. "They will not be allowed to move from their homes and mails have been sent to them regarding the same," he added.

On Thursday, 219 persons tested positive for coronavirus in Lucknow while 165 patients recovered. Six more patients died in Lucknow on Thursday. Across the state, 1,166 persons tested positive, including 48 in Kanpur, 54 in Ghaziabad, 22 in Gautam Buddh Nagar, 60 in Varanasi and 62 in Meerut.




(25 दिसम्बर, 1924 - 16 अगस्त, 2018)

### भारत रत्न पूर्व प्रधानमंत्री अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी जी की जयंती सुशासन दिवस पर शत-शत नमन




इस पुनीत अवसर पर  
**किसानों के कल्याण एवं सम्मान के लिए समर्पित  
प्रधानमंत्री नरेन्द्र मोदी द्वारा  
उत्तर प्रदेश के 2.13 करोड़ से अधिक किसान परिवारों के बैंक खातों में  
प्रधानमंत्री किसान सम्मान निधि  
योजनान्तर्गत  
रु. 4260 करोड़ की सम्मान राशि का हस्तांतरण**

एवं

### कृषक भाइयों से संवाद

(वीडियो कॉन्फ्रेंसिंग के माध्यम से)

— नरियामरी उपरिचरित —

### योगी आदित्यनाथ मुख्यमंत्री, उत्तर प्रदेश

दिनांक : 25 दिसम्बर, 2020 | समय : मध्याह्न 12:00 बजे

**विगत 3.5 वर्षों में उत्तर प्रदेश के किसानों के हित में उठाये गए महत्वपूर्ण कदम**

- पीएम किसान सम्मान निधि योजनान्तर्गत उत्तर प्रदेश के किसानों को अब तक 24 हजार 183 करोड़ रु. की राशि हस्तान्तरित। उपरोक्त सम्मान राशि के हस्तांतरण के पश्चात् यह धनराशि कुल 28 हजार 443 करोड़ रु. हो जायेगी।
- 36 हजार करोड़ रु. से 86 लाख लघु एवं सीमांत किसानों का ऋण मोचन • गन्ना किसानों को 1.12 लाख करोड़ रु. गन्ना मूल्य का रिकॉर्ड भुगतान • न्यूनतम समर्थन मूल्य के अन्तर्गत खाद्यान्न की रिकॉर्ड सरकारी खरीद कर किसानों को 60 हजार करोड़ रु. से अधिक का भुगतान • रमाला चीनी मिल सहित 20 चीनी मिलों का विस्तारीकरण एवं आधुनिकीकरण

**#PMKisan का इस्तेमाल करके कृषि विकास और किसान कल्याण के लिए किए गए कार्यों की जानकारी अधिक से अधिक लोगों तक पहुंचाएं।**

टोल फ्री नंबर : 1800 11 55266 | पी.एम. किसान हेल्पलाइन : 155261

सूचना एवं जनसम्पर्क विभाग, उत्तर प्रदेश



# CBMR's non-invasive bio-markers for diagnosis of cancer, other diseases

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In what can be termed good news for all those who undergo painful invasive procedures for diagnosis of diseases, the Centre of Bio-Medical Research (CBMR) has developed non-invasive bio-markers for cancer, kidney diseases, sarcoidosis and acute respiratory distress syndrome. CBMR director Dr Alok Dhawan said that with these bio-markers, they are going for validation from a large number of institutes so that they can be recognised as standard markers in the medical protocol. He said there are bigger plans for the institute which was involved in the research, that was primarily applied, translational research and directly impacted patient care. Dhawan said the institute has already had a success story in cochlear transplants where through the functional MRI, they can tell the patients whether the transplant will be

a success or not. "This has helped the poor patients in a great manner because such transplants are very expensive and if the patients know beforehand whether the transplant will be successful or not, they can save money," he said. Dhawan said the institute has a nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) machine through which metabolites present in body fluids can help in establishing whether the person has cancer, chronic diseases even before the onset. The study is also termed metabolomics. Prof Neeraj Sinha from the institute said their team has developed bio-markers for the diagnosis of prostate cancer and a number of kidney diseases. "Through the sample of urine, we can diagnose prostate cancer and kidney diseases," he said. Sinha said they have also been working with the critical care unit of SGPGI and developed a

bio-marker that shows when a mild respiratory distress converts into acute respiratory distress. "The diagnosis for this is done through a sample of blood serum," he said. About the science behind the diagnosis, he said: "Through the NMR spectroscopy, we can map the molecules in the sample provided. We need very little of the sample or body fluid that could be just 500 microlitre, and we study the concentrations of molecules in the sample. If there is a disease in the body, it gets reflected in the concentration of molecules," said Sinha said. Dinesh Kumar, who is an assistant professor at CBMR, said they have developed a bio-marker through which it can be differentiated if the patient is suffering from TB or sarcoidosis. "Normally the symptoms between the two are very similar and confusions prevail in the diagnosis of sarcoidosis for which a painful lung biopsy is carried out. But

we can differentiate through a bio-marker for which we require only serum," he said. Dr Alok Dhawan said the initiation of the research is a two-way process, wherein the doctors of SGPGI have also been approaching them with their curiosity to know what is happening with the patients and the institute also approaching the hospital. He said they are planning to get validation of these bio-markers with institutes like PGI (Chandigarh), AIIMS (Hyderabad and Jodhpur). He said they are already working with SGPGI and mulling collaboration with other institutes. The CBMR director also pointed out that the NMR machine's data could be reflected in less costing machines that could help in tertiary care management at district level in the state. He said he would also approach the chief minister and senior officials to make a presentation in this regard.

# BSP leaders demands CBI or SIT probe into Sujeet murder case

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Pressure mounted on the Lucknow police investigating the murder case of former gram pradhan Sujeet Pandey murder in Mohanlalganj after BSP leader Satish Mishra demanded a probe by Special Investigation Team (SIT) or Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Thursday. Mishra, along with other BSP leaders, reached Mohanlalganj and talked to Sujeet's son Ajay to seek progress of the investigation. The BSP leader told mediapersons that the bereaved family expressed dissatisfaction with the investigation into the case so far. Mishra said the kin of the slain ex-gram pradhan have been living under fear and need proper security. He asked the state government to provide security cover to the Pandey's family. "Experts are required to handle the case and expedite the investigation as the

Lucknow police have failed to make any progress five days after the incident. The bereaved kin are apprehensive that they may well be harmed if the accused are not arrested soon," Mishra said. He said he came to know through media reports that a property dealer, Ashok Yadav, was sprayed with bullets in Mohanlalganj in a similar fashion. "Traders and businessmen are apprehensive of their safety after the Sujeet Pandey murder case. Speedy probe and arrest of Sujeet's killers can allay the fear among the bereaved kin, and thus a CBI or SIT probe is the need of the hour," Mishra said. Pandey was also a traders' leader in Mohanlalganj and was a very popular person in the locality. His wife is the current gram pradhan of Mohanlalganj. Police claimed that they had got some vital clues related to the murder and were close to nabbing the accused. The police said they

were probing the case keeping in mind political rivalry angle besides money and property disputes. The police said they had got some clues about the suspects and were keeping a close eye on their movement. **CASH, MOBILE PHONES STOLEN FROM SHOP** Cash and mobile phones were stolen from a shop in Thakurganj police station area on Wednesday night. The shop is located near a hospital on Campbell road in Thakurganj. On Thursday, Anand Kumar Chaurasia of Triveninagar in Hasanganj got a call from his landlord Maya Devi, who informed him about the theft. "I reached the shop and found the shutter jacked up. I entered the shop and found several phones, memory cards and mobile phone accessories stolen," he said. Police said they have secured the footage of CCTV cameras installed in the area and were scanning the same to identify the thieves.

# Minister releases 'State Focus Report' for UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Finance Minister Suresh Khanna released 'State Focus Paper' for Uttar Pradesh for the year 2021-22 at the 'State Credit Seminar' which was held at NABARD



in Lucknow on Thursday. In his address, Khanna lauded the efforts of NABARD for preparation of potential linked credit plans for all the 75 districts of the state and aggregating them to form credit potential projections for under-priority sector activities. The minister advised all the banks to adopt a positive and systematic approach for lending to farmers as actual credit is consistently falling short of the lending targets under agriculture and allied sectors. This, he said, is important in an agrarian state such as UP which has more than 65% agriculture dependent population. Stating that providing hassle-free and adequate credit to farmers is the most important priority of the Centre and UP government, bankers may adopt a positive and systematic approach in dealing with loan cases. Emphasising that the UP government has formulated the novel 'One District, One Product' approach for MSME

sector, the state having immense traditional potential, he exhorted the banks to actively extend financial assistance to this segment under various schemes such as MUDRA loans. He also said that there should be objective and stricter monitoring of sanction and disbursement of loans to the priority sector at various levels of banks and the concerned line departments of the state government. He also stressed on credit deposit ratio of the state at least up to the national level with special emphasis on districts where the CD ratio was below 40%. He said that with financial assistance from NABARD, the state government is going to bring additional 13.6 lakh hectare area under irrigation which would provide spur development and create additional credit demand. He also advised banks to work closely with NABARD for extending loans to other key sectors, SHGs, joint liability

groups and farmer producer organisations (FPOs). The minister congratulated NABARD for its developmental work through watershed development, tribal-WADI development, skilling of rural people and FPOs in under-developed areas of the state. Khanna also felicitated farmers, women, NGOs and bankers for their impactful work in the areas of watershed and tribal development, SHGs, FPOs, financial inclusion etc in 'Gramin Samridhhi Samman Samaroh', which immediately followed the seminar. He told the banks that their customers-centric approach in rural areas is important for creating positive perception in the society in tune with the welfare objectives laid out by the Central and state governments. Khanna also handed over sanction letters from NABARD for multi-service facilities in 100 primary agriculture credit societies and mobile van to an FPO.

**Rajasthan State Pollution Control Board**  
Headquarter, 4, Institutional Area, Jhalana Doongri, Jaipur-302004  
Phone : 0141-2716814, 2716832 e-mail : member-secretary@rcpcb.nic.in

**नीलामी सूचना**  
मण्डल में अनुपयोगी सामान (कुर्सी, टैबिल, अलमारी, डेअर्ट कूलर, वाटर कूलर, लोहे की रॉल, लकड़ी के दरवाजे, एयरकन्डीशनर, छत के पखे, वाहन-के पुराने पार्ट्स, टायर द्रव्य इत्यादि एवं अन्य अनुपयोगी सामान) की नीलामी की जानी है। नीलामी की तिथि 15.01.2021 समय प्रातः 11.00 बजे निर्धारित है। उपस्थित बोलीदाता/उनके प्रतिनिधि के समक्ष बोली लगाकर, सामान नीलाम किया जाएगा। नीलाम किए जाने वाले सामान का पुस्तकालिक मूल्य राशि रुपये 265,997.07/- है। (रुपये छब्बीस लाख उनसठ हजार छः सौ सात मात्र) है। विस्तृत विवरण राज्य मण्डल की वेब साइट (<http://environment.rajasthan.gov.in/rcpcb>) पर उपलब्ध है।  
राज.सं.वाद/सी/20/8155 सदरस्य सचिव

**RAJASTHAN STATE GANGANAGAR SUGAR MILLS LIMITED**  
Regd. Office: 4th FLOOR, NEAR/IN SAMAR BHAWAN, BHAWANI SINGH ROAD, JAIPUR-302006  
CIN:U15421RJ19455SGC000285  
Tel: 0141-2740841, Fax: 0141-2740676, Email: id: gdpurchase.regm@rajasthan.gov.in

**NOTICE INVITING BIDS**  
F-5/RSGSM/PO/PUR/2020-21 Date: 23.12.2020

E-bids are invited for procurement of below items or Services:-

NIB No.	Particulars	Invited From	Last Date of Submission Of Bids
PUR/35	संरक्षण के विभिन्न मंदिरालय एवं उनसे संबंधित बिजली पर लोडिंग व ऑनलॉडिंग कार्य की सेवाओं के उपपान हेतु दर सविदा (UBN-GSM2021GLRC00233)	सेवा प्रदाता व्यक्ति/कर्म/कंपनी।	04.01.2021 Up To 6.00 PM

Details may be seen in the Bidding Document which is available on websites [rajexcise.gov.in](http://rajexcise.gov.in), [sppp.rajasthan.gov.in](http://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in) and [eproc.rajasthan.gov.in](http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in). This bid shall be processed through e-procurement portal (<http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in>) of Govt. of Rajasthan. Further updates about the bidding will be available only on <http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in> therefore interested bidders are advised to visit above website regularly for updates.  
Raj.Samwadi/C/20/8180 By: General Manager (Purchase)

**राज्य कृषि उत्पादन मण्डी परिषद, उ०प्र० किसान मण्डी भवन, गोमती नगर लखनऊ।**  
पत्रांक : वि/या०(325)/2020-796 दिनांक : 24.12.2020

**अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा सूचना**  
कार्यालय ई-निविदा सूचना पत्रांक: वि०/या०(325)/2020-639 दि: 01.11.2020 के क्रम में दिनांक 07.12.2020 को आमंत्रित ई-निविदाओं में क्रमांक-8 पर आमंत्रित टेण्डर आइडेंट्री-0200\_RKUMP\_527125.1 में तकनीकी त्रुटि होने के कारण इस निविदा को पुनः दिनांक : 11.01.2021 को तकनीकी बिड एवं दिनांक 12.01.2021 को वित्तीय बिड आमंत्रित की जाती है। ई-निविदा डाक्यूमेंट वेबसाइट [www.etender.up.nic.in](http://www.etender.up.nic.in) पर दिनांक : 08.01.2021 को अपरान्ह 5.00 बजे तक उपलब्ध रहेगा। शेष नियम एवं शर्तें पूर्ववत् रहेगी।  
उप निर्देशक (वि०/या०)

**उत्तर प्रदेश पावर ट्रान्समिशन कारपोरेशन लिमिटेड ई-निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना**  
अनुमती ई-निविदा हेतु पंजीकृत निर्माताओं या उनके अधिकृत प्रतिनिधि/आपूर्तिकर्ताओं से पारंपरिक दक्षिण-पूर्व क्षेत्र, प्रयागराज के अन्तर्गत निम्न सामग्री की आपूर्ति हेतु निविदायें दो भागों में उनके समुच्च अंकित तिथि एवं समय तक आमंत्रित की जाती हैं। निविदा के भाग प्रथम एवं भाग द्वितीय, निर्धारित तिथि एवं समय तक उ०प्र० सरकार के ई-प्रोक्योरमेंट सिस्टम के अन्तर्गत वेबसाइट [www.etender.up.nic.in](http://www.etender.up.nic.in) पर अपलोड किये जा सकेंगे। निविदा शुल्क एवं घरोहर राशि आरटीजीएस/एनईएफटी के माध्यम से जमा करायी जायेगी। निविदा खुलने की तिथि/निविदा तिथि एवं समय (यदि अवकाश हो तो आगे कार्यदिनांक) पर खोली जायेगी। निविदा की केता खुलने की तिथि से 06 माह होनी चाहिए। सफल निविदायें किसी भी दश में स्वीकार्य नहीं होंगी। **ई-निविदा सं०-12/गुओ(पाव०प्र०)/2020-21**, विद्युत पारंपरिक खण्ड-तृतीय, प्रयागराज के अन्तर्गत विभिन्न 132 केवी0 उपकेंद्रों पर अग्निशमन यन्त्रों की आपूर्ति। निविदा प्राप्त करने की अंतिम तिथि 21.01.2021 समय 17.00 बजे। निविदा खुलने की तिथि 22.01.2021 समय 12.00 बजे। निविदा खुलने की तिथि 22.01.2021 समय 17.00 बजे। निविदा प्राप्त शुल्क (जी०एस०टी० सहित) रू० 1,180/- (रू० एक हजार एक सौ अस्सी मात्र)। घरोहर राशि रू० 8,000/- (रू० सात हजार मात्र)। **ई-निविदा सं०-13/गुओ(पाव०प्र०)/2020-21**, विद्युत पारंपरिक खण्ड-11, प्रयागराज के अन्तर्गत 220 केवी0 उपकेंद्रों शी रोड के अनुषंग हेतु सामग्री की आपूर्ति। निविदा प्राप्त करने की अंतिम तिथि 21.01.2021 समय 17.00 बजे। निविदा खुलने की तिथि 22.01.2021 समय 12.00 बजे। निविदा प्राप्त शुल्क (जी०एस०टी० सहित) रू० 1,180/- (रू० एक हजार एक सौ अस्सी मात्र)। घरोहर राशि रू० 3,500/- (रू० तीन हजार पाँच सौ मात्र)। **ई-निविदा सं०-14/गुओ(पाव०प्र०)/2020-21**, विद्युत पारंपरिक खण्ड-चतुर्थ, वाराणसी के अन्तर्गत निर्माणाधीन 132 केवी0 उपकेंद्र कछवा हेतु पावर रिसिटेकल/एसी0 व्यक्तिगत की आपूर्ति। निविदा प्राप्त करने की अंतिम तिथि 21.01.2021 समय 17.00 बजे। निविदा खुलने की तिथि

**मध्यांचल विद्युत वितरण निगम लिमिटेड ई-निविदा सूचना**  
अधोहस्तक्षारी द्वारा निम्नालिखित प्रस्तावित कार्यों को संपादित करने के लिए अनुमती एवं कार्य में दक्ष ठेकेदारों का चयन ई-निविदा के माध्यम से किए जाने हेतु ई-निविदा दो भागों में निम्न विवरण अनुसार उ०प्र० सरकार के ई-टेण्डर पोर्टल [etender.up.nic.in](http://etender.up.nic.in) पर आमंत्रित की जाती है। निविदा सम्बन्धी विवरण [www.mvwnl.in](http://www.mvwnl.in) पर भी अवलोकित किया जा सकता है। अधोहस्तक्षारी को निरस्त करने/अवधि विस्तारण करने/संशोधन करने एवं निविदा कार्य को विभिन्न फर्मों के मध्य विभक्त करने का अधिकार सुरक्षित है। **1. अति अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा सं० 27/विनिर्मि(पं०)/लेसा/2020-21:** अधिशासी अभियन्ता, विद्युत नगरीय निर्माण खण्ड-द्वितीय, लेसा, लखनऊ के उपपर्यार्थ एक नया डीजल चालित वाहन की आपूर्ति। निविदा प्रपत्र मूल्य रू० 1180.00 एवं घरोहर धनराशि रू० 2640.00। ई-निविदा प्रस्ताव अपलोड करने की अंतिम तिथि 02.01.2021 समय 15:00 बजे तक तथा ई-निविदा का प्रथम भाग खुलने की तिथि 02.01.2021 समय 17:00 बजे। **2. अति अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा सं० 28/विनिर्मि(पं०)/लेसा/2020-21:** कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियन्ता, विद्युत नगरीय निर्माण मण्डल-पंचम, लेसा लखनऊ हेतु एक अद कम्यूटर आपरेटर की आपूर्ति का कार्य। निविदा प्रपत्र मूल्य रू० 1180.00 एवं घरोहर धनराशि रू० 2000.00। ई-निविदा प्रस्ताव अपलोड करने की अंतिम तिथि 02.01.2021 समय 15:00 बजे तक तथा ई-निविदा का प्रथम भाग खुलने की तिथि 02.01.2021 समय 17:00 बजे। अधीक्षण अभियन्ता (पंचम) लेसा भवन, रेजीडेन्सी, लखनऊ पत्रांक 1133 दिनांक 24.12.20 राष्ट्र हित में बिजली बचायें

**Two students killed in road mishap**  
Spurious liquor claims 3 lives  
PNS ■ LUCKNOW  
Two Class 12 students were mowed down by a truck and three others were seriously injured while they were on their way to coaching classes on bicycles near Sugira village in Mahoba district on Thursday morning. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath expressed grief over the loss of lives in the road accident in Mahoba and directed the administration to provide ex gratia compensation of Rs 2 lakh each to the kin of the deceased. The mishap took place when the victims were hit by a speeding truck on Jhansi-Mirzapur highway under Kulphar police station on Thursday morning. The victims were going to attend coaching classes when the accident took place. Following the accident, the villagers of the area blocked the highway in protest. Senior police and administrative officers rushed to the spot and pacified the angry villagers. Ravindra Tiwari, in-charge of Mahoba's Kulphar police station, said five intermediate students of Sugira village under Kulphar police station were going to a coaching institute by their cycles in the morning when they were hit by a speeding truck. Two students, identified as Dharmendra son of Santosh Sahu and Kapil son of Ashok Vishwakarma died on the spot. The condition of three other

**Notice**  
Engagement for the Post of "Ayurvedic, Yoga & Naturopathy, Siddha, Homeopathic , Unani Practitioner in Northern Railway, Central Hospital, New Delhi and one post of Homeopathic Practitioner at Health Unit N.RLY, Varanasi on contractual basis(part-time) on honorarium basis under the aegis of Divisional Staff Benefit Fund (DSBF) Committee/ HQ division.  
Chairman DSBFC/H.Q Division Northern Railway  
Date of Issue: 24.12.2020 Closing Date: 11.01.2021  
Application in Prescribed Performa are invited for Engagement for the Post of "Ayurvedic, Yoga & Naturopathy, Siddha, Homeopathic , Unani Practitioner in Northern Railway, Central Hospital , New Delhi and one post of Homeopathic Practitioner at Health Unit N.RLY, Varanasi on contractual basis (part-time) on honorarium basis under the aegis of Divisional Staff Benefit Fund (DSBF) Committee/HQ division. The details of the notification, application form, terms & condition, educational qualification, experience, age, honorarium etc. are available on the official website [https://nr.indianrailways.gov.in/view\\_section.jsp?lang=0&id=0,1,263,296,311,506](https://nr.indianrailways.gov.in/view_section.jsp?lang=0&id=0,1,263,296,311,506). Interested & eligible candidate may download the Performa and sent their application to the Chairman (DSBFC) & Dy.CPO.HQ, Personnel Branch, Annexe Building, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, Baroda House, New Delhi-110001 before the closing date i.e. 11.01.2021  
2872/2020 Chairman (DSBFC) & Dy. CPO.HQ  
Security Helpline No. 182  
NORTHERN RAILWAY  
Integrated Helpline No. 139  
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

