

## OPINION 8

A BEDOUIN'S  
TALE

## WORLD 11

SYRIAN REFUGEE CAMP BURNT TO  
GROUND IN NORTHERN LEBANON

## SPORT 14

DHONI CAPTAIN OF ICC'S  
WHITE-BALL TEAMS OF DECADE

LUCKNOW, MONDAY DECEMBER 28, 2020; PAGES 14 &amp; 3



the pioneer

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VIJAY URGES  
TO KEEP  
MASKS ON  
12 VIVACITY

## Untraceable fliers fuel UK strain fear

State Govts unable to locate returnees as their addresses are wrong, phones switched off

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

In an alarming development, hundreds of passengers who recently returned from the United Kingdom have not been traced across the country due to incorrect contact details furnished by them. The State administrations are finding it difficult to locate a number of these passengers as their contact numbers are either switched off or not traceable. In many cases, their addresses are also proving to be incorrect.

For instance 279 returnees in Telangana, 151 in Karnataka, 15 in Gurugram are untraceable so far. Meanwhile, 22 more passengers (16 in Maharashtra, two in Delhi, two in Telangana and one each in MP and UP) who returned from the United Kingdom have been tested positive.

According to director of Public Health G Srinivasa Rao, 1,216 people have arrived in Telangana from the United Kingdom since December 9 and a total of 937 have been identified and tested for Covid-19 and 279 passengers are still untraceable. Of the total 279



Representational image

fliers, 92 untraceable passengers are from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Kerala.

The Government is now on the lookout for the 151 untraceable United Kingdom returnees. All of them have returned to

Bengaluru since December 7 but have gone missing.

These 151 people are yet to be traced as their phone numbers are either switched off or not traceable. In Gurugram at least 15 returnees from the United Kingdom, in the last

two weeks, couldn't be traced. Additionally, seven travellers have refused to get themselves tested for Covid-19.

In Uttar Pradesh one passenger has gone missing after returning from the United Kingdom.

As per the data, 1,822 travellers to Punjab from the United Kingdom in the last one month landed at the Delhi international airport. As many as 1,604 travellers to Punjab and elsewhere landed at the Sri Guru Ram Das Jee International Airport after November 25. Of a total of 3,426 returnees, nearly 2,500 are still believed to be in the State.

As many as 16 returnees from the United Kingdom, where a new variant of coronavirus was detected recently, have tested positive in RT PCR tests conducted on their arrival in Maharashtra. Two more passengers tested positive in Telangana after landing from the United Kingdom.

One United Kingdom returnee has tested positive in Jalore in Madhya Pradesh. He had tested negative on December 7 after arriving in Delhi. He, along with two members of his family, has tested positive now. A merchant navy captain, who returned from the United States and the United Kingdom recently in Bareilly, has tested positive for Covid-19.

Meanwhile, two more persons who recently returned to Delhi from the United Kingdom were found to be Covid positive during a door-to-door contact-tracing and testing exercise. With this, the number of people testing positive for the disease after returning from the United Kingdom has gone up to 21 in the national capital. All of them returned from the United Kingdom after November.

## India registers lowest daily cases in nearly six months

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India registered 18,732 fresh cases of Covid-19, the lowest in nearly six months, while 97,61,538 people have recuperated so far from the disease pushing the national recovery rate to 95.82 per cent, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Sunday.

The death toll climbed to 1,47,622 with the novel coronavirus virus claiming 279 lives in a span of 24 hours in the country, the data updated at 8 am showed. A total of 18,732 daily new cases were recorded in the past 24 hours. The number of new daily cases last reported a dip on July 1 when 18,653 cases were registered.

The Covid-19 case fatality rate was registered at 1.44 per cent. There are 2,78,690 active cases of coronavirus infection in the country which comprises 2.73 per cent of the total caseload, the data stated.

According to the ICMR, a cumulative total of 16,81,02,657 samples have been tested up to December 26 with 9,43,368 samples being tested on Saturday.

## Bone-chilling cold to ring in New Year

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The weather is set to turn murkier for the plains of northwest India next week as forecasts suggest the possibility of severe cold gripping the region.

Several places in north India, including Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, recorded their minimum temperature below the five degrees Celsius mark on Sunday. The India Meteorological Department has forecast severe cold wave in parts of the region later this week and warning of dense fog.

The IMD on Sunday said the "cold wave" to "severe cold wave" conditions are also likely in Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi on December 28 and 29 and over North Rajasthan on December 29 and 30 and also in isolated pockets over Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh due to consequent strengthening of cold and dry northwesterly and northerly lower level winds.

Delhi, whose minimum temperature has been hovering around 4 to 5 degrees Celsius this week, is likely to witness mercury levels fall below 3 degrees Celsius by the end of December. In Delhi, December temperatures have fallen to the lowest low of around 2.5



degrees Celsius in the past two years in the last week of December. From 2015 to 2017, the mercury levels never dropped below five-degree Celsius in December. This year, the prevailing strong La Niña conditions over the Pacific Ocean are said to be the major driver behind the ongoing colder-than-normal winter.

For declaring the cold day or severe cold day, the IMD considers the wind chill factor — the effective minimum temperature due to wind flow. The cold wave conditions are associated with the fall of minimum temperature much below normal and are usually less than 10 degrees Celsius and the maximum temperature is 4.5 degrees Celsius or 6.4 degrees Celsius below normal.

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## We saw spirit of Atmanirbhar Bharat in 2020, claims Modi

PM pays tributes to several revered Sikh personalities in his Mann Ki Baat

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday addressed his 72nd and the last edition of monthly radio programme "Mann ki Baat" for 2020 saying the people have learnt "new lessons in each crisis" and developed "self-reliance" during coronavirus pandemic when supply-chain got disrupted world-over.

In his year-end radio-talk, the PM remembered great sacrifices of Sikh Gurus and their family members.

"On this day, the sons of Guru Gobind Singh, sahibzade Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh were immured; our sahibzade showed amazing courage and determination even at that tender age