**बैंक ऑफ बड़ौदा Bank of Baroda**  
Regional Office : 118/330, Gumti No. 5, Kaushalpuri Kanpur - 12  
Branch : International Business Branch, Kanpur  
**Possession Notice**  
Whereas the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of Bank of Baroda under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice calling upon the borrower & guarantor to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being with in 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.  
The borrower/guarantor having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrowers/guarantors and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13 (4) of the said Act read with rule 8 & 9 of the said rules.  
The borrower/guarantor in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the first charge of Bank of Baroda for amount & interest thereon.  
The borrower's attention is invited to provision of sub-section (8) of 13 of the act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.  
**Name and Address of Borrower/Guarantor & Description of Mortgage Property and O/S Amount as per Demand Notice/Demand & Possession Notice Date**  
**Borrower :** M/s Sadaf International LLP, Regd Office : 88/153, Chamanganj, Kanpur. Partners : (1) Mohd. Ismail Syed S/o Late Syed Rashidul Hassan (2) Smt. Shahnaz Parveen W/o Mohd. Ismail Syed (3) Mohd. Shamail Syed S/o Mohd. Ismail Syed (4) Smt. Bushra Shamail W/o Mohd. Shamail Syed, All Above R/o : 105/196, Chamanganj, Kanpur  
**Demand Notice Date: 28-09-2020 & Date of Constructive Possession: 22.12.2020**  
**Description of Mortgage Immovable Property :** Property (1) Part of Arazi No. 873 (Area 0.0671 Hectare) & Part of Arazi No. 874, (Area 0.0771 Hectare) Situated at Village Sheshpur Nari, Pargana Hadha, Tehsil & Distt. Unnao in the name of M/s Sadaf International LLP through its Partner Mohd. Ismail Syed S/o Late Syed Rashidul Hassan.**Bounded- North :** Arazi No. 865 & 866, South : 32 Ft. Wide Road, East : Rest Part of Arazi No. 874, West : Arazi No. 860.  
**Property :** (2) 3/6th Share of Part of Arazi No. 865 (Area 0.1010 Hectare) & Part of Arazi No. 866, (Area 0.4300 Hectare) and Part of Arazi No. 867 (Area 0.2400 Hectare) Situated at Village Sheshpur Nari, Pargana Hadha, Tehsil & Distt. Unnao in the name of M/s Sadaf International LLP through its Partner Mohd. Ismail Syed S/o Late Syed Rashidul Hassan.**Bounded- North :** Arazi No. 865, South : Arazi No. 873 & 860, East : Arazi No. 871 & Arazi No. 872, West : Rest Part of Arazi No. 865, (Area 0.240 Hectare). Total Area 0.771 Hectare of share 3/6th admisuiring 0.3855 Hectare Situated at Village Sheshpur Nari, Pargana Hadha, Tehsil & Distt. Unnao in the name of M/s Sadaf International LLP through its Partner Mohd. Ismail Syed S/o Late Syed Rashidul Hassan.**Bounded- North :** Arazi No. 868, South : Arazi No. 860, East : Rest of 3/6th Part of Arazar. West : Field Satya Narayan.  
**O/s Amount as per Demand Notice :** Rs. 3,06,16,231.18 + Intt. + Others Charges  
**Date : 25-12-2020 Place : Kanpur/Unnao Authorised Officer**



# Poor state of cattle in UP dairies

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

As sorry state of cattle in dairies of UP has been revealed in an investigative report ‘Cattle-Ogue’ by Federation of Indian Animal Protection Organisations (FIAPO), an apex animal rights body. Recently, 22 dairies having 795 animals were investigated in two districts including 10 in Varanasi and 12 in Prayagraj and found that to meet the high milk production targets, the animals were over-exploited, thereby resulting in cruel dairy practices.

Such practices also reduce the average lifespan and increase reproductive diseases and under infections. The life of a dairy cow lasts for an average of 10 years in a dairy

establishment as compared to 25 naturally,’ said FIAPO Executive Director (ED) Varda Mehrotra, informing that among these dairies seven had Holstein cows while five had Jersey and nine crossbred cows and these cows are genetically selected to produce an unnatural average output of 20 litres per milking, per day, per animal.

The situation has not been changed much as FIAPO’s 2017 report had revealed how most cows raised in the dairies were intensively confined, leaving them unable to fulfil their most basic natural needs, such as nursing their calves. They were treated like milk-producing machines, pumped with antibiotics and hormones to produce more milk. The

report underscored that while cows suffered in such setups, humans who drank their milk had increased their chances of developing heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and many other ailments, said the ED, adding ‘we’ve repeatedly seen, documented and shared with the government the conditions of animals in dairies of UP for last three years. Sadly, nothing has changed. Cows and buffaloes continue to languish in horrific conditions, which are a breeding ground for many diseases. He demanded that the government must act on the information we have made available to them.

According to the FIAPO, the dairies compromised animal comfort and didn’t clear

the debris causing accumulation of scabs of dung on the animals’ bodies. Also, animals had a mild to medium swollen hock joint indicating bruises due to friction with the concrete floor, or their legs being tied up while being marked.

To add to that, 50% of the farms didn’t have proper ventilation for the animals. Those with ventilation were farms with just a shed overhead, which wasn’t sufficient to protect the animals during heavy rains and cold weather. From housing, availability of drinking water, practices around lactating cows and calves, availability of clean feed, to the use of antibiotics or steroids, the state of the animals was despicable.

# 59 new Covid cases in Prayagraj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The number of corona-infected patients in the district has crossed 28,000 with 59 new positive patients found in the last 24 hours. While the figure of the infected has reached 28,042, the number of people who lost their lives due to Covid infection has increased to 368 with the death of one patient during treatment. A

total of 77 people became infection-free on Wednesday. According to Nodal Officer for Corona Dr Rishi Sahai, the scope of testing is being increased every day. There is a decrease in the number of infected people. The number of serious patients among the infected is extremely low. Four days later, a Covid infected with other diseases died during treatment.

According to CMO Dr Prabhakar Rai, there has been an increase in the number of people who are healthy than the infected. On Wednesday, 32 patients recovered from their homes. In this way, 20,273 patients have become infection free in home isolation. So far 6,745 patients have been discharged from Covid hospitals with 12 patients.

According to the Nodal

Officer for Corona Dr Rishi Sahai, to prevent coronavirus infection, arrangements have been made to conduct a screening of those coming from abroad or other states. Ten teams have been formed for testing on getting the information. Efforts are made to check every person coming from outside so that the infection does not spread, added Dr Sahai.

# They lost lives to give life to many employees

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

BP Singh and Abhay Nandan, both officers who lost their lives in the ammonia gas leak at IFFCO, gave life to many of their employees. It was because even after knowing the danger of death, the two officers reached the spot and turned off the gas leak. This saved the lives of over 20 people working there. Had it been a little longer, the accident would have been much bigger.

Abhay Nandan reached out to stop the gas leak. Where the leak was taking place, more than one and a half dozen employees working were trapped.

Going inside meant to face the danger of life. Knowing this fact, the officers did not care about their lives and frantically started trying to take out the people trapped there. But they fainted due to the grip of gas for a long time. His life was lost but he saved many lives. Employees whose lives have been saved in the accident said that the two officers, regardless of their lives, tried to take out the employees and stop the gas leak.

leak, the Chief Operator Ammonia, who was on duty there, and Dharmveer Pal, treasurer of IFFCO Employees Union, stayed. They too, without caring for their lives, dragged the four stranded companions out there with full vigil and managed to save their lives. Both were sick due to gas grip. They have been admitted to the hospital at the IFFCO campus from where the doctors discharged them in the afternoon.

How did this accident happen suddenly at the P-1 plant of IFFCO Phulpur unit late on Tuesday. This had become a topic of discussion throughout the day. According to IFFCO officials, as soon as people arrived on the duty of C-Pali, shortly after, the tide rashes of the ammonia pump suddenly broke and its plunger went out and within a short while a huge

# 55 more test positive in Varanasi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

As many as 55 new patients have been detected in the district on Thursday, increasing the total number to 20,828. The day also saw one more death, increasing the toll to 349. During the day, the follow-up negative reports included 42 and all of them have been recovered from home isolation, increasing the number to 17,151. As no patient was discharged from any hospital, the number remained at 2,903. The total number of patients who have been recovered so far

is 20,054, leaving 425 active cases. The recovery rate is 96.28 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, 32 positive patients were found out of 2,378 reports received. Till then, the total test reports received were 4,97,632 and the results of 3,007 are awaited. Out of them, 4,76,827 were negative, while 20,805 positive. The total number of samples collected was 5,24,033. Earlier, two males aged 58 and 76 from Durgakund and

Samneghat 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 2,622 including 199 red zones. Three green zones have been converted into red zones again. There are 2,423 green zones with seven new ones.

Meanwhile, 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 115 tests were found negative at SSPG Hospital Kabirchaura apart from 160 at District Women’s Hospital, 22 at CHC Shivpur, 37 at Vivekanand Hospital Bhelapur, 115 at LBS Hospital Ramnagar and 85 at SSH BHU. Apart from this, all the 42 tests at Varanasi Junction (Cantt) railway station and 30 at Manduadih were also found negative. Along with this, samples of 100 people were sent from SSPG, 149 from Women’s Hospital, 24 from Vivekananda, 100 from LBS and 65 from SSH for RTPCR investigation.

# Churches glitter with attractive lights

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

All the local churches have been glittered with attractive lighting arrangements on the eve of Christmas here on Thursday. However, due to the prevailing coronavirus pandemic, famous three-day Christmas Mela at St Mary’s Cathedral is not being held this year. Besides, the liturgical services (Mass) scheduled to be held on December 24 midnight, was held after the dusk and concluded before 9 pm in all the churches of the Diocese of Varanasi. The Bishop Eugene Joseph and other dignitaries were present and greeted all the Christians a happy Christmas.

Meanwhile, rush of people



St Mary’s Cathedral being glittered on eve of Christmas in Varanasi on Thursday

not only of Christians but also of other communities was seen in many markets to pur-

chase articles to decorate their homes on the occasion. Various types of articles and

gifts were sold. There was also a high demand for cakes decorated with attractive designs.

Though every year, the Diocese of Varanasi celebrates the festival in a grand manner, this year it has decided to organise it in a simple manner following the COVID-19 guidelines.

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

# Rajesh Kumar assumes charge as BLW PRO

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Rajesh Kumar has taken charge of Public Relations Officer (PRO) in the Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) here on Thursday. Prior to this, he was working as Chief Publicity Inspector in BLW itself. He did his Bachelor of Physical Education (BPED) from Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapeeth (MGKV) and received his Master of Physical Education (MPED) and Diploma in Yoga from Banaras Hindu University (BHU). He also received his diplomas in Photography and Journalism & Mass Communication from Rajarshi Tandon Open University, Prayagraj apart from getting PG Diploma in Yoga from Jain Vishwabhara in Rajasthan. He also obtained a Master’s degree in Journalism & Mass Communication from The Global Open University. He is a national player of Yoga and worked as a Yoga instructor in UP and as a judge at National Yoga meet. He is equally popular among officers and employees.



Rajesh Kumar

**AVAILABLE AT KASHI NETRALAYA:** In good news, the Kashi Netralaya has now facility to conduct surgery of cornea through modern Contoura Vision Lasik Surgery.

Earlier, the hospital has been conducting the surgery of cornea through Lasik Technology for the last six years but this year, the surgery through Contoura Vision has been started this year, the head of Kashi Netralaya Dr R Singh informed adding, the hospital also conducts TransEpithelial PRK (Stream light) successfully.

Only 20 points of cornea

are studied in Lasik Surgery but in Contoura Lasik, 22000 points of cornea could be studied, he informed adding, the aberrations of eyes in poor condition could be removed in Contoura Vision Lasik Surgery which is not possible in general Lasik Surgery.

The treatment of eyes is done in Visual Axis in Contoura Vision and contrary to this, the treatment in general Lasik is done in Papillary Axis.

The general Lasik is like readymade cloth while the Contoura Vision is like tailor made Lasik Surgery, he said adding, there is more chance to bring the vision back in this surgery comparatively to spectacles and contact lens which is also called as super vision.

The hospital conducts surgery with both machines Contoura Vision/Epiconoura/Topolyzer and Oculyzer and the hospital is first in the state in this direction, he informed adding, the visual quality is very good in the surgery of this technology. The visual quality of Contoura Vision is not only better than general Lasik but also the Smile, he informed

adding; this technology is also approved by the US FDA.

**CYCLIST KILLED IN MISHAP:** In a road accident, a cyclist was killed when he came under the wheels of a speeding truck in Goithahan village, under the Pandeypur-Lalpur police station on Thursday and it led to road blockade by villagers along with family members demanding compensation to the deceased families. They ended road blockade after the assurance by police officers.

According to the information, the deceased identified as Vinod Kumar (28) of Murdhan village was going to somewhere on cycle on Thursday morning and when he was passing through Goithahan village, a speeding truck hit the cycle and he fell down and came under the wheels of the heavy vehicle.

After the accident, the truck driver managed to escape from the scene.

Seeing this, the local villagers rushed to the spot and blocked the highway keeping the body on the road. They demanded compensation to the family of deceased.

# Christy Memorial School celebrates Christmas

**ALLAHABAD:** The Christmas programme was held 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, a programme was organised with college staff and the other dignitaries 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 in inaugural prayer, while Coordinator Vishal Charles read the Bible verse.

The village head of Purvakhas Shakil Khan praised

the college and said that the children studying in this school have a distinct identity and they are illuminating the name of the village along with the college. The manager, Kamal Masih led in closing prayer. On the occasion Vice-Chairman Ankush V. Lal, Dr Ramakant Dubey, Dr Ashwani Kumar, Deepak Wesley, Dr Donald Mani, Dr B Mehra along teachers and staffs were present.

# Christmas: Celebration of human solidarity & togetherness

**ALLAHABAD:** We are living in a culture of selfish individualism and indifference. What we see all around is the cult of the individual: me, me, me, my career, my fulfillment, my interests, my will, my needs, my happiness, and doing it my way. Globalisation with its market and media has cemented this individualism. It turns individuals into isolated monads. It is centered on the self and its gratification.



Fr. Leo Sequeira

The cultural ideal of the western developed world is the self-made, self-sufficient, autonomous individual who stands alone, not needing anyone else. Freedom and happiness are equated with independence and self-sufficiency. This requires having one’s own money to maintain this kind of independence. Hence the careerism and feverish busyness that characterise the present day autonomous lifestyle. Individualism leads to indifference and apathy towards others. But in other cultures like Indian- interdependence, social coherence, togetherness, community, sharing, hospitality, reliance upon one another are appreciated. Here one’s identity is defined not in terms of independence but in relation to one’s family, friends and the community. A person becomes a person in and through other people and not by independence, not needing anyone else. But today due to the explosion and expansion information technology with unbridled consumerism and selfish

gives oneself against the culture of individualism, a selfish withdrawal into one’s own self. Synergy of solidarity and togetherness can pave the way for greater unity of human family across many borders that divide us. Today more than ever the hope of humanity lies in human solidarity and togetherness. Christmas invites us to preserve, strengthen and promote this culture of solidarity and togetherness.

In the contemporary times of global individualism and indifference, solidarity is an important experience for understanding and experiencing incarnation. ‘The word became flesh and dwelt among us’ (Jn1:14). This sutra is to heart of our Christian faith. At Christmas we celebrate Jesus becoming one flesh with the human family. The fundamental event of Jesus’ offering of salvation is his becoming one in flesh with the human family. God became human, one of us, one like us, one among us, one with us, sharing our human lot. The beginning, middle and end of salvation is solidarity. The very life of Jesus is supreme testimony to human solidarity and togetherness. In his life, solidarity begins with identification, and expands through innumerable acts of his oneness with the people and ends with the communion-meal with his disciples and his supreme sacrifice on the cross where he was totally one with the poor and the outcaste. A mother identifies with her child

that she can say ‘whatever you do to my child, you do to me’. Jesus tells St. Paul while he was persecuting the early Christians, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting’. In the last judgment scene, Jesus says ‘Whatever you do to the least of sisters and brothers you do to me’ (Mt.25).

It is not only building solidarity with the human family especially with the poor and the little ones but in a multi-cultural and multi-religious society like ours it also means acceptance of pluralism and diversity. India is a beautiful Sangam of different races, languages, cultures, religions, traditions and ideologies. Christmas invites us to strengthen and celebrate this unity in diversity which is the soul of our culture and civilisation, spirit of our constitution and the secret of our democracy. Today we need to enlarge our identity to include others in our embrace as they are and not as we would want them to be. Festivals unite, they bring people together across the borders like caste, creed, ethnic affiliations, language etc. Christmas is such a beautiful feast that brings people together irrespective of caste and creed. May the Baby Jesus in the crib inspire and strengthen us to build solidarity and togetherness to work for the good of the human family which will surely result in peace and harmony in our country.

# MCMT honoured with Awadh Samman

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Adding another feather in its cap, the Microtek College of Management & Technology (MCMT) has been honoured with the prestigious ‘Awadh Samman’ by UP Government.

The general secretary of institution Neeraj Rajhansh received the award from the Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya at a function held in Lucknow.

The award is given to the institutes of UP and Utrakhland for the remarkable contribution in the fields of

education and service.

The college imparts education to students keeping the requirements and abilities what the multinational companies want while selecting any for the job, said the Chairman and Executive Director of the college Dr Pankaj Rajhansh adding, the college also makes arrangement of training to the students in commercial centres.

The college makes available information about courses to the students on regular basis through online, virtual laboratories, high & tech labs and microtek app, he informed

adding, more than 85 per cent college students got job in multinational and national companies on special package.

The courses of BBA, BCA, B.Sc, M.Sc (Math, Physics, Chemistry, Zoology, Botany, Computer Science, Bio-Technology), B.Com, M.Com, etc are run in Kerakat premises of the college, which is affiliated to the Purvanchal University, he informed adding, the college is running the courses of BBA, BCA, B.Com and B.Com (Hons), at its premises in Barai village of

Badagaon. The college also imparts training of skill development, sponsored by various ministries of Central Government, time to time and after the training programmes, the students get job through placement programme. The college also makes efforts to benefit the students by making available the proper knowledge if they want to become entrepreneurs, he informed adding, the central government is also running PMKVY for the poor students and residential programme BDUGKVY free of cost.





Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya laid foundation and unveiled 79 projects implemented by PWD worth Rs 5028.07 lakh in Kanpur at a function organised at Circuit House compound on Thursday

Pioneer

# DC directs KNN to construct 60 city roads within 90 days

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Divisional Commissioner Raj Shekhar, while addressing the Kanpur Nagar Nigam officials, expressed concern over the failure of the municipal corporation to start construction of 60 sanctioned roads out of the total 929 roads approved earlier and directed them to complete the work in 90 days with strict marking of work code at each construction site.

He said their digging for tubewells was going on unabated all over the city, especially in the multi-storeyed buildings,

and directed the local administration should prepare a proposal and forward it to the government at the earliest to prevent the misuse of groundwater.

He pointed out that hundreds of hoardings were illegally put up in the city and directed the KNN to ensure QR coding of the hoardings within one month.

He said despite the decision taken in the past meeting that QR code would be put up on hoardings, no progress had been made in that direction.

The divisional commissioner said that the properties

which came under KNN should be marked with property coding and mapping be done at the earliest. He said some of the mapping work had been done partially and it should be completed within the stipulated time frame.

He said in the next two months dry and wet garbage would be collected separately from all the 110 wards.

The divisional commissioner said that the process of including 19 villages under Kanpur Nagar Nigam was going on and thus more safai karmacharis would be needed to attend to the newly-created

wards. He said the KNN need to send a proposal for increase of safai karmacharis strength.

He said Raiin Baseras (shelter homes) did not have CCTV and thus it should be set up immediately to ensure the safety and end the misuse at several places.

Prominent among those who took part in the meeting included Kanpur Municipal Commissioner Akshay Tripathi, additional Kanpur commissioner, Jal Kal general manager, chief finance and accounts officer, chief engineer.

# SBI donates a well-equipped ambulance to administration

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The State Bank of India has always been the forerunner in corporate social responsibility and in fact it is ingrained in the bank's culture. The bank not only provides the largest and the best banking to customer but also makes meaningful and measurable impact on the lives of economically, physically and socially challenged people as well. The bank is committed to serve the country and continue with its CSR activities.

This was stated by SBI DGM Divyanshu Ranjan while flagging off a well-equipped ambulance and handing over the keys to District Magistrate Alok Tiwari.

He said the SBI spent one per cent of its profits on CSR. He said in the current COVID-19 times it was the need of the hour to have more ambulances to meet the needs of the people and thus the bank had decided to provide a well-equipped ambulance. He hoped it would be a fruitful exercise of the bank.

Addressing the gathering, the DM said the SBI was



The SBI Deputy General Manager, Divyanshu Ranjan and DM Alok Tiwari flag off the well-equipped ambulance on Thursday

famous as 'Bank to Every Indian' and had always been in the forefront in CSR. He added that at critical times the bank had always helped liberally.

He said the role of the SBI in COVID-19 times had been commendable and the district administration was full of gratitude for their gesture. He

appealed to big houses to come forward and as part of CSR help in this critical times.

He said the bank had also distributed food items, cleanliness kit and provided this in the containment zones. He said the bank had provide mobile ATMs for containment zones. He said it had also pro-

vided two ventilators and PPE kits. He hoped that the bank would continue to help in the similar manner in future also.

Prominent among those who took part in the function were Vishwanath Mishra, Rajiv Lochan, Vinay Kumar Shakya and Diwakar Mani.

# IIT-K internship programme for startups

KANPUR (PNS): The Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, has opened an internship programme for startups. The interested startups and companies can reach out to IIT-Kanpur to offer internships to its students.

The Startup Internship Programme (SIP) is a part of IIT-Kanpur's Entrepreneurship Cell. The programme has been running for the last 12 years. Ever since its launch, the institute has been striving to help emerging startups hire the top quality students. E-cell at IIT-Kanpur wants to take an opportunity to invite startups to be a part of SIP 2021.

Startups can hire summer interns for various profiles including areas such as software development, analytics, marketing, designing, operations, data science, engineering, business development, finance, consulting etc.

"Through SIP, we aim to collaborate with the start-ups

willing to offer internship opportunities to IIT-Kanpur students. Ever since its launch, it has been striving to help emerging startups hire quality students from IIT-Kanpur as summer interns and concurrently help our students gain some valuable work experience," said an official of e-cell.

As part of the programme, IIT-Kanpur will help all associated startups in short listing and hiring the right students. The e-cell will take care of everything right from resume forwarding to conducting interviews or tests.

The hiring of interns will start from January 2021 and go on till April 2021. The internship period will be from May to July 2021, he said.

**FOCUS ON SUPPORTING TOPICS OF ENVIRONMENT:** KRISHNAN: Environmental studies should focus on investigation on a broad range of issues that society is facing now and will face

in the future. The broader issues to be addressed include population and consumption concerns, energy use, biodiversity and global climate change. Each issue requires consideration of the political, social and economic concerns, in addition to a scientific understanding of the subject.

This was stated by Prof R Krishnan from the Institute of Environmental Studies, Pune, while addressing a seminar on 'Relevant topics in environment' at Anupam Dham College of Environmental Studies in Kidwai Nagar here recently.

He said droughts, growing populations and agriculture businesses had further strained the decreasing water supply and this engendered the need of making environment an elaborate study keeping in view the changing environment.

He said it was high time universities focused on supporting topics of environment.

He said to help resolve some of the environmental issues, policy makers, scientists, and government planners were looking for the most efficient ways to use natural resources with the least negative impact.

He said environmental management was where the interdisciplinary nature of environmental studies truly shone because one must consider the scientific, economic and social aspects of the area to be managed. Prof Krishnan said sustainability was an environmental management practice that had been gaining popularity in recent years. He said it addressed ways that one could use natural resources now without compromising the economic and social development of future generations. He said a major portion of environmental management was the creation of environmental policies to ensure industrial activities did not negatively impact the environment.

## Minister asks students to focus on research work

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Minister of State for Higher Education Neelima Katiyar, while addressing a virtual session of India International Science Festival, said all the lands belonging to schools, colleges and gram sabhas would be digitised to end all frauds and land-grabbing incidents.

She said no one then would be able to grab government lands.

Katiyar said this would be done through remote sensing and it would be under the possession of the district administration.

She said the government, in a bid to promote research work, was giving scholarships and financial helps and in the year 2019-20 over 47 students were given scholarships of Rs 50,000 each. She said apart from this, they would be provided resources for motivating them to take up research work on priority.

She said India had immense talent and they only needed the right opportunity at the right time.

The minister said the government was also planning to set up village information system which would also have a web portal.

She said the outlines for ponds and water sources had been identified and the survey work had already taken off in a big way.

She said India was taking a big leap into higher education and it would be using technology to achieve the aims.

She appealed to students to be focused on research work as the country needed them and this alone could make India a force to reckon with in the world.

## Vajpayee a big motivation to students: MM principal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Mahila Mahavidyalaya Principal Dr BR Agarwal while addressing a function on Atal Bihari Vajpayee's birth anniversary at the college on Thursday, said the former prime minister was not only a politician but also a great writer, poet and thinker and above all a statesman. She appealed to the students to emulate the great leader so that the nation progressed in the future.

Dr Agarwal said Vajpayee was on many occasions given the 'Best Parliamentarian Award' and his speeches were unparalleled and his criticism was never bitter for any other politician. She said under his rule, there had been remarkable development in various fields and he was recognised as one of the best statesmen across the world. She said in the current times Vajpayee was a big motivation to the students and he was still the ideal persona of millions of people not only in India but across the world. During the 5-day celebrations, many competitions including poster, quiz, essay writing and poetry recital were organised.

Dr Rashmi Chaturvedi said that in poster making, Sriшти stood first while in poetry recital Karishma Sharma and Aparna Tripathi were joint winners and in English poster making Alisha stood first and in essay writing Nandini Gupta stood first. The panel of judges comprised Dr Indumati Singh, Dr Pushpa Yadav, Dr Nishi Singh, Dr Deepali Srivastava, Dr Sarita Verma.

Meanwhile, in association with the Humankind Welfare, a blood donation camp was also organised on Wednesday. Around 200 students of NCC, NSS and Physical Education department donated their blood. Dr Agarwal highlighted the importance of blood donation. Dr Shaqueel and Abul Hasan of Humankind Welfare were present. The proceedings were conducted by NSS incharge Dr Saba Yunus with Physical Education incharge Dr Deepali Nigam and NCC incharge Lt Richa Chhibber. Around 27 students of the college also donated their blood.

# NER GM inspects rly hospital

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

General Manager of North Eastern Railway (NER) Vinay Kumar Tripathi on Wednesday did a thorough inspection of Lalit Narayan Mishra Central Railway Hospital here. During the inspection the inauguration of the newly-installed Mars-30 high frequency 400 milli ampere X-ray machine in the Radiology department was done by unveiling the plaque. On the occasion Medical Director, Railway Hospital Dr Kumar Umesh, PCE Satish Kumar Pandey along with senior doctors, senior railway officers and paramedical staff of Railway Hospital were present. GM inspected the ICU, ICCU, dialysis unit, cardiac lab, operation theatre, phys-



iotherapy centre, diabetic cardio unit, medical intermediate ward, covid unit, covid ward, pathology etc. After receiving information about treatment and facilities being given to patients he gave instructions for necessary improvements in them.

He obtained information about available medical equipment at the hospital and stressed on availability of advanced ones. The GM directed to make available necessary medical equipment, medicines and other facilities for the treatment of patients. He expressed satisfaction over cleanliness and maintenance there besides good treatment being provided to the patients from available resources.

# DRM's directive to officials

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) of Varanasi Division of NER Vijay Kumar Panjiar inspected several stations, including Bhatni, Siwan, Mairwa, Kusumhi and Deoria Sadar, along with senior divisional officers and members of Business Development Unit (BDU) on Wednesday with an aim to attract more traditional and non-conventional freight loading, increase speed of goods trains and ensure safe traffic movement. DRM inspected goods loading/unloading sides, sheds and condition of approach roads at different stations apart from discussing matters related to freight improvement with BDU members. During his hectic inspection, he first reached Bhatni Jn and after reviewing the progress of ongoing projects and passengers' amenities, Panjiar asked the officers concerned to accelerate the pace of development works. He then reached Mairwa station inspecting the facilities being given to traders at goods shed there. He instructed the officers to ensure proper cleanliness, widening of approach roads, adequate lighting and better facilities to labourers there. Later he inspected Siwan goods



Kusumhi railway station and inspected goods siding and coal godown. He suggested sprinkling of water to reduce pollution caused by coal dust. At the end of his inspection, DRM reached Deoria Sadar where apart from inspecting the railway station, he visited the health unit and instructed the authorities concerned for cleanliness and bet-

ter maintenance. He inspected the goods shed. Panjiar said NER is trying to provide maximum facilities to its traders and in this direction the BDU has also been set up on Varanasi division. He was accompanied by SDO Rohit Gupta, SDCM Sanjeev Sharma, SDE-I JK Singh, SDME(C&W) SP Srivastava, SDEE (General) Satyendra Yadav, SDS&TE Trimback Tiwari and other senior officers.

# Progressive farmers honoured

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

UP Minister of State for Energy Rama Shankar Singh Patel at a programme organised to mark the birth anniversary of former PM Chaudhary Charan Singh at Jila Panchayat Hall on Wednesday said the need of the hour was that the farmers should avail themselves of the facilities of government schemes to increase their income and contribute to the nation. Speaking as the chief guest he urged the farmers to adopt ways under which the farming could be linked with horticulture and fisheries



too. He said the government was committed to doubling their income. MLA Ratnakar Mishra emphasised on organic farming, Agricultural scientist, BHU, Dr Shri Ram Singh, deputy director, agriculture, Ashok Upadhyay, besides assistant director, fisheries, too gave tips to farmers to increase production and ways to earn more. The function started with the garlanding of Chaudhary Charan Singh's portrait and concluded with the honouring of progressive farmers. The farmers threw light on life and policies of Chaudhary Charan Singh. The vote of thanks was proposed by CDO Avinash Singh.

# One arrested with ganja

CORRESPONDENT ■ JALAIUN

On the directive of SP Yashveer Singh and ASP Dr Awadhesh Singh police apprehended one accused along with 53 kg of illegal ganja. Orai CO Santosh Kumar said the accused Jitendra Kumar, a native of Basrauli village under Moth police station in Jhansi, was arrested from Ajnari underbridge under Kotwali Orai police station. Police confiscated 53 kg of ganja, a stolen scooter (UP-93/A 0137), ₹170 and two cell phones from him. He said police had filed an FIR against the accused. During interrogation he had disclosed that few others



were involved in the illegal supply of ganja which they got from Barhampur district in Odisha, the CO said and added all the accused would be behind bars soon. The team which made the arrest comprised inspector Sudhakar Mishra, SOG incharge inspector Praveen Kumar, surveillance incharge S-I Ajay Kumar Singh, S-Is Kulbhushan Singh, Chandan Pandey, Vijay Singh and Mohit Yadav besides Anjali, Satyendra Kumar, Shailendra Chauhan, Karmveer Singh, Gaurav Bajpai, Jagdish Chandra, Niranjana Singh, Vinay Chauhan, Necty Kumar, Manoj Sonkar and Shree Ram Prapajati.

# LTT-Gkp special timing revised

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The railway administration by revising the timings and stoppages of the following trains already being run for the convenience of passengers is extending them. However, their coach composition will remain the same. All coaches in them will be of reserved category and passengers will have to follow the Covid-19 prevention guidelines, CPRO PK Singh said.

**LTT-GKP BIWEEKLY SPL:** The run of 02165 Lokmanya Tilak Terminus (LTT)-Gorakhpur biweekly special has been extended from January 4 to February 1, 2021. As per the revising timing and stoppage the 02165 LTT-Gorakhpur biweekly special will leave LTT every Thursday and Monday at 06.00 hrs, Thane at 06.20 hrs, Kalyan at 06.40 hrs, Nashik Road at 09.10 hrs, Manmad at 10.05 hrs, Jalgaon at 11.50 hrs, Bhusaval at 12.35 hrs, Itarsi at 18.10 hrs, Jabalpur at 22.00 hrs, Katni at 23.30 hrs, the second day from Satna at 00.45 hrs, Prayagraj Jn at 04.20 hrs, Janghai at 05.48 hrs, Bhadohi at 06.18 hrs, Varanasi at 07.05 hrs, Mau at 08.32 hrs, Deoria Sadar at 10.17 hrs and reach Gorakhpur at 11.25 hrs. During the return journey the run of 02166 Gorakhpur-LTT bi-weekly special has been extended from January 5 to February 2. The 02166 Gorakhpur-LTT special will every Friday and Tuesday leave Gorakhpur at 15.45 hrs, Deoria Sadar at 16.32 hrs, Mau at 18.00 hrs, Varanasi at 20.20 hrs, Bhadohi at 20.58 hrs, Janghai at 21.28 hrs, Prayagraj Jn at 23.30 hrs, the second day Satna at 02.20 hrs, Katni at 03.35 hrs, Jabalpur at 05.00 hrs, Itarsi at 08.55 hrs, Bhusaval at 13.25 hrs, Jalgaon at 14.00 hrs, Manmad at 16.00 hrs, Nashik Road at 17.00 hrs, Kalyan at

19.50 hrs, Thane at 20.15 hrs and will reach LTT at 20.50 hrs. **LTT-MANDUADIH SPL:** The run of 02167 LTT-Manduadih daily special has been extended from January 1 to 31, 2021. As per the revised timing and stoppage, the 02167 LTT-Manduadih special will leave LTT daily at 22.45 hrs. Kalyan at 23.30 hrs, Nashik Road at 02.15 hrs, Bhusaval at 05.50 hrs, Khandwa at 08.20 hrs, Itarsi at 10.50 hrs, Jabalpur at 14.30 hrs, Katni at 15.55 hrs, Satna at 18.00 hrs, Manikpur at 19.22 hrs, Prayagraj Chheoki at 21.12 hrs, Varanasi at 01.35 hrs on the third day and reach Manduadih at 01.55 hrs. During the return journey the run of 02168 Manduadih-LTT daily special has been extended from January 2 to February 1, 2021. As per the revised timing and stoppage, the 02168 Manduadih-LTT special will daily leave Manduadih at 10.10 hrs, Varanasi at 10.35 hrs, Prayagraj Chheoki at 13.45 hrs, Manikpur at 16.05 hrs, Satna at 17.15 hrs, Katni at 18.35 hrs, Jabalpur at 20.10 hrs, on the second day Itarsi at 00.50 hrs, Khandwa at 03.25 hrs, Bhusaval at 05.15 hrs, Nashik at 08.55 hrs, Kalyan at 11.35 hrs and reach LTT at 12.30 hrs.

**LTT-GKP DAILY SPL:** The railway administration has made changes in the timings and stoppages of 01015/01116 LTT-Gorakhpur-Lokmanya Tilak-daily special. The 01015 LTT-Gorakhpur daily special will be run from January 1 to April 8, 2021 as per the changed time and stoppage. As a result the 01015 LTT-Gorakhpur regular special will daily leave Lokmanya Tilak at 23.59 hrs, Thane at 01.00 hrs, Kalyan at 01.20 hrs, Nashik Road at 04.05 hrs, Manmad at 05.05 hrs, Chalisgaon at 06.10 hrs, Pachora at 06.35 hrs, Jalgaon at 07.25 hrs, Bhusaval at

08.00 hrs, Raver at 08.35 hrs, Burhanpur at 08.50 hrs, Khandwa at 10.15 hrs, Khirkiya at 11.12 hrs, Harda at 11.40 hrs, Timarni at 11.55 hrs, Itarsi at 13.10 hrs, Hoshangabad at 13.30 hrs, Mandi Deep at 14.25 hrs, Habibganj at 14.50 hrs, Bhopal at 15.10 hrs, Vidisha at 15.57 hrs, Ganjbasoda at 16.27 hrs, Bina at 17.20 hrs, Lalitpur at 18.01 hrs, Jhansi at 19.15 hrs, Orai at 20.42 hrs, Kalpi at 21.12 hrs, the third day Kanpur Central at 00.15 hrs, Unnao at 00.44 hrs, Aishbagh at 01.52 hrs, Badshahnagar at 02.14 hrs, Barabanki at 02.47 hrs, Gonda at 04.02 hrs, Mankapur at 04.26 hrs, Babhanan at 04.52 hrs, Basti at 05.22 hrs, Khalilabad at 05.46 hrs and reach Gorakhpur at 07.05 hrs. During the return journey 01016 Gorakhpur-LTT daily special will be run from January 3 to April 10 as per the changed timing and stoppage. As a result the 01016 Gorakhpur-LTT daily will leave Gorakhpur at 17.45 hrs daily, Khalilabad at 18.26 hrs, Basti at 18.55 hrs, Babhanan at 19.20 hrs, Mankapur at 19.46 hrs, Gonda at 20.25 hrs, Barabanki at 22.05 hrs, Badshahnagar at 22.43 hrs, Aishbagh at 23.35 hrs, Unnao at 00.55 hrs, Kanpur Central at 01.35 hrs, Kalpi at 02.47 hrs, Orai at 03.16 hrs, Jhansi at 05.38 hrs, Lalitpur at 06.45 hrs, Bina at 07.45 hrs, Ganjbasoda at 08.20 hrs, Vidisha at 08.48 hrs, Bhopal at 10.05 hrs, Habibganj at 10.20 hrs, Mandi Deep at 10.35 hrs, Hoshangabad at 11.30 hrs, Itarsi at 12.00 hrs, Timarni at 12.45 hrs, Harda at 13.02 hrs, Khirkiya at 13.30 hrs, Khandwa at 14.40 hrs, Burhanpur at 15.35 hrs, Raver at 15.55 hrs, Bhusawal at 17.00 hrs, Jalgaon at 17.30 hrs, Pachora at 18.05 hrs, Chalisgaon at 18.45 hrs, Manmad at 19.40 hrs and stopping at Nashik Road, Kalyan and Thane and reach LTT at 00:10 hrs.



# Call Parliament Session to repeal agri laws: RaGa



PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Hitting out at Centre over its handling of the farmers' protest, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Thursday demanded immediate Parliament session to repeal the controversial farm Bills.

Rahul said there is no democracy in India after he met President Ram Nath Kovind as part of Congress delegation with two crore signatures against the farm laws. Rahul Gandhi, senior party leaders Ghulam Nabi Azad and Adhir Chowdhury were allowed to visit the Rashtrapati Bhawan while all others, including Priyanka Gandhi, were detained.

After meeting with the President, Rahul Gandhi said, "I want to tell PM Modi that farmers will not go back home if there's no repeal of the farm laws. The Centre should call a joint session of Parliament and repeal the laws. All opposition parties are with the farmers."

Rahul Gandhi told the President the laws were "anti-farmer" and would make farm-

ers suffer huge losses. He said the Opposition stood with the farmers who have been camping at Delhi's borders for over a month now demanding the repeal of the legislations.

"We took crores of signatures... the voices of farmers. The PM will have to listen to them. The entire country is watching. It is cold, and the farmers are suffering, dying. I am warning you. Nobody can stand against the farmers," the Gandhi scion said.

Rahul Gandhi alleged that only three-four people are running the system and said the Congress is fighting this.

"It is an assault on the idea of India. The government is stopping our MPs from moving out of our office... There is no democracy in India, it is only in imagination, not in reality," said Rahul Gandhi, after coming out of the meet-

ing. Expressing solidarity, the Congress leaders said the Opposition stands with farmers. "The protesting farmers will not stop the protest till the laws are repealed. There is no democracy in India," he said flanked by party leaders.

As the march was stopped, Priyanka Gandhi said, "Any dissent against this government is classified as having elements of terror. We are undertaking this march to voice our support for the farmers."

Priyanka Gandhi also said, "We're living in a democracy and they are elected MPs. They have the right to meet the President and they should be allowed. What is the problem with that? Government is not ready to listen to voices of lakhs of farmers camping at borders."

## Bharat Biotech applies for emergency-use nod for Covid vaccine

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech, which is developing the country's indigenous coronavirus vaccine in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), has again applied to the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) for the emergency-use authorisation.

**E m e r g e n c y - U s e** Authorisation is a mechanism to facilitate the availability and use of medical countermeasures, including vaccines, during public health emergencies.

Bharat Biotech had first applied for the emergency use authorisation of its vaccine on 7 December and presented its proposal, along with the interim safety and immunogenicity data of Phase 1 and 2 clinical trials.

The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisations (CDSCO) expert panel had, however, recommended that the firm should present the safety and efficacy data from the ongoing Phase 3 clinical trial in the country for further consideration, said the sources in the Union Health Ministry.

Bharat Biotech's COVAXIN, an inactivated vaccine candidate, is currently undergoing Phase 3 human clinical trials on

26,000 volunteers over 25 centres across India, after having undergone Phase 1 and 2 trials involving 1,000 volunteers.

Meanwhile, the Serum Institute of India (SII) has also submitted the additional data asked by the DCGI determining safety and immunogenicity of its COVID-19 vaccine candidate, Covishield.

America's Pfizer was the first to apply on 4 December, followed by Pune-based SII and Bharat Biotech who applied on 6 and 7 December, respectively. Pfizer had, however, requested more time to make a presentation before the committee.

India is likely to have a Covid-19 vaccine approved for emergency use before December end as CDSCO's expert panel is set to review the application of SII, Bharat Biotech and Pfizer for emergency use authorisation.

Meanwhile, Aurobindo Pharma Limited and Covaxx, a US-based company, have entered into an exclusive license agreement to develop, commercialize and manufacture UB-612, the first Multitope Peptide-based vaccine to fight Covid-19, for India and the UN Children's Fund (Unicef) agency. COVAXX is currently conducting a Phase 1 clinical trial for the vaccine candidate.

## ED attaches ₹1.85-cr fix deposits, cash in Kerala gold smuggling



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has provisionally attached fixed deposits along with the cash recovered from the bank lockers worth ₹1.85 crore in Kerala Gold Smuggling Case. Among the attached assets, properties worth ₹1 crore belongs to IAS officer and former Principal Secretary to Chief Minister of Kerala, M Sivasankar.

The ED had initiated investigation under Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) on the basis of NIAs FIR filed before the Special Court for NIA cases in Kochi against Sarith P S, Swapna Prabha Suresh, Faisal Fareed and Sandeep Nair under various sections of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

The Customs Commissionerate (Preventive), Cochin had seized 30 kg gold worth ₹14.82 crore at Trivandrum International Airport on July 5, 2020. The seized gold was camouflaged as diplomatic baggage to UAE Consulate, which has immunity from checking at airport as per Vienna convention.

The consignment was to be received by the accused Sarith P S, who worked in UAE Consulate earlier as Public Relations Officer in complicity with Swapna Prabha Suresh, Sandeep Nair and others.

"During the course of investigation under PMLA, it was revealed that the accused persons namely Sarith P S, Swapna Prabha Suresh, Faisal Fareed and Sandeep Nair indulged in illegal smuggling of gold to India and huge amount of Proceeds of Crime (POC) were generated," the ED said in a statement.

Identified POC totalling to ₹1.85 belonging to the accused persons have been provisionally attached under PMLA, it further said.

Accused Sivasankar was arrested by the ED on October 28 and is presently undergoing judicial custody. Earlier a prosecution complaint (chargesheet) was filed in the case.

## ED seizes ₹4,109 crore asset under PMLA in Agri Gold Ponzi case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has provisionally attached assets worth ₹4,109 crore under Prevention of Money laundering Act (PMLA) in Agri Gold Ponzi fraud Case involving fraud of ₹6,380 crore.

The attached assets include 2,809 landed properties, Haailand Amusement Park of Arka Leisure and Entertainments Private Limited in Andhra Pradesh spread over 48 acres, shares of various companies, plants and machinery.

These attached properties are located in Andhra Pradesh's Anantpur, Kurnool, Krishna, Chittoor, Guntur, Kadapa, Vizianagaram, East and West Godavari, Visakhapatnam, Nellore, Prakasam, Srikakulam and Kadapa districts.

The properties attached in Karnataka are located in Bengaluru, Kolar, Yadgir and Mandya.

In Odisha, it is in Khurda district. Krishnagiri District of Tamil Nadu.

In Telangana, properties were attached in Mahaboob Nagar, Narayanpet, Khammam, Mahboob Nagar, Hyderabad, Ranga Reddy, Vikarabad, Medchal, Malkajigiri, Nalgonda and Mahabubnagar districts.

The ED had initiated investigation under PMLA based on multiple FIRs lodged in the

States of AP, Telangana and Karnataka.

"The scam was perpetrated by accused Avva Venkata Rama Rao through Agri Gold Group of Companies. Avva Venkata Rama Rao hatched a well planned conspiracy and along with his seven brothers and other associates setting up more than 150 companies and started collecting deposits from general public with a promise of providing developed plots/farm lands or withdrawal at a high rate of return on maturity/pre-term," the ED said in a statement.

Thousands of commission agents were engaged to lure people with various schemes for hefty commission and managed to collect ₹6,380 crore from 32,02,628 investor accounts, it said.

In the end, the gullible investors neither got plots nor could recover their deposits. Investigation under PMLA further revealed that Agri Gold Group companies used to lure the gullible public to join as depositors in their schemes either directly or through their agents under the pretext of real estate deal.

The ED probe further revealed that Avva Venkata Rama Rao and his family went on a siphoning spree and illegally diverted the public deposits and invested in myriad verticals and in private companies which were directly owned by their family.

## Air pilots refuse to accept paltry 5% rollback in 'illegal' pay cut



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Air India pilots have refused to accept the paltry 5 per cent rollback in "illegal pay cut" and asked Air India CMD to donate it towards funds for building of the new Parliament building or PM CARES fund.

In a letter to Rajiv Bansal, Air India Chairman and Managing Director, the two pilot associations — Indian Pilots' Guild and Indian Commercial Pilots' Association — said, "We do not accept this paltry 5 per cent roll back in illegal pay cut and you may advise the concerned to donate this 5 per cent towards funds for building the Parliament or PM CARES".

The pilots said that they would be forced to resort to 'industrial action'.

They said they have given the management every benefit of doubt as well as ample time

**THE LETTER STATED THAT PARLIAMENTARIANS ALSO HAVE ONLY TAKEN 30 PER CENT CUT ON GROSS EMOLUMENTS AND VEHEMENTLY REFUSED TO TAKE A HIGHER CUT**

to redress the issue of disproportionate pay cut for Air India pilots and its subsidiaries. "If we do not see a timely substantial reduction in this disproportionate pay cut, we will be forced to seek justice through harsher means including 'Industrial Action'," they added.

The letter stated that parliamentarians also have only taken 30 per cent cut on gross emoluments and vehemently refused to take a higher cut. "While the parliamentarians themselves have taken a cut of only 30 per cent on gross emoluments and vehemently

refused to take a higher cut, we think it is completely egregious for us pilots to continue tolerating this arbitrary massive pay cut of 55 per cent on our gross emoluments," stated the letter.

"This pittance in the form of a 5 per cent decrease in the current wage cut is an outright insult, its sting magnified in light of our unwavering support and trust in this company. This 'generosity' amounts to a reduction of approximately 3 per cent in the current gross pay cut for pilots," they said.

## Pvt detectives offer Govt help to check fake Corona vaccine



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As India prepares for massive roll out of coronavirus vaccine across the country, the Association of Private Detective and Investigators (APDI) has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi offering help in dealing with the problem of counterfeit and fake items.

"During the Corona pandemic we saw the market flooding with fake sanitizers, medicines, health supplements and other critical items. We actively worked with various state governments and helped in seizure of such fake items. Now we have offered our help to government and various agencies who will be in-charge of distribution and administration of vaccine to check counterfeiting and supply of fake vaccines which is a high possibility in a big country like India," said APDI Chairman

Kunwar Vikram Singh at the International Corporate Investigators Summit.

"The Union Government had written to state governments about this crucial issue and later our investigators worked with various state police and local administrations in dealing with the situation. Our direct intervention had laid to seizure of fake items in big quantity," he added.

Singh also said the International Corporate Investigators Summit was first of its kind in the world where leaders from corporate world from India and abroad gathered to discuss the issues and challenges that the corporate world in facing in various sectors. Challenges and problems of sectors like pharma, healthcare, hospitality, tour and travel, services and IT were thoroughly discussed in the Summit.

## Cyber security course launched to make Digital India initiative safer

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

To make the Government's Digital India initiative safer and robust in rural India, the Common Service Centre (CSC), an SPV under the Ministry of Electronics and IT, has launched a cyber security course in collaboration with French institute -- Ecole Supérieure Robert de Sorbon.

"Both the courses will run through our education and vocational training arm - CSC Academy - and these courses will be specially be available to our rural youths across India. Our partnership with Ecole Supérieure Robert de Sorbon, a not-for-profit, prestigious institution of higher education from France, will add more value to our courses which have been designed keeping mind the improve chances of employment and to promote entrepreneurship among our youths in rural areas," said CSC Managing Director Dr Dinesh Tyagi.

The French Institute will support CSC to enable Cyber Security Course at CSC Academies across India. The CSC has also started CAD and 3D Printing courses in collaboration with the French company to enhance skills and improve employability of rural youths.

The CSC Academy, an arm of CSC, is a not-for-profit society which is committed to teaching, delivering of specialized courses/ training programmes, leadership, communication skills and promotion of entrepreneurship among the rural masses in India.

## Kerala moves SC against HC order increasing number of pilgrims to Sabarimala temple

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Kerala Government has moved the Supreme Court challenging the State High Court's verdict which had directed it to increase the number of pilgrims to the historic Sabarimala temple to 5,000 per day, saying it will put a "great strain" on police personnel and health officials in view of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The state government, in its petition filed in the apex court against the December 18 judgement of the Kerala High Court, has said the state had constituted a high-level committee headed by the chief secretary which had set the number of pilgrims per day to 2,000 on weekdays and 3,000 on weekends respectively.

It said that to control the COVID-19 pandemic during the Sabarimala temple festival season between December 20 and January 14 next year, the state had constituted the high-

level committee to consider all aspects and to fix the number of pilgrims who can be permitted per day to visit the shrine.

It said the committee, in a meeting convened on December 14, considered the report submitted by revised health advisory of the Health and Family Welfare Department and enhanced the number of pilgrims per day to 2,000 on weekdays and 3,000 on weekends.

"The high court disposed of the writ petitions filed by some of the respondents herein, with a direction to the government to increase the number of pilgrims per day to 5,000. The enhancement of pilgrims was done by the high court without considering any proper report or other documents. The number of police officials, health officials and pilgrims affected by COVID-19 in the Sabarimala temple so far is on the higher side," the State Government

said in its petition, filed through advocate G Prakash.

It said that entry to the temple is controlled by a virtual queue managed by police and pilgrims are tested for COVID-19 before allowing them to enter the temple.

"Increase in the number of pilgrims will put police personnel and officials of the health department in great strain and difficulty in controlling the pilgrims of this magnitude," it said.

"It is also reported on the media that a new COVID-19 virus was detected in England and considering the spread of new virus, Government of India cancelled all flights to and from England. This being the situation the Government of Kerala, seeks urgent interference of this court with the impugned judgment to control the spread of COVID-19 during the Sabarimala festival season," it said.

## PIL in SC seeks appointment of chairperson, members to 22nd Law Commission

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A plea was filed Thursday in the Supreme Court seeking direction to the Centre to declare the Law Commission as a "statutory body" and appoint the chairperson and members to the panel within a month.

The PIL has been filed by BJP leader and lawyer Ashwini Upadhyay and made the ministries of Home Affairs and Law and Justice as well as the Law Commission of India as parties.

The plea said the cause of action arose on August 31, 2018 and is still continuing when the tenure of the 21st Law Commission ended but the Centre has neither extended the tenure of its Chairperson and Members nor notified the 22nd Law Commission.

Although, on February 19, 2020, Centre approved constitution of Twenty-second Law Commission but it has not appointed the Chairperson and Members till date.

## Rahul laying on '2 crore farmers signed' memo submitted to Prez: Tomar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Thursday lashed out at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, alleging that his claim that the memorandum he submitted to the President was signed by more than 2 crore farmers had no signatures in it from the community.

He also asserted that no one from the Congress party had even met kisan leaders for that. Tomar said that several farmers have denied signing any document sent by the Congress party.

"Whatever Rahul Gandhi says, even Congress doesn't take it seriously. Today when he went to register his protest with the President with signatures, these farmers told me that no one from Congress came to them to get their sig-



nature. Farmers from Baghat have given me a letter in support of Centre's Farm Laws. They have told me that the Government shouldn't buckle under any pressure to make amendments to farm bills," Tomar said after meeting Rashtriya Kisan Mazdoor Sangh members from Baghat. A delegation of 60 farmers belonging to Kisaan Majdoor Sangh, Baghat met Tomar at Krishi Bhawan and gave a letter in support of centre's farm laws. Besides, a delegation of the Kisan Sena also met Tomar and discussed the farm laws.

## BKU (Lok Shakti) moves SC challenging farm laws, seeks impleadment in pending matter

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Bharatiya Kisan Union (Lok Shakti) has moved the Supreme Court challenging the three new farm laws, against which various farmer unions are staging protest at several border points of Delhi, and sought impleadment in the matter pending in the apex court.

In an application seeking impleadment in the pending petition, Bharatiya Kisan Union (Lok Shakti) has claimed that the new farm laws "promote corporate interest" and are not concerned with the "interest of farmers".

The plea, filed through advocate A P Singh, alleged that these acts are "unconstitutional" and anti-farmer as it would "dismantle the

Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC) system intended to ensure fair prices for farm products".

"The implementation of the acts in its current form will spell disaster for the farming community by opening a parallel market which is unregulated and gives enough place for exploitation of the Indian farmers," the application said.

It claimed that farmers are "very much scared that these acts also lead to corporatisation of the entire agriculture market and the prices can be driven up or down by the corporates".

While hearing the matter related to farmers protest, a bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde 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.

Several farmer unions, including the BKU, have been impleaded as respondents in the matter pending in the top court.



## Sailors stranded

As China blocks Australian coal vessels in the middle of a trade war, India must intervene to rescue our seamen



A humanitarian crisis is brewing in the middle of a China-Australia trade war, which has left stranded stocks as well as sailors on the high seas, and neither country is claiming responsibility for either the return of the cargo ships or allowing even temporary docking rights. China, which has so far procured coal from Australia, has refused the consignment following growing diplomatic hostilities, what with Australia increasingly showing a pro-West tilt and initiating the global fair probe demand for the Wuhan contagion, implicitly holding China responsible for the spread of the COVID virus. Now 400 sailors and two

million tonnes of coal are stuck on ships off China's northeast coast. The shipment is spread across 21 bulk carriers and is valued at around \$200 million, so there is a huge economic cost involved. Reports say that 15 of the ships have been waiting since June, stranding the crew on board, who are not allowed to get off, given the existing maritime COVID protocols. Many of the sailors on the Australian vessels are Indian. China says they can turn the vessel around but the seafarers were prevented from doing so by the owners, who didn't want to readjust a "non-profitable" sailing plan. As the two nations are engaged in diplomatic sabre-rattling, 40 Indian sailors are suffering because travel restrictions in the wake of new pandemic alerts mean that they can't be offloaded on to another ship passing by the waters. Apart from the complete violation of labour codes and human rights, the blockade has also halted the movement of other ships in the maritime corridor, affecting global supply chains.

In no small part, China is using the crisis to arm-twist both Australia and India. Apart from rallying behind the global probe demand on the Wuhan contagion, what has really angered the Chinese is that both the nations have joined the US and Japan in policing its ambitions in the South China Sea as part of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or Quad. This new grouping also formalised its military vigilance and cooperation strategies through a series of recent naval drills. In fact, at one time India was wary of Australia's role, considering its deep dependence on Chinese markets. After all, China continues to be Australia's largest trading partner and accounts for 32.6 per cent of its exports. Besides, China has sourced iron ore, coal and gas from Australia because of its geographical proximity and quality, preferring the latter over Brazil. India had never thought that Australia would do anything to jeopardise this mutually beneficial relationship. Also, both India and Australia, being in the neighbourhood, didn't exactly want to rile up China or risk a hit back by overtly upping the dragon's anxieties. But the Wuhan contagion and Beijing's imperialist aggressiveness in the region changed all that. This is significant geopolitically because four of the biggest democracies with stakes in the region are collectively committed to preserving open waters and holding off China's misadventures to monopolise them. The initiative allows inter-operability among the four partners, which means accessing and using one another's strengths and bases to pursue their common mission. This makes the Quad formidable. The full-fledged military alliance gives a robustness of entity, one which can now embolden Quad plus the US to coalesce together against China. Except for the US, nobody in the group had directly dared to call out China. With a military-level agreement, there should not be trust issues anymore. And if mutual interests and concerns find congruence, it could over time become what the US calls a NATO-like presence in Asia that could contain China's expansionist designs. Most significantly, the military alliance could also be strengthened to being an economic coalition; for example setting up a Quad Free Trade Agreement (FTA) to attract investment and set up an alternative supply chain and management network. This is what riles China, which now sees both India and Australia as US stooges in the region. Earlier, it had imposed an 80 per cent tariff on Australian barley and banned beef imports. Ever since, Australia has been looking for allies to divert its exports. One of the results was the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, to which Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Prime Minister Narendra Modi agreed on June 4. One hopes that Modi can prevail upon Morrison to ensure that some rehabilitative measures can be taken since China is testing the new strategic friendship.

## Logistical headache

Delivering the COVID vaccine across India will be a challenge and the Government must be prepared to face a few setbacks



We should be clear about one thing: The COVID-19 outbreak might not be the last such pandemic to scourge mankind. And while pandemics usually occur every few centuries, the next one could be just around the corner. We have in the past nine months developed and deployed protocols, technology and, most importantly, bolstered public health systems. Yet, thousands have died in India and we may not know the accurate death toll for some more time to come. Even going by the Union Health Ministry's data as updated on Thursday, the single-day rise of 24,712 COVID-19 cases and 312 fatalities has pushed India's virus caseload to 1,01,23,778 and the death toll to 1,46,756; and

sceptics don't seem to be too kind on the Government when they proclaim that the establishment is deliberately downplaying the figures to shroud its incompetence and poor handling of the scourge. But as multiple vaccines are developed to combat the virus that has ripped the global economy asunder, we should be pragmatic about how the Government will deliver the vaccine across the country. There will be missteps and some failures, too, from people jumping the queue to the almost certain petty corruption, many of which instances will be played up by those trying to score political points. There is almost certainly going to be an anti-vaccine campaign as well, by some because they don't believe in vaccinations and by others because they will say that the technology rolled out to manage the deployment will be an affront to their right to privacy. There will always be malcontents and those who are dyed-in-the-wool anti-establishment people disguised as libertarians.

Thankfully, as of now, there is widespread support for inoculation among the public in India who have witnessed how the nation eradicated polio and has taken massive strides in public health in the past two decades. There will have to be fairness in how the vaccine is rolled out and we must prioritise frontline healthcare and security staff as well as senior citizens who are among the most susceptible groupings to the risk to contracting the virus. And there should be an active campaign by the Government to curb the inevitable spread of fake information. Many individuals and entities have rightly argued that false information and fake news have been a pox on democracy and fake news and information on healthcare carry the very clear and present danger of death. Several groups on social media sites are already filled with snake-oil solutions such as immunity boosters which actually do nothing to stop the spread of the virus. This is a problem that policymakers on the health front have to deal with as urgently as they are tackling the challenges of deployment. Already, amid mounting concerns over the detection of a mutated and more virulent strain of COVID-19 in the United Kingdom (UK), one State after another is scampering through to trace the UK returnees in the past month, with the Meghalaya Government altogether barring the entry of individuals from the European country into the State with immediate effect. In view of such scary developments, it is, therefore, essential on several fronts that India deals with the pandemic and gets back to work with its full might, intent and purpose.

JS RAJPUT

Democracy depends upon objective interactions, respectful dialogues and mutual trust. People may differ in their viewpoints but they need not resist combined efforts to find solutions and settle differences, no matter how serious these may be. The year 2020 shall be remembered for the Shaheen Bagh dharana and Kisan Satyagrah. Normally, the word "Satyagrah" reminds one of Gandhiji who had modified the original term "Sadagrah" to "Satyagrah". Democracy allows protests; Gandhiji gave the weapon of Satyagrah not only to India but to the entire world, and its potential was never in doubt. It took roots not only in India but was also used by luminaries like Martin Luther King Jr and Nelson Mandela. As the inheritors of Gandhian legacy, India and Indians have a special responsibility to ensure that it is not converted into 'Asatyagrah'. In unimpeachable agitations organised within India, Satyagrah gets reduced to a mockery.

No one cares for the truth, non-violence invariably becomes a casualty and human lives are wasted without any hesitation or a sense of shame. These days, the "leaders" go on hunger strike — *Upवास* — for just a few hours! The literal meaning of *Upवास* is "being near the soul" but most demonstrations and protests are hijacked by politicians. India seriously needs its intellectuals to play their role: Get out of the slumber of callousness and take a strictly objective view of national aspirations, expectations of the young as well as to ensure that the principle of trusteeship is strictly upheld in thought and deeds of those who have the reins of authority. It is their obligation to name and shame all those who have forgotten about human values, social obligations, the responsibility to give dignity to every human being, to be specially concerned and supportive of children, women and those standing last in the line. While the developed and modern countries may be overwhelmed in their materialistic pursuits, India just cannot abandon its eternal responsibility to move ahead in spiritual quest, and thereby place the right path in front of humanity. Indians are inheritors of a civilisation which respects the criticality of the sensitive man-nature relationship and believes in meeting human survival needs from nature; and despises its wanton destruction to meet his greed. India alone could get the humanity out of concerns like environmental destruction, climate changes, water scarcity, air pollution,

# Are we a civilised society?

India's intellectuals need to ensure that the principle of trusteeship is strictly upheld in the thought and deeds of those who have the reins of authority



soil degradation, melting of glaciers, vanishing of species, flora and fauna, and much more. The ideology of progress has to be redefined in national context, keeping in view the global considerations and treating the world as one family. India must rise and present before the world a working model of "science with humanity" and "knowledge with character". It is time that the contours of civilisation are incisively delineated and the march towards a world of peace is guided by humanism, welfare of all and a practising civil society that cares for everyone. It would require a long-term strategy and it shall have to be implemented through education. There is no other way out.

What is civilisation? This query was once posed by Swami Vivekananda, and his own answer was: "It is the feeling of the divine within." And how does one discover that divinity? Through education that is both secular and spiritual. He gave us that illustrious eternal statement: "Education is the manifestation of perfection already in man." He was convinced that what India needs most is "education, education and more education"! The first duty of the nation is to educate people, extricate them out of ignorance and self-negation: "Educate people and they would be able to solve their own problems." To him, education was of no use if it didn't prepare the masses for the struggles of life. More importantly, it was to bring out the strength of character, spirit of philanthropy and the courage of a lion. India has suffered enough in the way of negative education. Delinking of Indians from India was a deliberate strategy imposed

by the alien rulers and, unfortunately, the model was perpetuated by those who inherited power and authority at the time of Independence. Over the decades, people have realised the gravity of the folly and there are enough indications in the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020, that things shall change. The policy formulates: "A holistic and multi-disciplinary education would aim at developing all capacities of human beings — intellectual, aesthetic, social, physical, emotional and moral, in an integrated manner." The formulation is further augmented by the emphasis on value-based education "which will include the development of humanistic, ethical, constitutional and universal human values of truth (*satya*), righteous conduct (*dharma*), peace (*shanti*), love (*prem*), non-violence (*ahimsa*) and others". One fervently expects all this to equip every learner to discover the treasure within him. This is the path to a truly civilised world.

There, however, are serious impediments to traverse the newly chalked out pathway. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in the virtual mode, unveiled the statue of Swami Vivekananda on the campus of the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU). There was sustained opposition to the very installation of the statue, and it was not a rare occurrence. In this university, the activities, agitations and full-throated support of certain ideologically constrained groups of students and teachers to even the groups and individuals who do not believe in India's unity and integrity as a nation often baffle those who think independently, have the

national welfare uppermost in their mind and retain objectivity even in provocative situations. JNU is a great institution that should be the melting pot for varied thought, ideas and imagination. In a world torn by conflicts, violence, wars and weaponisation, universities have a great role to play in augmenting social cohesion and religious amity. They have to work for the culture of acceptance, far ahead of tolerance. This is the Indian tradition which has to be strengthened.

Universities, including JNU, just cannot afford to ignore the stirring words of Jawaharlal Nehru who considered these as the pace setters of peace and progress at the national level, and from there it must extend to the global scenario: "A university stands for humanism, for tolerance, for reason, for the adventure of ideas and for the search of truth. It stands for the onward march of the human race towards higher objectives. If the universities discharge adequately, all is well with the people and the nation." Great universities would never relish the tag of being politically or ideologically oriented. The people and the nation expect JNU to become a centre of nourishing civilisation. It could really work seriously on comprehending the culture of acceptance of diversity.

In his 1932 book, *Remakers of Mankind*, Carl Washburne writes that when asked "What is your goal in education when India obtains self-rule", Gandhiji replied: "Character building. I would strive to develop courage, strength, virtue, the ability to forget oneself in working towards great aims. This is more impor-

tant than literacy; academic learning is only a means to this great end." Character formation was the strength of the traditional Indian system of knowledge quest that included creation, generation, utilisation and transfer of knowledge to the future generations. With all the experiences gained globally in varying contexts and approaches, it is now accepted globally that education in every country must be rooted in culture and committed to progress. Character building just cannot be envisioned in isolation to culture. No culture would flourish in isolation and there can be no barriers erected in the way of children being made aware and conversant with their own culture before being introduced to the others. India painfully suffered as the transplanted system that deliberately kept young educated Indians debarred from getting familiar with the nuances of their own culture; they were systematically indoctrinated in the "superiority of the western culture". This was very comprehensively articulated by Gandhiji in the *Young India* of September 1, 1921: "It is my firm opinion that no culture has treasures so rich as ours. We have not known it; we have even been made to depreciate its value. We have almost ceased to live it."

Let us hope that the proposed educational reforms would prepare the young with credentials and they would look after the masses. Education must lead to human dignity for one and all.

(The author works in education and social cohesion. The views expressed are personal.)

## SOUNDBITE

Today, the Congress high command has formally approved the electoral alliance with the Left parties for the impending elections in West Bengal.

**Bengal Congress chief**  
—Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury



There is no possibility of a backdoor or diplomatic dialogue with India in the prevailing situation. It is not possible until Indian atrocities are stopped in Kashmir.

**Pakistan Foreign Minister**  
—Shah Mahmood Qureshi



Happy birthday daddy... you're the most positive, kind, liberal human being, and we are blessed to have your values instilled in us. I miss you so much.

**Actor**  
—Sonam K Ahuja



Ajinkya Rahane's calm and composed demeanour shouldn't be mistaken for him being weak and he will be as aggressive as Virat Kohli as the stand-in captain.

**Indian cricket legend**  
—Sachin Tendulkar



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### J&K's vocal verdict

Sir — By no stretch of imagination can the results of the District Development Council (DDC) elections in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) be seen as an endorsement of the Centre's abrogation of Article 370. On the contrary, if anything, it was an unequivocal verdict against the move. The claim of victory by the BJP is belied by actual results. However, it is gratifying to see some semblance of democracy brought about by the DDC polls.

Overall, the constituent parties of the Gupkar Alliance that are opposed to the abrogation of Article 370 and insistent on their demand for regaining what they believe is rightfully theirs, have emerged the clear winner and gained legitimacy as the people's voice. They still occupy much of the political space in the State and remain vibrantly relevant there.

The argument that the Government can unilaterally do whatever it wants on the strength of its parliamentary majority is of dubious legitimacy. The people of any region cannot be mainstreamed or integrated by disempowering them.

**G David Milton**  
Maruthancode, Tamil Nadu

### Budget should spare a thought for the elderly

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is nowadays holding consultations with various stakeholders regarding the Union Budget for 2021-22. In this document, I would expect special provisions for senior citizens to ease their problems.

The Centre and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) should jointly introduce a special long-term investment scheme with interest payable monthly for senior citizens, replacing the existing Senior Citizens Savings Scheme (SCSS) which is available at public sector banks and post offices, and Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana (PMVVY) through the LIC of India with the maximum investment limit for both schemes being ₹15 lakh each.

The suggested scheme should have a combined maximum investment limit of ₹50 lakh instead of the current total of ₹30 lakh (₹15 lakh plus ₹15 lakh in the two schemes). This step has been necessitated in view of the fall in interest rates in the Government schemes and fixed deposits (FDs). The interest should be paid per month and the Tax Deducted at Source (TDS) provision must not apply to the savings schemes meant specifically for senior citizens.

### CBI at the receiving end

Sir — After being a caged parrot of the powers that be, the inability of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to take probes and prosecution in sensational cases to their logical conclusion is dismaying. That the courts are increasingly questioning the CBI's integrity is a shocking

indictment of the latter.

In this context, a recent verdict of the Madras High Court questioning the competency, expertise and integrity of CBI officers should come as another wake-up call. The CBI "lost" in its custody 103 kg of the 400 kg gold it had seized from a corporate giant in 2012 and which was kept in its vaults. In the absence

of any plausible explanation from the CBI, the High Court told the State CB-CID to probe the matter, a move fiercely opposed by the CBI but to no avail.

Generally, the CBI is entrusted a case after a State's probe agencies fail but, in this case, the reverse happened.

**Ganapathi Bhat**  
Akola



For other citizens, different banks have FD schemes of various durations but the interest rates are causing utter confusion to those desirous of a safe investment as the rates are fixed differently by different banks.

Currently, the lesser known PNB Housing Limited, a subsidiary of the public sector Punjab National Bank, offers the most lucrative interest rate.

**Subhash Chandra Agrawal**  
Delhi

### Electoral reforms

Sir — With time, the Indian democracy has become sufficiently mature to enable us to think about evolving political systems that suit the needs, size and population of our nation. Reforming the polling system is one of them.

In this particular sphere, we have been able to develop an election machinery by way of the Election Commission whose robust and efficient system has become an envy of not only the smaller countries but also of the developed ones.

But we must end the situation wherein the nation is continually in election mode, thereby creating an atmosphere of political upheaval. We must also eliminate political corruption in the form of midterm defections and Aaya Rams and Gaya Rams. Also, it will help if the problems of a particular State get sufficient attention in its Assembly elections and not get overshadowed by national issues.

**BP Srivastava**  
Noida

Send your feedback to: [letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)



FIRST COLUMN

## Many lessons in co-operation

The virus has shifted the axis of power and made the ground ready for an alliance of like-minded geographies with a focus on regional strategic ties



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

As the world lurches towards a new year, the axis of strategic ties among nations for mutual economic and geopolitical benefits seems to be taking a new turn. To begin with, in nearly three decades a British Prime Minister is slated to be the chief guest at the Republic Day function in New Delhi. Almost at the same time, a new President is expected to take charge of the world's oldest and most prosperous democracy, the US. Third, millions around the globe would have been vaccinated with first doses of the Coronavirus vaccine, which is expected to bring the relentless march of the deadly infection to a halt. All these developments, when looked at from an India-specific prism provide significant opportunities and associated trap doors for the projected \$10 trillion economy by 2030.

First, the promised visit of Boris Johnson to a function which marks the celebration of the Indian Constitution is an optical landmark that showcases the warming of many decades of frigid ties riddled with terms like colony and colonisers. Historically, the UK has been seen as a former coloniser wishing to poke its nose in regional issues such as Kashmir and the Afghanistan war, tilting in favour of Pakistan. Slowly, it turned towards defence ties where India chose French fighter planes over the UK's multirole fighter, while it was still miffed with the steady fall in students to the UK due to a scrapping of the work permit policy. In between, a very large British telecom giant and one of the largest Foreign Direct Investment contributors to India had to get into an uneasy relationship with an Indian operator to remain in business.

However, the global pandemic has shifted the axis of power and made the ground ready for an alliance of like-minded geographies with a focus on regional strategic ties. The UK took the first bold step, effectively banning Chinese telecom equipment makers from the fifth generation telecom networks, while making strong statements on Beijing's expansive moves in the South China Sea. It is here that the recent visit of British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab to New Delhi assumes significance as he mentioned upgrading of India-UK ties as well as Free Trade Agreements between the two nations as top priorities. Putting the economy right in the middle of a new era of partnership is a win-win situation for both countries. A post-Brexit UK will need new markets and templates for trade relationships with individual nations such as India. On the other hand India will most likely be able to forge a strategic long-term alliance for its technological, healthcare and financial targets.

On the same page comes a new administration in the US, which is likely to push for a multilateral approach on tricky topics like climate change, digital regulation (digital tax and data flows across international borders). The initial choice of US President-elect Joe Biden's top Cabinet members could reflect a completely new template for New Delhi-Washington engagement. This could mean India may have a better say in issues on multilateral platforms on topics like climate focus, while facing flak on issues related to digital diplomacy and strategy. Also, the Centre may be subjected to a not so sweet discourse on management of human rights and some old regional issues may be occasionally brought up. The high point of this long, largely politically agnostic journey could be optically measured with a town hall or Republic Day appearance by Biden in the next four years. The key aspect of change is expected to be in the manner the two administrations move beyond social media diplomacy to real world, deep impact agreements, which should reflect in increased partnerships, investments and opportunity creations in the two economies.

China would continue to play a significant role in global politics. However, a stronger alliance of like-minded nations moving towards globally accepted, interoperable technology regulations for the 21st century could be steered by India and the US.

Finally, the super news for 2021 would be universal vaccination. It is heartening to see India working with both, the UK and the US, towards urgent and decisive elimination of the virus which has cost thousands of lives and millions of livelihoods across the world. In a couple of months a substantive portion of the population would have been immunised but, the outbreak has taught lessons for the future and led to greater international co-operation.

The virus has been a reminder for nations at different levels of technological advancements to join hands and use the power of technology to eliminate global challenges related to climate change, environmental degradation, access to safe housing and food, sustainable agriculture and good health for all. After all, the wealth of nations lies in the well-being of citizens. If advancements in technology have shrunk boundaries and created wars as well, there lie the seeds for providing greater economic benefits to citizens by using the same technology. The highest laurels for leadership in the 21st century, much like the post-World War planer, would go to those who find technology-aided solutions to increase the well-being of the human race. In more ways than one, this year has been a watershed moment in human development. Now it is for strong leaders to move ahead.

*(The writer is a policy analyst. The views expressed are personal)*

THE BJP IS THE SINGLE-LARGEST PARTY TO HAVE WON THE PEOPLE'S MANDATE AND NOT THE OPPORTUNISTIC GUPKAR ALLIANCE.

—UNION LAW MINISTER  
RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



THE PEOPLE OF JAMMU & KASHMIR HAVE SAID IT WITH A HUGE MAJORITY THAT THEY DO NOT ACCEPT (THE DECISIONS OF) AUGUST 5, 2019.

—FORMER J&K CHIEF MINISTER  
OMAR ABDULLAH

# Empower adolescents

Teenagers are thirsting for information about themselves and the changes that puberty brings to their bodies. It is time to pay greater attention to their voices and needs



SWAPNA MAJUMDAR

It was late at night when Seema Kumari, an accredited social health activist working in Bihar's Sitamarhi district, heard the news. The 16-year-old daughter-in-law of her neighbour had given birth at home earlier than expected. Despite the late hour, she rushed to their house to see if she could be of any help. Unfortunately, the infant, weak and born prematurely, did not survive. In Sitamarhi, 106 newborn babies die for every 1,000 live births according to the Government's statistics. Early marriage further exacerbates the vulnerability of adolescents. According to the fourth National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4), in Sitamarhi, 50.5 per cent of the women aged between 20-24 years had been married off before the age of 18 and 11.7 per cent of girls/women aged 15-19 years were already mothers or pregnant at the time of the survey in 2015-16.

Although she was deeply saddened by their loss, Kumari took the opportunity to convince the mother-in-law that she would not insist on another grandchild until her teenaged daughter-in-law had recovered physically and mentally. In fact, Kumari extracted a promise that they would wait for at least three years before trying for another baby. By this time not only would Pinky turn 19 and be better prepared for motherhood, it would also reduce the risk of infant mortality. Over the next three years, Kumari kept an eye on the family. It meant daily visits, talking to the mother-in-law and constantly reminding her of the promise. She also provided reproductive and sexual health information and aids to Pinky so that she could plan her family and delay motherhood till she was ready for it. In January this year, Kumari's hard work bore fruit when Pinky gave birth to a healthy girl at the local primary health centre.

Women like Kumari are among the many frontline health workers who are making a difference between life and death for mothers and babies. Pinky was fortunate that Kumari was able to persuade her conservative marital family that there was a need to wait before the next pregnancy. The likelihood of girls aged between 10-14 dying during pregnancy and childbirth is five times higher than for women aged between 20-24. An estimated 6,000 adolescent mothers die every year in India. The underlying reasons are early marriage coupled with a lack of sexual and reproductive health information. It was to disrupt the vicious circle of having too many children, too quickly and provide adolescents with appropriate information on reproductive and sexual health that the Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK) was launched by the Government in 2014.

Although the RKSK prioritised sexual and reproductive health as one of its six strategic areas of adolescent well-being, talking about this sensitive issue remains a taboo. In Bihar, entrenched patriarchy has made RKSK even more critical as adolescents, especially girls, are forced to remain invisible and refrain from being seen or heard. It becomes difficult for them to confide in their parents. Hence, they desperately need someone they can turn to for advice. But there is a shortage of trained, skilled human resource who can be their friend and guide.

Many girls on the brink of puberty know little about menstruation as no one prepares them for it when they reach puberty. In fact, menstruation comes as a shock for many and affects their mental health as they are unable to grapple with

“MANY GIRLS ON THE BRINK OF PUBERTY KNOW LITTLE ABOUT MENSTRUATION AS NO ONE PREPARES THEM FOR IT WHEN THEY REACH PUBERTY. IN FACT, MENSTRUATION COMES AS A SHOCK FOR MANY AND AFFECTS THEIR MENTAL HEALTH AS THEY ARE UNABLE TO GRAPPLE WITH THIS MAJOR CHANGE IN THEIR BODIES. THERE IS ALSO AN ACUTE SHORTAGE OF MEDICAL COUNSELLORS AS WELL AS WOMEN DOCTORS



this major change in their bodies.

There is also an acute shortage of medical counsellors as well as women doctors. Though the biology textbook has a chapter on reproductive health, most teachers in rural areas skip it. This trend was more prevalent in co-educational schools where the teacher was too embarrassed to teach this important chapter to a class full of boys and girls.

Eighteen-year-old Fatima, who travels 20 kilometres daily to a college from Sherghati block of Gaya District, admitted that she wanted to know more about sexual and reproductive health. Fatima said the only information she had gleaned on this subject was from television programmes but that was not enough. Neither was it comprehensive. Under the RKSK, peer educators and Adolescent Friendly Health Clinics (AFHCs) are supposed to bridge this information gap. For a population of 1,000 people, there are supposed to be four peer educators, two boys and two girls. The Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs), panchayats and local Non-Government Organisations are part of the group to select and train the peer educators or “Sathiyas” as they are called. It is their responsibility to remove all doubts and fears of the adolescents by bringing them to the AFHCs.

Unfortunately, in many villages of rural Bihar, such clinics remain on paper. During a social audit conducted to assess the ground realities, it was found that even where they did exist, the absence of qualified service providers including counsellors mandated under the RKSK, made these clinics mostly non-functional.

One such AFHC is at the Belsand Primary Health Centre in Sitamarhi. The signage on the board outside

mentions the services the clinic offers.

The dilapidated board and the faded writing is the first sign of the clinic's present state of health. The clinic doubles up as an Outpatient Department since there is no other room. Adolescents prefer not to come to this clinic primarily because there is an acute shortage of staff and privacy. Apart from a lack of a counsellor dedicated solely for adolescents, the Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM) was on contract from the sub-centre!

The clinic was supposed to have seven doctors but it had only two. The lack of a woman doctor meant that few abortions were conducted there. According to ANM Rakhee Kumar, the lack of a woman doctor was the reason why very few came to seek abortion services at the clinic. The fact that parents and girls preferred to visit quacks for abortions underlines just how vital functioning AFHCs are for adolescents to access sexual and reproductive information and safe abortion services. Sadly, girls visit trained healthcare workers only when abortions are botched up by the quacks. And sometimes it is too late to help them.

When mothers are well-informed there are better chances that adolescents, both girls and boys, will better understand the changes their bodies are undergoing. In turn, well-informed teenagers are able to help their friends cope with their problems.

The three daughters of Anganwadi Worker (AWW) Anita Devi are different from their friends. They understand the importance of education and the pitfalls of early marriage. They have accurate information on puberty and its related changes. They have taken on the responsibility of sharing this knowledge with their friends.

Adolescents between 10-19 years comprise 22 per cent of Bihar's population. The RKSK strategy was to provide a continuum of care for the health and development of adolescents. Also, envisioned was a convergence model of service delivery by involving ANMs, ASHAs, AWWs and volunteers of the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan.

Several Union Ministries were to provide various components for adolescent development through special programmes like the Integrated Child Development Services. Adolescent health programme managers at the State and district level were to oversee the initiative based on project implementation plans.

Further, at the community level the intervention was to be through peer educators, holding quarterly Adolescent Health Day meetings, providing weekly iron and folic acid supplements and through a Menstrual Hygiene Management scheme. The facility-based intervention was through setting up and strengthening of AFHCs.

Despite such good intentions, the Government has failed in implementation due to the lack of convergence among the various departments and lack of trained service providers and supplies. There is an urgent need to empower frontline health workers like ASHAs, ANMs and AWWs in understanding the voices, aspirations and potential of adolescents and providing accurate information. Adolescents are thirsting for information about themselves and the changes that puberty brings to their bodies and way of thinking. It is time to pay greater attention to their voices and give them the power of information.

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

## A vital analytical tool for business decision-making

Financial ratio analysis can be helpful if used in conjunction with proper knowledge of factors affecting a business, and not just mechanically



HIMA BINDU KOTA

Financial ratio analysis is used to convey the fiscal health and performance of an organisation to various stakeholders such as owners, customers, managers, suppliers, vendors, lenders, regulators and competitors. This is done by analysing information available in a firm's financial statements.

This system originally started in banks in the US in the 19th Century to gauge the loan repaying capacity of organisations. It was later extended to investors' decision-making for business purposes using financial ratios. Later, with corpo-

rate organisations emerging, the relevance of ratio analysis was understood even more. After the second World War, with the advent of science and technology and increased market competitiveness, new tools and techniques were added to financial ratio analysis. The series of additions and improvements continued in the 1960s well into the '90s to come to the existing analysis methods.

Over the years, researchers have continually established the utility of financial ratios in investigating various aspects of business like profitability, solvency and efficiency. It provides trends within organisations by analysing fiscal statements over a large number of financial years (FYs). This is extremely useful to understand the direction of growth of an organisation and identify any trends that affect performance. This type of trend analysis is not possible with the data of a single financial year. Ratio analysis is also crucial to benchmark one's perfor-

mance in comparison to industry competitors, identify gaps, assess competitive advantages, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This information can be used by decision-makers to improve the organisation's position in the industry. Ratio analysis is also a tool to discern how efficiently an organisation is using its assets and liabilities and whether the financial resources are over or underutilised. To help managers in their decision-making process, several categories of ratios are used. First, the liquidity quotients like current ratio, quick ratio and cash ratio, measure the ability of an organisation to meet its current liabilities with the use of current assets.

In case an organisation is facing financial trouble in repaying its debt, it is captured in these ratios. Such quotients are used primarily by lenders, bankers and creditors to ascertain an organisation's capacity to honour its financial commitments. Second, solvency ratios mea-

sure the firm's ability to meet any long-term fiscal commitment and the fact that in the long-term, it owns more than it owes. The solvency of firms is measured by the debt-to-equity and debt-to-assets ratios. Profitability ratios are the third category used to measure the capability of an organisation to earn profits when compared to the costs associated with the business.

A higher profitability ratio, compared to itself in the previous year or its competitor, shows an improvement in fiscal strength. Some important profitability ratios that are used in financial analysis are gross profit margin, net profit margin, return on equity, return on assets and return on capital employed.

Fourth, efficiency quotients like the asset turnover ratio, inventory ratio, fixed assets turnover ratio, working capital turnover ratio, payables turnover ratio and receivables turnover ratio measure how effectively an organisation uses its

assets and liabilities to earn revenues and profits. A higher efficiency quotient generally means that the business is more efficient.

Coverage ratios, too, measure an organisation's ability to cover its debt obligations. A higher coverage quotient shows the ease with which it can service borrowings. Some of the frequently used coverage ratios are debt coverage ratio, interest coverage ratio, fixed charge coverage ratio and EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation) coverage ratio. And last but not the least, market ratios help investors to analyse their investments in the organisation and help them predict future stock prices and returns due to dividends. Price-to-earnings, earnings per share, dividend yield and dividend payout ratio are some examples of market ratios.

How is financial ratio analysis changing in the present world order? The trend in today's times is more predictive in nature and the

importance of historical numbers is decreasing by the day. Predictive forecasting models which help in capital budgeting decisions and choices regarding sources of funds and operations have gained more prevalence. The existing business environment is uncertain and volatile with increased focus on people, the planet and sustainability. This is particularly true since the outbreak of the Coronavirus. So, non-pecuniary information that is not reflected in the financial statements is also gaining importance now, which is not replicated in the current ratios used in financial analysis. Globalisation has also increased cross-border transactions, mergers and acquisitions, movement of people and technology transfer, making pecuniary statements more complex than ever. Although financial ratio analysis is important for making decisions, it is not without its limitations. This technique may not give the actual picture when window dressing of

statements occurs against financial and business ethics. Ratio analysis techniques may also not give proper results for comparison when different companies use different valuation techniques for inventory and depreciation. Another aspect which goes against ratio analysis is that it just gives the results in numbers and does not reflect the causation factors, which can make these numbers meaningless. Further research should be done to capture the new-age trends in financial ratio analysis to make them even more relevant.

Financial ratio analysis can be a very important analytical tool for business decision-making if it is used in conjunction with a proper knowledge of factors affecting a business and not just used mechanically. If the limitations are considered, they can be very useful to a savvy business manager.

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



# Indian eco recovering fast, says RBI article

GROWTH TO TURN POSITIVE IN Q3

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The economy is coming out of the Covid-19 pandemic's deep abyss faster than most of the predictions, and the growth will enter positive zone in the third quarter of the current financial year, said an article on the 'state of economy' in the RBI Bulletin.

"...More evidence has been turned in to show that the Indian economy is pulling out of COVID-19's deep abyss and is breaking out amidst winter's lengthening shadows towards a place in the sunlight...It is refrating at a pace that beats most prediction," said the article written by the officials of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

Impacted by the coronavirus pandemic, the Indian economy dipped by a historic

23.9 per cent in the first quarter of the current financial year. The contraction narrowed down to 7.5 per cent in the second quarter. Quoting reports, the article said, "Real GDP growth is expected to break out into positive territory in Q3 - albeit, to a slender 0.1 per cent." Two important forces are conspiring to bless this turning of the page on the virus, the article said.

"First, India is bending the COVID infection curve: since mid-September, barring localised surges, infections are slanting fashion to support investment and consumption demand," it said,

"The fiscal measures have been sequenced in a designed shift in focus from consumption expenditure in Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package (PMGKP) to investment expenditure in Aatma Nirbhar 2.0 and 3.0," the article added.

Abstracting from the inherent flux in high frequen-

cy indicators, the underlying trend would reveal that the pick-up in momentum of economic activity that commenced with the onset of the second half of 2020-21 is sustained, it noted. "The absence of the dreaded 'second wave' of pandemic in India so far has imparted elevation to this momentum in an environment of supportive macroeconomic policies, spurring a faster unlock and normalisation of the economy," it added.

RBI said the views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the central bank. Authors of the article further said that contractions forecast by various agencies for the year as a whole are already being trimmed, and if the current momentum is maintained, the bounce back expected in the last quarter of the year may be stronger than postulated under baseline assumptions.

# India networking market declines 16.4% in Q3: IDC

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

India's networking market which includes ethernet switch, routers, and WLAN (wireless local area network) segments witnessed a 16.4 per cent year-over-year (YoY) decline in the third quarter of this year due to the negative impact of Covid-19, industry tracker International Data Corporation (IDC) said on Thursday.

The decline during the July-September period was majorly characterised by the decline in router revenues.

The routing business in India declined by 40.2 per cent YoY in Q3, IDC said, adding that Cisco leads the router market with a 64.4 per cent share followed by Juniper and Nokia.

The WLAN market in India grew marginally by 3.1 per cent YoY.

The market for Wi-Fi 6 also witnessed significant traction in the Indian market.

While the revenue contribution of Wi-Fi 6 differed by vendors, there was a significant jump in the sales of Wi-Fi 6 access points across all the major vendors in the segment.

With a market share of 29.8 per cent, TP-Link was the market leader in the WLAN segment during Q3, followed by D-Link due to the rapid increase in demand for consumer gateway routers.

The enterprise class WLAN segment was led by Cisco followed by Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE).

"Covid-19 has accelerated the enterprise movement towards cloud which has become the origin of transformation in the networking ecosystem,"

Sudharsan Raghunathan, Senior Market Analyst, Enterprise Networking, IDC India, said in a statement.

"Many of the networking investments have been around technologies that enable seamless working from anywhere,

enhancing the security framework, extending the corporate network efficiently, easier manageability and troubleshooting, and bringing back employees into the office premises safely."

Switching had a YoY decline of 8.8 per cent in Q3, IDC said, adding that much like the routing segment, the decline in the ethernet switch segment was attributed to the decline in investments from service providers.

Cisco continued to dominate the ethernet switch market with a 59.8 per cent share during Q3, followed by Huawei and Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE), IDC said.

However, according to an IDC India forecast, increased adoption of emerging technologies such as cloud, Internet of Things (IoT), mobility, etc. would drive incremental revenues in the coming years. IDC also expects large investments for 5G rollouts in the next couple of years.

# Sensex soars 529 pts as RIL, HDFC twins shine

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity indices marched higher for the third session on the trot on Thursday, propelled by Reliance Industries and financial stocks, amid a positive trend in global markets on prospects of a Brexit trade deal.

A sharp jump in the rupee and persistent foreign fund inflows added to the momentum here, traders said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex surged 529.36 points or 1.14 per cent to close at 46,973.54. The broader NSE Nifty zoomed 148.15 points or 1.09 per cent to 13,749.25.

Axis Bank topped the Sensex gainers' chart, spurring 3.04 per cent, followed by Sun Pharma, ONGC, Reliance Industries (RIL), HDFC, ICICI Bank, Bharti Airtel, Bajaj Finance and Kotak Bank.

Index heavyweights RIL, HDFC and HDFC Bank accounted for over half of the Sensex's gains. On the other hand, Infosys, Nestle India, IndusInd Bank, Dr Reddy's, HCL Tech and Bajaj Finserv were among the main laggards, dropping up to 1.32 per cent. During the holiday-truncated week, Sensex inched up 12.85 points or 0.02 per cent, while Nifty slipped 11.30 points or 0.08 per cent. Markets will be closed on Friday on account of Christmas. Global equities extended gains as Britain and European Union neared a Brexit deal ahead of the Christmas weekend, cheering participants.

# FASTag to be mandatory for vehicles from Jan 1: Gadkari

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

FASTags will be mandatory for vehicles from January 1, 2021, Union minister Nitin Gadkari said on Thursday.

FASTags, which facilitate electronic payment of fee at toll plazas, was introduced in 2016. Making the tags compulsory would also help in ensuring that vehicles pass seamlessly through the toll plazas as fee payment would be done electronically.

PTI ■ MUMBAI

With mobile network boosters becoming a major reason for poor service

quality, the Department of Telecom has asked online sellers to pull down listings of such equipment, an official statement said on Thursday.

The DoT has also carried out raids across multiple locations in South Mumbai over the last two days which led to the removal of 68 illegal boost-

ers (or repeaters), it added.

The action comes amid frequent complaints of poor network quality in various parts of the country.

"Online platforms have also been issued notices to remove listing of illegal repeaters from their website and such companies have

responded positively," Amit Gautam, who is part of DoT's Wireless Monitoring Organisation, was quoted as saying in the statement.

NIFTY 50						
SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE	
NIFTY50	13672.15	13771.75	13626.90	13749.25	148.15	
TATAMOTORS	1727	1780	1720	1758	6.60	
SUNPHARMA	574.60	595.00	572.15	592.80	18.80	
AXISBANK	595.00	614.00	594.15	609.25	16.80	
RELIANCE	1947.00	1998.80	1945.90	1992.95	49.10	
IOC	88.25	91.70	88.25	90.25	2.10	
ONGC	92.50	95.50	92.15	92.95	2.15	
SHLIFE	857.90	879.70	851.25	874.15	19.20	
HDFC	2417.00	2464.65	2411.05	2451.85	48.80	
KOTAKBANK	1918.00	1978.00	1917.00	1958.00	37.25	
ICICIBANK	506.75	515.95	505.10	513.05	9.45	
DIVISLAB	3705.00	3757.00	3692.05	3755.00	66.40	
BHARTIARTL	520.00	523.00	514.00	516.25	9.05	
GAIL	119.00	123.00	119.00	120.35	2.10	
BAJFINANCE	5138.95	5218.95	5106.00	5175.00	86.10	
BAJAJ-AUTO	3318.00	3423.55	3316.05	3360.20	55.55	
NTPC	99.30	101.50	99.00	100.15	1.45	
HDFCBANK	1389.40	1404.00	1377.00	1395.90	20.25	
SBIN	260.00	268.85	264.65	266.85	3.85	
HDFCLIFE	474.90	482.90	466.00	477.45	6.70	
ADANIPOWER	617.00	663.60	649.00	656.95	8.35	
INDIANPORTS	828.80	834.90	815.30	834.65	10.00	
HEROMOTOCO	3045.00	3083.70	3030.00	3037.30	32.95	
COALINDIA	136.35	139.10	135.60	136.30	1.25	
HINDUNILVR	2382.50	2410.00	2360.05	2391.95	21.60	
BPCL	376.40	381.25	375.55	377.30	2.90	
TITAN	1530.00	1530.00	1486.00	1497.10	6.25	
HINDALCO	237.00	244.65	236.20	237.00	0.80	
TATASTEEL	625.30	636.95	619.25	623.00	1.60	
ITC	210.00	216.00	205.60	208.85	1.60	
ULTRACEMCO	5099.00	5124.35	5011.65	5041.90	7.95	
POWERGRID	190.25	192.25	189.45	190.00	0.05	
TCS	2909.00	2921.35	2883.20	2908.95	0.20	
MARUTI	757.00	753.75	7414.20	7449.00	-0.95	
ASIANPAINT	2658.00	2658.00	2613.00	2611.85	-0.70	
M&M	712.50	723.55	700.10	714.00	-0.50	
JSWSTEEL	367.90	378.95	365.00	366.50	-0.35	
BRITANNIA	3655.00	3683.90	3590.05	3620.00	-5.35	
IT	1275.00	1318.00	1253.50	1262.80	-2.50	
GRASIM	906.65	912.85	891.00	895.40	-2.50	
BAJAJFINSV	9083.60	9123.95	8964.10	8985.40	-27.85	
TECHM	951.00	956.00	934.80	940.00	-3.15	
DRREDDY	5247.00	5247.00	5165.00	5203.95	-20.15	
EICHERMOT	2459.00	2474.00	2427.50	2437.00	-9.70	
SHRECEM	24190.00	24239.95	23554.10	23786.50	-107.90	
INDUSINDBK	862.00	870.00	849.10	850.45	-4.40	
UPL	454.90	456.60	448.00	449.30	-2.65	
HCLTECH	927.95	928.25	917.00	917.00	-5.60	
NESTLEIND	18612.00	18830.00	18372.60	18580.00	-152.70	
WIPRO	386.45	386.70	378.65	381.80	-3.75	
INFY	1249.90	1249.90	1226.00	1237.35	-15.70	

NIFTY NEXT 50						
SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE	
NIFTY NEXT 50	32220.50	32322.55	31931.75	32068.55	118.75	
AMBUJACEM	255.00	260.00	245.00	246.40	9.20	
CADILAHC	477.80	491.70	470.00	490.00	15.00	
ICICIPRULI	487.10	508.00	484.80	496.60	11.85	
OFSS	3159.60	3272.00	3115.00	3232.00	75.90	
AUROPHARMA	902.50	912.00	878.25	910.30	21.00	
ALKEM	2899.95	2929.00	2850.10	2928.00	56.85	
ACC	1690.00	1694.40	1680.10	1690.70	30.85	
ICICIGI	1457.25	1495.00	1457.25	1482.45	24.25	
MCDOWELL-N	565.35	576.70	565.00	569.90	8.60	
LUPIN	969.00	981.50	961.85	978.00	14.65	
HINDPETRO	211.45	215.50	211.05	213.45	3.15	
MOTHERSUMI	152.05	155.40	151.55	153.65	2.20	
NMDC	112.35	115.40	109.70	113.25	1.60	
INDUSTOWER	237.60	243.25	235.15	239.45	2.70	
GODREJCP	716.35	725.00	716.35	720.30	7.50	
SBICARD	832.00	839.40	830.50	835.15	5.75	
HINDZINC	244.00	247.65	240.55	241.50	1.50	
DABUR	515.00	516.75	508.30	513.35	3.20	
PFCE	114.00	116.65	113.50	114.10	0.55	
BOSCHLTD	12730.00	12903.95	12646.50	12701.00	54.50	
BANKBARODA	61.05	63.25	60.60	60.80	0.25	
CONCOR	394.50	396.35	390.00	392.85	1.00	
HAVELLS	898.60	912.25	891.00	895.05	1.70	
PGHI	11055.85	11198.00	10922.10	11050.00	16.75	
INDIGO	1650.00	1673.00	1615.15	1651.15	1.90	
DMART	2661.85	2700.00	2604.80	2665.00	3.15	
UBL	1145.00	1156.45	1122.15	1132.35	1.00	
ADANITRANS	430.00	435.00	425.65	428.35	0.40	
SIEMENS	1545.00	1555.00	1518.00	1550.00	1.40	
BAJAJHLNG	3080.05	3119.95	3052.05	3070.00	1.60	
IGL	490.00	497.05	485.25	488.50	-0.15	
COPAL	1567.65	1579.35	1553.05	1566.20	-1.15	
PIDILITIND	1745.00	1752.55	1714.60	1731.25	-1.30	
MUTHOOTFIN	1200.00	1204.15	1185.00	1189.55	-1.85	
ABBOTINDIA	15940.00	15940.00	15500.00	15750.00	-27.35	
BERGEPAINT	738.45	738.45	721.65	732.55	-1.35	
BANDHANBNK	407.00	409.40	394.95	398.00	-1.05	
TORNTPHARM	2813.60	2835.05	2766.45	2790.00	-9.65	
BIOCEN	486.25	486.25	472.90	481.25	-2.35	
GICRE	141.90	146.40	139.55	140.85	-0.70	
MARICO	408.00	412.25	399.00	402.55	-2.50	
TATACONSUM	615.00	616.90	597.05	610.00	-4.30	
NAUKRI	4640.00	4700.00	4608.70	4625.00	-40.60	
PETRONET	251.45	253.00	245.15	246.35	-2.55	
PNB	32.20	32.40	31.40	31.45	-0.35	
LTI	3674.95	3674.95	3601.00	3634.00	-40.95	
DLF	230.00	233.25	224.30	226.20	-2.65	
ADANIGREEN	1058.00	1059.00	1021.00	1032.00	-12.95	
HDFCAML	2970.00	2990.00	2880.00	2900.00	-38.95	
PEL	1430.50	1440.95	1395.00	1405.00	-19.40	

## BSE 500

Script	Open	High	Low	LTP
VEDL	156.00	170.50	154.90	162.65
PIDILITIND	1762.00	1762.00	1715.00	1732.85
IDEA	10.52	10.60	9.94	10.10
TATAMOTORS	171.50	177.90	171.50	175.90
HDFCBANK	1387.10	1403.60	1377.00	1396.90
BHARTIARTL	519.05	522.95	510.35	517.05
INFY	1265.00	1265.00	1226.10	1236.35
RELIANCE	1950.80	1998.65	1947.05	1993.90
SBIN	264.60	268.80	264.60	266.75
INDUSINDBK	858.00	869.70	848.50	852.50
ICICIBANK	507.20	515.90	506.10	513.65
INOXLEISUR	283.00	283.00	276.90	277.10
SRTRANSFIN	980.00	1029.55	971.35	996.75
BAJFINANCE	5147.00	5216.40	5110.00	5183.65
HINDUNILVR	2381.25	2409.95	2361.55	2399.95
HDFC	2413.35	2464.35	2413.00	2454.25
L&T	90.65	91.95	89.70	90.35
AMBUJACEM	254.00	261.00	245.00	246.60
ONGC	91.95	95.50	91.95	93.15
TATASTEEL	625.00	637.00	619.30	622.25
PNB	32.15	32.65	31.40	31.45
TIINDIA	823.50	823.50	797.10	800.00
IBULHSGFIN	203.90	209.50	201.10	204.45
AXISBANK	595.00	613.70	595.00	610.35
ACC	1685.30	1692.95	1600.20	1613.25
LICHSGFIN	358.90	370.65	358.90	362.10
KOTAKBANK	1920.00	1978.50	1916.25	1956.80
BHEL	998.00	1053.60	975.15	984.00
DRCTCT	1421.00	1428.00	1403.05	1408.70
LT	1278.00	1280.65	1254.00	1261.85
CHAMBFERT	230.90	233.50	224.40	230.25
AUROPHARMA	900.00	912.00	878.85	893.00
CIPLA	830.05	835.00	815.50	830.45
IRBLBANK	223.00	225.65	218.80	220.15
SPIECJET	98.30	99.50	94.10	95.20
USPL	597.00	613.00	597.00	607.75
CESC	453.00	456.50	448.15	449.35
WIPRO	2914.85	2921.95	2884.00	2908.45
FSL	387.35	387.35	378.75	382.20
PVR	80.20	94.00	80.00	91.90
SAIL	1325.00	1339.80	1261.50	1278.55
SAIL	60.10	62.60	60.00	60.30
SAILIFE	850.10	879.50	850.10	873.35



AMID POLITICAL CRISIS IN NEPAL

Chinese envoy meets Prachanda

**Kathmandu:** Chinese ambassador Hou Yanqi on Thursday met Nepal Communist Party's executive chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', who claims control over the ruling party after removing Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli from the posts of the party's parliamentary leader and chair.

The meeting at Prachanda's residence in Khumaltar - which lasted for about 30 minutes - dwelt on the contemporary political situation after the NCP split. "They discussed the issues of bilateral concern," according to sources close to Prachanda.

Bishnu Rijal, a leader close to the Prachanda-faction, tweeted that "Ambassador of the People's Republic of China Hou Yanqi met Chairman of the Nepal Communist Party Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' this morning. They discussed the issues of bilateral concerns."

Hou's meeting with Prachanda comes two days after she called on President

Bidya Devi Bhandari on Tuesday at the latter's office in Sheela Niwas.

Hou is said to have discussed the latest political development following the president's move to dissolve the House of Representatives and announce mid-term elections, My Republica reported.

This is not the first time that the Chinese ambassador has intervened in Nepal's internal affairs at a time of crisis.

In May, Hou held separate meetings with President Bhandari, the prime minister and other senior NCP leaders, including Prachanda, when Oli was facing mounting pressure to step down.

In July, she again met a number of top leaders, including the president, prime minister, Prachanda, Madhav Kumar Nepal and Jhala Nath Khanal and Bamdev Gautam to save Oli, who is known for his pro-Beijing leanings.

A number of political party leaders had termed the Chinese

envoy's series of meetings with the ruling party leaders as interference in Nepal's internal political affairs.

Dozens of student activists carrying placards with anti-China slogans had staged a demonstration in front of the Chinese Embassy here to protest against Hou's interference in Nepal's internal affairs.

China's political profile in Nepal has been on the rise in the recent years with billions of dollars of investments under Beijing's multi-billion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), including the building of the Trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network.

Besides the investments, China's ambassador to Nepal Hou has made open efforts to garner support for Oli.

Meanwhile, the Prachanda-led faction has decided to stage nationwide protests next Tuesday to oppose the dissolution of Parliament.

It was also decided to



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson speaks during a media briefing in Downing Street in London on Thursday

either side, covering trade worth GBP 668 billion in 2019," it said, adding that the UK has taken back control of its "money, borders, laws, trade and our fishing waters".

"The deal also guarantees that we are no longer in the lunar pull of the EU, we are not bound by EU rules, there is no role for the European Court of

Daniel Pearl's scapegoat murderer released

**Karachi:** In a surprise move, a Pakistani court on Thursday ordered the release of British-born al-Qaeda leader Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh and his three aides, who were convicted and sentenced in the abduction and murder case of US journalist Daniel Pearl.

A two-judge bench of the Sindh High Court, presided over by Justice KK Agha, directed security agencies not to keep Sheikh and other accused under "any sort of detention" and declared all notifications of the Sindh government related to their detention "null and void".

The court observed that the four men's detention was "illegal".

In April, a two-judge Sindh High Court bench commuted the death sentence of 46-year-old Sheikh to seven years imprisonment. The court also acquitted his three aides who were serving life terms in the case - almost two decades after they were found guilty and jailed.

However, the Sindh government refused to release them and kept them in detention under the Maintenance of Public Order.

Their continuous detention was challenged in the Sindh High Court, which ordered their release. However, it asked to place their names on the no-fly list so that they could not



leave the country. It also directed them to appear before the court whenever summoned.

Pearl, the 38-year-old South Asia bureau chief for The Wall Street Journal, was abducted and beheaded while he was in Pakistan investigating a story in 2002 on the links between the country's powerful spy agency ISI and al-Qaeda.

A three-judge apex court bench headed by Justice Mushir Alam is hearing the appeal by the Sindh government and the family of the slain journalist against the acquittal of Sheikh.

The US has been mounting pressure on Pakistan, demanding justice for Pearl.

Pearl's murder took place three years after Sheikh, along with Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar and Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar, was released by India in 1999 and given safe passage to Afghanistan in exchange for the nearly 150 passengers of hijacked Indian Airlines flight 814. **PTI**

Africa CDC: New virus variant appears to emerge in Nigeria

**Nairobi:** Another new variant of the coronavirus appears to have emerged in Nigeria, Africa's top public health official said Thursday, but he added that further investigation was needed.

The discovery could add to new alarm in the pandemic after similar variants were announced in Britain and South Africa, leading to the swift return of international travel restrictions and other measures just as the world enters a major holiday season.

"It's a separate lineage from the UK and South Africa," the head of the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, John Nkengasong, told reporters. He said the Nigeria CDC and the African Center of Excellence for Genomics of Infectious Diseases in that country - Africa's most populous - will

be analyzing more samples.

"Give us some time ... It's still very early," he said.

The alert about the apparent new variant was based on two or three genetic sequences, he said, but that and South Africa's alert late last week were enough to prompt an emergency meeting of the Africa CDC this week.

The variant was found in two patient samples collected on Aug. 3 and on Oct. 9 in Nigeria's Osun state, according to a working research paper seen by The Associated Press.

Unlike the variant seen in the UK, "we haven't observed such rapid rise of the lineage in Nigeria and do not have evidence to indicate that the P681H variant is contributing to increased transmission of the virus in Nigeria. However, the relative difference in scale of

confirmed in the past day, including more than 400 deaths. It was the largest single-day increase in cases.

The country has more than 950,000 infections and Covid-19 is "unrelenting," Health Minister Zwelini Mkhize said. **AP**

South Africa reports 14K new cases in single day

**Nairobi:** South Africa's Health Minister says the country has seen more than 14,000 confirmed new coronavirus cases in the past day, with a positivity rate of 26 per cent, as overall cases edge toward 1 million.

Health Minister Zwelini Mkhize says the "alarming rate of spread" of infections is much faster than during the first wave in midyear. His daily report doesn't say how many of the new infections are attributed to the new variant

Dozens detained in Armenia during anti-Govt protests

**Yerevan:** Police in the Armenian capital detained dozens of people on Thursday during protests against the country's Prime Minister, who is being pressured to resign over his handling of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Azerbaijan.

Opposition politicians and their supporters have been demanding for weeks that Nikol Pashinyan step down over the Nov. 10 peace deal that saw Azerbaijan reclaim control over large parts of Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding areas. The Russia-brokered agreement ended 44 days of fierce fighting in which the Azerbaijani army routed Armenian forces.

Police detained 77 people following clashes when thousands of protesters converged on center of the capital Yerevan and surrounded the heavily guarded government building. Pashinyan and other cabinet members were able to get into the building despite the unrest.

"Now our goal is that they don't get out until Nikol Pashinyan resigns," Ishkhan Saghatlyan, a leading member of the opposition Dashnaktsutyun party, was quoted as saying by the Russian state Tass news agency.

Nagorno-Karabakh lies within Azerbaijan but was under the control of ethnic Armenian forces backed by Armenia since a separatist war there ended in 1994. **AP**

Niger votes on Sunday for democratic power transfer

**Niamey (Niger):** Niger could see its first democratic transition of power since independence in the elections being held on Sunday amid a growing threat from jihadists in the region.

President Mahamadou Issoufou, who has served two terms, is stepping down, paving the way for the first peaceful

transfer of power between two elected presidents since independence from France in 1960. Niger has seen four coups.

The transfer would be significant not only in Niger but also in West Africa, where leaders recently have held on for disputed third terms in Guinea and Ivory Coast.

More than 7.4 million Nigeriens are registered to vote, and 30 candidates are running for president while 171 seats are being contested in the national assembly. The next president will have to deal with major problems including extremism, poverty, displacement and corruption. **AP**

FROM PAGE 1

5 +VE FLIERS FROM UK FLEE ISOLATION WARDS, 2 NABBED

Amid mounting concern over a new strain of the virus detected in the UK, the Delhi Government on Tuesday had said people who have arrived here recently from that country, are being traced and tested, while an institutional quarantine facility was being set up separately for positive cases at the LNJP Hospital.

All the passengers travelling from or transiting through airports in the UK and disembarking in India would be subjected to RT-PCR test on arrival. In the case of a positive sample, the SOP recommended spike gene-based RT-PCR test. Passengers testing positive will be isolated in an institutional isolation facility in a separate (isolation) unit, coordinated by the respective State health authorities.

Necessary action to send the samples to the National Institute of Virology, Pune, or any other appropriate lab for genomic sequencing will be initiated at the facility level. If the genomic sequencing indicates the presence of the new variant of SARS-CoV 2 then the patient will be kept in the separate isolation unit and treated as per the clinical protocol.

CONG, LEFT FINALLY STITCH ALLIANCE FOR BENGAL POLLS

Though the seat-sharing talks before the last Assembly polls and the 2019 Lok Sabha elections could not materialise, the Congress reaped the benefits both the times in terms of seats won as it has a high concentration of voters in select constituencies in North Bengal.

The Left Front had failed to win a single seat in 2019 Lok Sabha polls, losing security deposits in 39 constituencies while the Congress bagged just two seats, losing security deposits in 38 other constituencies. On the other hand, the BJP won 18 of the 42 Lok Sabha seats, only four behind TMC's 22 seats, announcing itself as a formidable force in the Bengal political arena.

Later in the day speaking at a press conference, Chowdhury took a dig at the BJP and said that the Congress doesn't 'sully' leaders from Delhi. When asked about the party's CM face for Bengal polls, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said decision in this regard will be taken later.

Citing the TMC-BJP alliance in 1999 Lok Sabha polls, Chowdhury has said that Congress had

warned Mamata at that time but she helped the strengthening of BJP in Bengal.

West Bengal Assembly with 294 seats will go to polls in April-May 2021. Trinamool holds 222 seats. However, BJP has made major inroads in the State in the Lok Sabha elections winning 18 seats, and establishing itself as the major Opposition force in the State. Recently the TMC trumped the BJP in all 3 bypolls but the BJP is using its booth-level strategy, has deployed its top leaders including Home Minister Amit Shah and party president JP Nadda in the State for winning the upcoming elections.

MODI'S VIRTUAL MEET WITH 9 CR FARMERS IN MEGA REACH TODAY

Union Agricultural Minister Narendra Singh Tomar who met farmers supporting the Government line on farm laws, too charged the Congress of misleading farmers with its alleged "double-faced talk".

With the face-off seeing no early end, the BJP and the Government have intensified its "awareness campaign" on new farming laws passed by the Modi-Government six-month ago.

The Prime Minister's address to the farmers of six-States on Friday is part of BJP's major outreach to the farmers. Modi's virtual meet with "nine crore farmers" is scheduled on December 25 - former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's birth anniversary - during which he is expected to clarify the centre's position on the farm laws, and release the next batch of financial aid - Rs 18,000 crore - from the PM-Kisan scheme.

At yet another Press conference, BJP general secretary Arun Singh said farmers will listen to the Prime Minister from 1200 hrs onwards.

He estimated that about 9 crore farmers will listen to Modi's virtual address.

"All the Central Ministers, BJP CMs, State Ministers, MPs, MLAs, corporators & mayors will participate in different awareness programmes across the country...", said Singh.

"Over 19,000 programmes have been organised on the issue...it is like a festival...most of the farmers, barring a very few, are backing the Prime Minister on the farm laws... Farmers trust is with the Prime Minister," Singh claimed.

The meeting will include a conversation with select farmers from six States who "will share their experiences... on initiatives taken by the Government for their welfare", according to a statement from the

Prime Minister's Office.

OPEN TO DISCUSS ALL ISSUES: CENTRE TO KISAN

On MSP, Aggarwal said the farm laws have no connection with the price regime nor would have any impact on the procurement of farm produce at the fixed rates. This has been told to the unions in every discussion and it has also been made clear that the Government is ready to give written assurance on MSP, he said.

"Any new demand related to MSP, which is out of the ambit of farm laws, is not logical to include in the talks. As informed earlier, the Government is ready to discuss all the issues raised by farmer unions," he noted.

"To listen to all farmer unions of the country is the responsibility of the Government which it cannot run away from. The Government has been talking with the farmer unions under the Sanyukt Morcha with an open mind and also desires to talk with you in the future as per your convince," added the letter.

Aggarwal said it is important to keep all doors open for discussion for the Government. It is the responsibility of the Government to listen to farmer organisations and farmers and the Government cannot deny this, he said.

The previous five rounds of talks between the Government and the unions have failed to break the deadlock with the farmers insisting on repeal of the three laws and camping at various border points of Delhi for nearly a month now.

The Government had earlier written to the farmer unions on Sunday, inviting them for the sixth round of talks as per their convenience.

The anti-farm law protests entered day 29 on Thursday.

**INDIA CHALLENGES ₹22K CR VODAFONE ARBITRATION RULING IN SINGAPORE COURT**

Sources said the Government believes that taxation is not covered under investment protection treaties with various countries and the law on taxation is a sovereign right of the country.

While the treaties are primarily aimed at protection of investments, the tax is levied on 'returns' earned by entities.

Vodafone Group declined to comment on the issue. Vodafone had challenged before the arbitration tribunal the demand for ₹7,990 crore in capital gains taxes (₹22,100 crore after including interest and penalty) under the Netherlands-India Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT).

The demand pertained to Vodafone's USD 11-billion acquisition of 67 per cent stake in the mobile phone business owned by Hutchison Whampoa in 2007.

In September, an international arbitration court ruled that the Indian Government seeking ₹22,100 crore in taxes from Vodafone using retrospective legislation was in "breach of the guarantee of fair and equitable treatment" guaranteed under the bilateral investment protection pact between India and the Netherlands.

India had 90 days or till December 24 to challenge the Vodafone award before a court in Singapore - which was the seat of the arbitration. As per the award, the Government has to reimburse Vodafone 60 per cent of its legal costs and half of the 6,000-euros cost borne by Vodafone for appointing an arbitrator on the panel.

Sources said the Government of India's liability came to ₹85 crore in legal cost. In the separate case of Cairn, India has been asked to pay with interest the value of shares it sold, the dividend it seized, and tax refunds it withheld to recover part of tax demand from the British firm.

The Government, the sources said, is expected to challenge this ruling too given the size of the award.

Cairn Energy, which gave the country its biggest oil discovery, was in March 2015 slapped with a demand for ₹10,247 crore tax on alleged capital gains it made when it in 2006 reorganised its India business before listing of the local unit.

Vodafone International Holding (a Netherland company) had in February 2007 bought 100 per cent shares of Cayman Island-based company CGP Investments for USD 11.1 billion to indirectly get 67 per cent control of Hutchison Essar Ltd - an Indian company.

The tax department felt the deal was designed to avoid capital gain tax in India and imposed a tax demand, which was rejected by the Supreme Court in 2012.

To stop abuse and plug the loophole of such indirect transfer of Indian assets, the Government in 2012 amended the law to make such transfers taxable in India, they said, adding Vodafone was slapped with a fresh demand which the firm contested through international arbitration.

Hafiz Saeed gets 15-yr jail for terror financing

PTI ■ LAHORE

Mumbai terror attack mastermind and banned Jamat-ud-Dawa (JuD) chief Hafiz Saeed was on Thursday sentenced to 15 and a half years in jail by an anti-terrorism court in Pakistan in one more terror financing case.

The Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) of Lahore also imposed a 200,000 Pakistani rupees (PKR) fine on Saeed.

The 70-year-old radical cleric has already been convicted for 21 years imprisonment in four terror financing cases of late.

"On Thursday an Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) of Lahore sentenced five leaders of Jamat-ud-Dawa, including its chief Hafiz Saeed, in another terror financing case...For 15 and a half years," a court official told PTI.

Now, Saeed will have to undergo collective imprisonment of over 36 years in five terror financing cases at the Kot Lakhpat Jail in Lahore. His punishment will run concurrently in these cases. There are reports that he is given "VIP protocol" in jail.

Saeed, a UN-designated terrorist on whom the US has placed a USD 10 million bounty, was arrested on July 17 last year in the terror financing cases.

He was sentenced to 11 years in jail by an anti-terrorism court in February this year in two terror financing cases.

In November, Saeed was sentenced to another 10 years in jail by an anti-terrorism court in two more terror financing cases.

The other four JuD leaders convicted by the court on Thursday are Hafiz Abdus Salam, Zafar Iqbal, JuD spokesperson Yahya Mujahid and Muhammad Ashraf.

Each convicted person has also been fined a PKR 200,000. The ATC also handed down six-month imprisonment to Saeed's brother-in-law Abdul Rehman Makki in this case and imposed a fine of PKR 200,000 on him, the official said.



## Trend Slazer

### 'I am here because of fans'

Actor **ANIL KAPOOR** is happy with the response he is getting for his performance in the new digital film, *AK vs AK*.

"Being loved for what you love doing is the greatest feeling ever! I am here because of the fans and their undying support. Without them we are nothing. And the appreciation *AK vs AK* is getting is so inspiring, I can't even describe it," said he.

The film stars Anurag Kashyap along with Anil and also has cameos of the actor's children, Sonam and Harshvardhan Kapoor, and brother Boney Kapoor. The cast members play themselves, although the film is a work of fiction.



**'This Christmas, I would like to urge everyone to find Santa within yourself. One has to**

**continue to work hard, be patient, resilient and just be ready to face the challenges that life throws at us. Sometimes the external circumstances may not be in our control but the desire to be happy should overpower everything else.'**

**—Tusshar Kapoor**

Actor **AKSHAY OBEROI** has looked back at his debut film *Isi Life Mein...*, which released a decade ago on this day. He says the work he is doing today is largely because of his first film.



"My whole life I had dreamt about being on a film set. I always wanted to act, and there I was doing what I loved. There were a lot of young people and so there was young energy on that film. I have the fondest memories of that time. I found my voice then," said Akshay.

He is now awaiting the streaming of his web series *Inside Edge* Season 3.

### Gadot replies to Hrithik Roshan

Actor **GAL GADOT** has replied to Bollywood actor **HRITHIK ROSHAN**, who had earlier praised her for essaying *Wonder Woman* perfectly in the new release, *Wonder Woman 1984*. Gadot said she is glad that Hrithik had enjoyed the film.

"Just watched *Wonder Woman*. Exhilarating experience. My childhood crush (WW) and my first love (films) together with the BIG cinema IMAX experience! Doesn't get any better than this. Thank you Gal Gadot for being the perfect *Wonder Woman*. And congratulations to the entire team!" Hrithik had tweeted.

To this, Gadot has replied, "So glad you enjoyed the film Hrithik! Wishing you and yours a happy holiday."



# What will be the future of romance?

With 2020 upending just about every aspect of our lives, new and unexpected dating trends have emerged. A dating app reveals that people are feeling a strong desire to build trust online before taking their relationship offline



conversation in 2020 was 'working from home' as 57 per cent of daters discussed this as their new normal.

#### MAKING THE FIRST MOVE

People are diving right in to make the first move with their profile prompts. The most popular prompt used in India this year was: Beach or mountains... Other top popular prompts were: Nightclub

or Netflix... After work you can find me... Favourite quality in a person...

#### EMOJIS OF CHOICE

An emoji says a thousand words. The heart wants what it wants! The most used emoji on profiles was the classic red heart. This goes to show that even during a pandemic, single people looked to find meaningful connections.

#### WHEN THE STARS ALIGN

Zodiac signs continue to be a hot topic among the users of the dating app. So which of the signs were most likely to find love this year? It was Leo. They had the most matches of any star sign, followed by Scorpio and Libra.

#### PHOTO MUST HAVES

The more photos you have, the more chances you'll match. Two in three (63 per cent) of the users uploaded photos of them in their everyday lives on their profiles, while selfies (62 per cent) took the second spot.

#### THE ERA OF SLOW DATING

More than ever, people are feeling a strong desire to build trust online before taking the relationship offline, leading to more virtual communication. More than 40 per cent of the users are slowing down the 'get

to know you phase.' Women are now more likely to focus on the qualities in a partner, ultimately putting less pressure on themselves in dating.

People are having more quality conversations online, known as "pre-dates", averaging roughly 20 minutes.

#### THE RISE OF NEW DAWN DATERS

One in two, over 46 per cent of people are likely to be the "new dawn daters." The biggest driver of breakups was the inability to see a partner (46.45 per cent). One in three people (29 per cent) also said that the pandemic has precipitated existing issues.

#### THE COVID CONVERSATION

The pandemic and our health and safety concerns have been a trending topic of conver-

sation for single people everywhere. In this new landscape, people are learning to navigate the new rules of dating and are trying new ways to meet others virtually.

As we look ahead to 2021, there's no doubt the dating landscape will continue to evolve. Here are a few predictions:

♦Dating in-person is definitely not off the table with one in two people claiming that they are ready to date in-person.

♦People are increasingly open to virtual dating as well with one in five up for using video chats.

♦Dating will ramp up in early 2021 as 69 per cent of the users say that they are planning to use dating apps just as much as they do now, if not more through Valentine's Day 2021.



# Be your loved one's Santa

Christmas brings joy, lifting the spirits with cheer and hope. With a tough year coming to a close, there's plenty to celebrate. Here's a curated list of goodies to choose from for that perfect gift for your loved one

#### GIFTS FOR MEN

□ Hidesign's diary: Hidesign's in-house illustrator Shreya Swamy presents quirky sketches and humorous one liners in a beautiful, handcrafted soft-suede leather bound 2021 diary, which is sure a joyful way to pen down your thoughts. Priced at ₹3,395.

□ Diesel: Experiment with these big and bold watches which are the latest addition to your wardrobe. Priced at ₹13,495.

□ Six-part shaving system kit: Bombay Shaving Company has curated a six-part shaving system kit, designed for a comfortable, close and joyous shave. The pack includes a precision safety razor with mild and aggressive clamp, feather blades, pre shave scrub, shaving cream, imitation hair badger brush, post shave balm, razor sheath and shave dab. Priced at ₹3,675.

□ Portronics: A prominent leader in the innovative and portable digital product market launches Harmonics 300 — the newest addition to their existing line of premium wireless headsets in two different colours — Blue and Black. Priced at ₹2,999.

□ MyRun: Even the smallest space can become a never-ending road with MyRun; an infinity run, with no noise to distract you from your goals. Synchronise it with your tablet to make the most of your purchase. All thanks to personalised training programmes, unique workout experiences and feedback on your running in real time.

□ Christmas capsule collection from Numero Uno: Numero Uno launched a new capsule collection for Christmas which features sweaters and sweatshirts in colours of green, white and reds. The Christmas themed red and white stripe pullover is made of 100 per cent knitted



cotton and can be paired with denims for an elegant look. Priced starts at ₹1,599.

□ Prada sunglass: The glasses hit the catwalk at the Fall/Winter 2020 Prada Men's fashion show. The frame's rigorous design is revisited with larger volumes and soft lines. The style stays true to the fine combinations of acetate layers that highlight the lens profiles, creating a distinctive three-dimensional effect. Available in versions of Black, Matte Black with Pink, Crystal Amber with White and Crystal Grey with White.

□ Haircare range by Bare Anatomy: With high quality ingredients ethically sourced from all over the world, Bare Anatomy's complete range is sure to impart instant shine and nourishment to tangled and lifeless locks during winters. Priced at ₹1,800 (for a kit of mask, shampoo and conditioner).

□ Bombay Baking Company: The exquisite and much sought-after patisserie-deli at the JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu cele-

brates the joy of gifting by offering patrons customisable Christmas hampers. Enhance your Christmas cheer as you treat your taste buds to the signature flavour of the festive spirit with the assortment of signature Christmas cakes, desserts and savory goodies handcrafted by our master chefs. The hampers can be customised and guests can select from decadent delicacies such as Christmas plum cake, chocolate walnut fudge, dundee cake, Christmas pudding, chocolate santa, handcrafted bonbons, Christmas cookies, chocolate Yule log, gingerbread house and more. Priced at ₹4,000 plus taxes.

□ Alexa: You can now listen to podcasts available through Spotify and Apple Podcasts on their Echo devices. Customers can enable the podcast providers by linking their accounts in the Alexa app. Once enabled, they can start listening on their device.

□ Time to wine down: The hamper offers an exciting combination of the best paired cheeses and wine to add more delight to every occasion. It is loaded with a fine selection of Happy Milk organic cheeses such as mozzarella, chilli, garlic, cheddar and pepper, and best paired with a bottle of Chianti Classico. Priced at ₹6199.

□ Glenfiddich limited edition pack 2020: Glenfiddich introduces the limited-edition gift pack for 2020 with their iconic 12-year-old expression. Embracing change since 1887 is the genesis of the pack design. The idea emanates from the realisation of change, which is imperative to welcoming the unknown, risk taking and addressing the constant need to forge ahead, an ideal gifting option for Christmas and New Year. Price at ₹6,700 (Mumbai) and ₹3,860 (Delhi).

#### GIFTS FOR WOMEN

□ Kiko Milano holiday gems diamond dust lipstick: Treat yourself to a look guaranteed to make you feel holiday ready or pick from a range of gifts your friends will be delighted to unwrap and treasure, all packaged in rich emerald green and gold packaging inspired by decorations and ornaments. Price range starts at ₹2,990.

□ Spread the love by The Body Shop: Meet this year's line-up of special edition festive fragrances: New Winter Jasmine, Festive Berry and Warm Vanilla. Priced starts from ₹725.

□ Athleisure by ASICS: With a nip in the air, it's important to keep the love for running alive while bearing the cold. And, ASICS has exactly what you need to keep your running shoes on with their new winter apparel.

□ Ultra facial cream by Kiehl's: Celebrate this holiday season with Kiehl's best-selling face cream. With its unique lightweight texture, it provides lasting 24-hour hydration for softer, smoother and visibly healthier-looking skin.

□ Sparkling edition by Taj Palace, New Delhi: Sparkling edition hamper includes Christmas special traditional dundee cake, traditional plum cake, artisanal homemade cashew and raisin chocolates, assorted french macaroons, freshly baked cookies, Christmas candles, luxury accessories and collectibles. All this is elegantly packed in a handcrafted basket. Guests can choose from this exquisite assortment to make their very own customise festive composition. Priced at ₹25,000 plus taxes.

□ Christmas trees and plants by Ferns N Petals: The feeling of festivity is incomplete without the well-decorated Christmas trees that symbolise eternal life

and growth. Gift DIY kit and gemstone wishing trees along with a range of traditional real plants such as red and white poinsettia, Christmas tree, araucaria, cyprus etc. Price ranges from ₹449 till ₹2,299.

□ Elan by Daniel Wellington: The collection was initially inspired by Daniel Wellington's most popular accessories, the classic bracelet and classic ring. After some tweaks and modifications, the selection includes earrings, bracelets, rings and necklaces, available in rose gold or silver. This introduces completely new characteristics to the realm of Daniel Wellington and is a visual embodiment of energy, style and enthusiasm. Price: ₹4,999 onwards.

□ Starbucks tumbler: #CarryTheMerry from the comfort of your homes with an array of festive cups, mugs, tumblers and bottles, inspired by the themes of Christmas. The cosy and festive holiday beverages can be enjoyed with the vibrant holiday merchandise collection.

□ The Rug Republic cushions: Give a touch of colour and charm to your living space while providing great functionality with our versatile 'Tigris' cushion. Hand woven in cotton then screen printed. Price: ₹1,500 to ₹2,500.

□ Panasonic's nanoeTM hairdryer: The innovative product now arrives in India catering to the growing grooming-at-home needs of consumers. Based on nanotechnology, the hair dryer uses nanoeTM to ultrafine water particles that penetrates into hair cuticles to maintain the moisture balance of the hair and scalp. The platinum ions coat the hair surface and tighten the cuticles to make them UV rays resilient for healthy and lustrous hair. Priced at ₹6,990.

—IANS

# 3 IDIOTS IS MY VISITING CARD: MADHAVAN



Actor R Madhavan says that the 2009 blockbuster *3 Idiots* is and will always be the most important film of his life and career for its relatability and impact on the viewers, especially students.

The actor turned nostalgic as the film will complete 11 years of release date on Christmas Day, and shared how much he is respected even today for being a part of the cast.

"*3 Idiots* will always be the most important film of my career and my life because of the impact it has with the youth world over. The film for me is the visiting card to any industry I go to, they all look at me with reverence and respect because of that one film all over the world, irrespective of whether they understand Hindi or not. I don't think any other film has touched that level of importance in

my life," he said.

In the film, Madhavan's character aspires to be a wildlife photographer but studies engineering owing to his father's insistence.

Recalling his character in the film, the actor shared, "The role of Farhan Qureshi and the conversation which he had with his father is the kind of conversation every youngster has had with their parents one time or the other. The

character has become completely synonymous with the struggle of the younger generation to prove their individuality and because of that I'll always be known as Farhan from *3 Idiots*."

Directed by Rajkumar Hirani, the film stars Aamir Khan, Sharman Joshi, Boman Irani, Kareena Kapoor Khan, Omi Vaidya and Mona Singh in key roles, along with Madhavan.



The celebration of Christmas and the Gregorian New Year is a more recent phenomenon in India and are a British legacy. Obviously, the more recent globalisation of our world, the mass media and a much more interconnected world have also played a major role in promoting these two events.

In most Western Christian cultures, the Christmas meal consists of two meals — the dinner of the December 24 evening and the lunch of December 25. Both these meals are traditionally enjoyed in the intimacy of private homes and great care and attention is given to their preparation which can, in some cases, take several days. This includes the selection of the menu, purchasing of the ingredients, the actual cooking, setting a festive table and serving the food.

On Christmas Eve, the meal is followed by attendance at the midnight mass and children cannot wait to go to bed in order to allow time for Santa Claus to bring the presents...

As to the type of food served during Christmas, it is always associated with traditions. Since you come together in family, naturally you look for the tastes and flavours of your childhood, a time when the magic and mysteries of the gifts appearing under the Christmas tree still marvelled you. In most cases there is little appetite for change and innovation. On the contrary, one looks for "old" grandmother recipes hidden in some notebook in the attic or carefully kept in the memory box or the library.

In the Northern Hemisphere, Christmas falls in the wintertime and understandably the weather dictates to a large extent the type of foods which are served during the celebrations. It is not uncommon that the Christmas menus are copious, not highly recommended for calorie-conscious individuals or alternatively calling for serious workout and restraint after the celebrations.

In more recent times, with greater professional mobility and the reduction of the size of families it has become more difficult for the extended families to come together for the celebrations and there is an increasing trend to celebrate the two Christmas meals outside one's home in restaurants where you meet with friends. Though still largely a "traditional" meal, nevertheless more innovations are happening in these "out of home" settings.

In European countries, a large variety of meals are served for Christmas. Often, they express not only food but also contain a symbolism. For instance, in Bulgaria, the Christmas meal may consist of seven, nine or 12 courses which represent the seven days of the week, nine months of pregnancy or the 12 months of the year. In South of France, 13 desserts are served which represent the 12 apostles and the Christ. In Hungary, it is not only the food which is festive but also the tablecloth which is of great significance.

In several countries, there are products specially made for the Christmas and New Year celebrations. In Germany and Austria hot wine is an integral part of the Christmas landscape. In Italy, the delicious Panettone and Pandoro announce the arrival of the festive season. In France, the Bûches (Yule Logs) and the incomparable Galette des Rois are deeply associated with the celebrations. And obviously, Christmas Pudding, Plum Cake and the Christmas Biscuits are very popular in English speaking countries.

In my home country France too, there are varieties in terms of Christmas foods, depending on the region where you come



# Set your table at home

This year, the size of family gatherings will be drastically reduced, restaurants will see limited dine-ins, home delivery of Christmas meals will play a significant role and we will all have more time to revisit our grandmother's recipe book



**'THE FOOD SERVED DURING CHRISTMAS IS ALWAYS ASSOCIATED WITH TRADITIONS. SINCE YOU COME TOGETHER IN FAMILY, NATURALLY, YOU LOOK FOR THE TASTES AND FLAVOURS OF YOUR CHILDHOOD'**

from. In some regions fish is the centrepiece of the menu whereas in others meat is what we call the "plat de resistance" or the main dish. There are though, some elements which are common to all regions such as seafood, particularly oysters and foie gras which belong on the table of all those who can afford it. And naturally, one of the all-time favourites all over is the roasted turkey with the secrets of the stuffing which are transmitted from generation to generation.

With changing eating habits, some fundamentally revolutionary such as veganism, many of the traditional Christmas foods are put in question — even though for a small but growing minority — though new lasting creations have yet to emerge.

In India, we observe a microcosm where the different Christmas traditions and foods, mainly originating from Europe find their expression. The increasing commercialisation of the festivities is reinforcing and accelerating this process. Households with affinity to one or the other European country find inspiration in their Christmas food menus as do restaurants which are specialised in serving European or American foods.

Like all other aspects of life, Christmas 2020 and New Year 2021 have been and will be affected by the COVID crisis. This year, the size of family gatherings will be drastically reduced, restaurants will see the number of dine-ins restrained, home delivery of Christmas meals will play a significant role and we will all have more time to revisit that recipe book handed over from our grandmother and try our hands on one of its Christmas secrets.

(The writer Kazem Samandari is Executive Chairman, L'Opéra.)

## DIAL TO DINE

A biryani per second and home-cooked meals were the most loved items on a food app this year

As contactless food became the norm in the pandemic-hit year, online delivery platform Swiggy on Tuesday said that some form of biryani was ordered more than once every second while home cooked food was one of the most ferried items in 2020.

The chicken biryani reaffirmed

its place as India's favourite dish. For every veg biryani, there were six chicken biryani orders. Over three lakh new users made their Swiggy debut by ordering in a chicken biryani, according to the data from fifth edition of Swiggy's annual 'StatEATstics' analysis.

"While we delivered five times



as many orders to 'Home' addresses compared to 'Work' addresses between January and March, that number rose to nine times as many home orders versus work orders in April and May," the report mentioned.

Missing office cappuccinos and masala chais while working from home, lakhs of hardworking Swiggy users ordered varieties of tea and coffee. Swiggy also delivered over two lakh *pani puri* orders post lockdown.

The company launched 'Swiggy HealthHub' in August, a curation of healthy food items. While users in the National Capital Region (NCR) ordered the healthiest meals, Bangaloreans showed a high resolve to get healthy. At 130 per cent, the city saw the highest increase in healthy food

orders on Swiggy HealthHub.

People ate an average of 342 calories for dinner. Lunches ranged at under 350 calories, while breakfast, the day's most important meal, saw people consume an average of 427 calories.

Swiggy Instamart, its instant grocery and essentials delivery service, delivered over 75,000 kgs of onion. "Our shortest delivery request came in from someone in Bengaluru and spanned a 600 metres to collect an empty water can from their home and exchange it for a full one at the store. Meanwhile, our longest delivery spanned 39 kms in Kolkata and involved the delivery of a SIM card," Swiggy informed.

—IANS

## R E C I P E S



### GINGERBREAD MEN BISCUITS

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- Flour: 2100 gm
- Baking powder: 60 gm
- Brown sugar: 1020 gm
- Garam masala: 9 gm
- Ginger powder: 5 gm
- Egg: 300 gm
- Honey: 600 gm
- Butter: 600 gm

#### METHOD

- Take a bowl and mix well butter and brown sugar.
- Add eggs and honey little by little.

- Then add flour, baking powder, garam masala, ginger powder and mix all the ingredients for a minute.
- Put it for rest at a temperature of 4 degree Celcius for 10 hours.
- Pre heat the oven at a temperature of 160 degree celsius.
- Cut the biscuits into a shape.
- Bake the biscuits for 15 minutes.
- Leave the biscuits to cool down for 30 minutes.
- Finish by decorating with royal icing.

Courtesy: L'Opéra Culinary Head, Amit Kumar.

### MULLED WINE XMAS SANGRIA

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- Slow cooked red wine: 150 ml
- Whole spices: 150ml
- Triple Sec: 30 ml
- Cognac/Spiced rum: 30 ml
- Orange peel

#### To garnish:

- Dehydrated Orange chip/Cinnamon stick and Star anise

#### METHOD

- Slow boil wine along with triple sec, spiced rum or cognac and all whole spice except bay leaf.

Courtesy: The Leela Ambience Convention Hotel, Delhi.



### CREEPY COFFEE

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- Smirnoff espresso vodka: 60 ml
- Lime juice: 10 ml
- Coke: 150 ml

#### To garnish:

- Orange and lime Wedge

#### METHOD

- Fill a tall glass with ice cubes.
- Add Smirnoff espresso vodka to the glass and stir.
- Top up with cola and garnish.

Courtesy: Diageo India.



### STOLLEN BREAD

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- Flour: 500 gm
- Milk: 125 gm
- Fresh yeast: 25 gm
- Butter: 250 gm
- Sugar: 50 gm
- Mix spices: 5 gm
- Salt: 8 gm
- Mix fruit: 600 gm
- Lemon zest
- Gluten: 20 gm
- Clarified butter: 250 gm
- Marzipan: 100 gm

#### METHOD

- Soak all the fruits in a bowl in rum overnight.
- Dissolve the yeast and milk with a pinch of sugar.

- Mix flour, yeast mixture sugar, gluten, mix spices, lemon zest and salt for several minutes. The dough shouldn't be very smooth.
- Add butter and mix until flour and butter completely so that the dough smoothens. Remove from the bowl and let the dough rest for 30 minutes.
- Knead the fruits into the dough. Turn the dough out onto a greased surface, divide it into three pieces, and shape each piece into oval shape.
- Place one piece of marzipan down the longer centre of each oval and fold dough over it lengthwise.
- Leave the top edge of the

dough just shy of the bottom edge. Then press the top edge to seal it to the dough below.

- Place the bread on a baking sheet, cover them and let them rise until puffy.
- Bake the stollen for 30 to 35 minutes, until golden brown in preheated oven at 200 degree Celsius.
- Remove the stollen from the oven and brush them with melted butter and dust with icing sugar.
- Transfer on a rack to cool completely. Wrap airtight and store in chiller.

Courtesy: The Leela Ambience Convention Hotel, Delhi.



# Kohli, Shami absence advantage for

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Australia chief coach Justin Langer can empathise with the Indian team after the 36-run shocker it endured in Adelaide but he is also “glad” that the visitors are “stressed” during the Christmas weekend ahead of the second Test on December 26.

Having won the first Test within two and half days by dismissing India for their lowest Test score of 36, Langer said his team would look to drive home the advantage in the absence of Virat Kohli by putting relentless pressure on new skipper Ajinkya Rahane.

What would he have done had he been in India coach Ravi Shastri's shoes?

“None of my business. I have had enough with stresses ....I empathise with the opposition and I know what it feels like. If India are feeling any stress, I am glad they are and not us over the Christmas weekend,” Langer said during a virtual media conference.

He did admit that the absence of Kohli (paternity leave) and Mohammed Shami (wrist fracture) would be an advantage for his team but the focus firmly remains on its own planning.

“Of course, whatever sport you play, if you take out two of your stars, Virat Kohli is an all-time great player I think and Shami is a real glue for the team because he is so miserly and skilful. It surely gives us some advantage,” he said.

“We need to start strongly on the first day and build pressure on Rahane as he is the new captain of India for this series. So the processes don't change. Whenever you take out best players of any cricket team, it weakens them and that's the reality,” he said.

While David Warner is out of the second Test, Langer couldn't say with finality whether the dashing opener will be available for the third Test in Sydney.

“I am very hopeful. ....As I said for the last three weeks or so, he will be doing everything possible to get back out onto the ground, so fingers crossed,” he said.



Indian captain Virat Kohli chats with Mohammed Shami on 2nd day of 1st Test AP

But he does have trouble running?

“He is starting (to get) a bit of trouble running at full speed, when he gets that back and feels confident with it, of course he will come back into our team, so we will just monitor him regularly and fingers crossed that he will be back,” Langer said.

Tim Paine's batting has been a topic of discussion as the Australians judge every keeper-

batsman through the Adam Gilchrist prism but the coach has enormous faith in his skipper's abilities and the leadership qualities he has shown in the past two years.

“You think about Adam Gilchrist, I guess, who transformed the game in a sense, and that is why Adam Gilchrist is an all-time great player because he transformed the game. I have got enormous faith in Tim Paine,”

## Aussies set for unchanged XI

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Australia chief coach Justin Langer on Thursday said the home team will be unchanged for the second Test against India beginning on Saturday unless there is any unexpected event in the next two days.

Langer said he'd have to be “pretty courageous” to make any changes to a side that dished out such a dominating performance.

“I'd be a pretty courageous man to change the XI for this Test match after the last one,” Langer said during a virtual media conference.

“At this stage, unless something happens over the next few days — and things can happen in the world we live in — we'll go in with the same XI, I'd say.”

Langer said.

“...Whether it's his wicket-keeping, his captaincy, his batting, I have said publicly and privately for almost the last year, he is our most important player, because he is a lead wicket-keeper, his leadership on and off the field is incredible,” he said.

“....We saw he can play, how well he batted in first innings under pressure in Adelaide, probably changed the game actually with the run-out of Virat Kohli, so he is a great player, great leader and I literally love having him in our team,” he said.

## Melbourne standby venue for Sydney Test

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Cricket Australia on Thursday said Melbourne has been placed on standby to host the third Test between India and Australia if Sydney's Covid-19 situation renders it “untenable” despite efforts being made to continue with the original schedule.

The fate of the third Test has been shrouded in uncertainty

since earlier this month after a fresh Covid-19 outbreak in the northern beaches in Sydney, which is scheduled to host the third Test from January 7.

“CA has reaffirmed its commitment to giving it the best chance to play the third Vodafone Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground and the fourth Vodafone Test at the Gabba as per the original schedule,” CA said in a statement.

“Should the public health situation in NSW render playing in Sydney untenable, CA's preferred contingency plan is to work with the Victorian Government to play the third Vodafone Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground followed by the fourth Vodafone Test at the Gabba,” it added.

A final decision on the third Test venue would be made during the Boxing Day Test.

# BCCI approves 10-team IPL from 2022

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

The BCCI's governing body on Thursday ratified the entry of two new franchises in the IPL to make it a 10-team affair from 2022 and also decided to back the ICC's push for cricket's inclusion in the 2028 Olympics, during its Annual General Meeting (AGM) here.

“Two new teams will be introduced in the 2022 IPL,” a Board source said.

It is learnt that time at hand is too short for even a nine-team IPL next year as an elaborate tender-floating process, increase of matches and ensuring that all foreign player international calendars are

adjusted, would be prove to be a herculean task.

In another major development, the Board, in principle, decided to back the ICC's bid for inclusion of cricket, in the T20 format, in the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics “after getting some clarifications from the International Olympic Committee”.

Also, it was decided that all first-class players, both men and women, will be suitably compensated for the curtailed domestic season due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The BCCI plans to get the domestic season underway, after several months' delay, in January with the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 championship.

## Chetan Sharma appointed new chairman of selectors

Kuruvilla, Mohanty join five-member panel

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Former India pacer Chetan Sharma was on Thursday appointed chairman of the senior national selection panel by the BCCI's Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC), which also picked Abbey Kuruvilla and Debashis Mohanty in the five-member team.

The new panel was formed on the sidelines of the BCCI's 89th Annual General

Meeting (AGM).

The selection panel also has former India players Sunil Joshi and Harvinder Singh.

Sharma is a former player who represented India in 23 Tests and 65 ODIs during an 11-year-old international career, the highlight of which was his hat-trick in the 1987 World Cup.

As per the BCCI constitution, the candidate with the most Test caps becomes the chief selector.

## Cool but aggressive Rahane will be able stand-in captain: Sachin

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

India's batting mainstay Ajinkya Rahane's calm and composed demeanour shouldn't be mistaken for him being weak and he will be as aggressive as Virat Kohli, now on paternity leave, as the Mumbai batsman steps in as a stand-in captain in the remainder of the ongoing four-Test series against Australia, says Sachin Tendulkar.

Rahane has captained India twice in Tests and has a 100 per cent win record, with one of those wins coming against Australia in 2017.

“Ajinkya has led India earlier also, and his calmness doesn't mean he is not aggressive. Each person has his way of showing aggression. Someone who doesn't show aggression doesn't mean he's not aggressive. (Cheteshwar) Pujara, for example, is very calm and composed; his body language is into the game, focussed. But that doesn't mean that Pujara is trying any less than anyone else,” Tendulkar said.

Tendulkar pointed out that Rahane's strategy as captain may be different from Kohli's but he and his team would have a common goal, i.e. to win matches.

“Each person has his own way of reacting and responding to situations, but I can assure you everyone's destination is one; they've different routes to get there — and that is how they can



make India win. So, Ajinkya's would be a different style, different strategies. That is up to the team management — how they plan, how the pitch plays, and what our batting and bowling line-ups would be,” he said.

“All those things come into play. They will do everything to try and win. Absence of seniors does affect the balance of a team, but that gives opportunities to someone else. Overall, it is about Team India and not about individuals. Individuals can get injured and be ruled out of the series, but Team India will always be there,” added Tendulkar.

# MUSICAL MELANGE

SAPTAK CHATTERJEE combines his background in Hindustani Classical with western music to offer an interesting mix



Isn't it strange that schools still describe music and activities like theatre and even debating as extra-curricular activities?,” Saptak Chatterjee asks. “I mean, these are co-curricular activities which help you grow into a better person and discover skills that you never knew you might have.” That said, Chatterjee always knew that he wanted to be a singer. After all, he is following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather who were both Hindustani Classical vocalists. “To be fair, my father always gave me a choice and pursuing music was never a compulsion. Even if I chose to become a singer, Hindustani classic was never forced upon me.”

Indeed, a few weeks before the Common Aptitude Test for the Indian Institutes of Management some years ago, he threw up his hands and decided enough was enough. Today, Chatterjee finds himself on the verge of releasing his second album and working on the music a l



TO BE FAIR, MY FATHER ALWAYS GAVE ME A CHOICE AND PURSUING MUSIC WAS NEVER A COMPULSION. EVEN IF I CHOSE TO BECOME A SINGER, HINDUSTANI CLASSIC WAS NEVER FORCED UPON ME

scores and background music for a few streaming television shows. “I've been writing my own music for a while now and released my first studio album in 2018,” he says before adding that working with a band, writing his own music and mixing music with an engineer was a great experience.

“I have come a long way since I started. Last year I played at the NH7 Weekender which is the largest music festival this side of the continent,” Chatterjee says. And working on his second studio album during the pandemic has also been a great learning experience for him. “Musicians have had to rediscover the way they talk about their music, the way they write and promote it. I'm really looking forward to the second album and hopefully we can hear a couple of tunes today,” he says.

As we listen to one of the first tracks called *Paheli*, that Chatterjee released from his second album *Aina*, which thanks to his distribution company is available on all major streaming services such as Apple Music, Amazon Music, Jio Saavn and YouTube Music and can be played through the smartphone interface available on the Kia Sonet that Chatterjee is driving. He talks about the song, explaining its writing process. “In most love songs you can almost visualise the two people. Right? But in this one it is unclear who the singer is talking about, he is romanticising the concept of ‘another’,” he explains and adds, “The song leaves the listener thinking, ‘who could this song be about?’”

As to how this track came about, Chatterjee credits his bandmates, “I was sitting around on my keyboard, messing around with chords and speaking to my bandmates when someone suggested that I take the ‘hardcore’ commercial route and write a love song.” That set off a spark in his head. “Why can't a love

song be with just one person, and that is where it started and it is open to the listeners' interpretation.” As to how rewarding song writing is, he just says that once you hear it back, “it feels great.” About melting the lines between Hindustani Classical and western music, he frankly says, “I have never looked at it like that. It is just a bunch of musicians trying to come up with something new.”

While Chatterjee credits his father as being his primary musical inspiration, he says that it is A R Rahman who is another great inspiration. “I have grown up listening to his music and I have been a part of shows which paid tribute to him. His music is not mainstream even though mainstream audience loves it because it does not have that mainstream approach. This is the reason why it really appeals to creators who are trying something different.”

Chatterjee is really impressed by the Intelligent Manual Transmission (IMT) technology on-board the Kia Sonet Tech Line HTX+ that he is driving. “I was a little tentative when I started, but my left foot is really grateful. It climbs really smoothly and I am really enjoying the drive.” And he is also surprised with the six-speed transmission that the Sonet comes with on the turbocharged T-GDI engine. This little powerhouse of an engine produces a class-leading 120PS of power, which is more than enough to enjoy the open roads and also delivers great fuel economy.

As for the seven-speaker BOSE audio system on the car, Chatterjee admits, “because I am hearing my own music, I know exactly how it is supposed to sound and, to be honest, when we played *Paheli* first it sounded almost exactly like it did back in the studio when I was mixing and mastering it.” He even praised the sound system for being well-balanced. “If you tell a musician that a sound system has too much low end, they will scowl at you because that is not the way they want their music to be heard. But when you listen to the other track, *Kaam Dhaam*, you can hear just how well-balanced the audio system is. For a car of this size, at this price-point, the BOSE audio system works like magic.”

Saptak, just 25, is working towards his future and we will almost certainly be hearing more of him soon. Maybe in Bollywood or on a television series or two. He is an incredibly talented young man who will certainly go places and one who loves the Kia Sonet which has reignited his love of motor-ing. And if you like driving as well as listening to music while on the move, the Kia Sonet is the best possible option for you as it combine great audio and great driving. ■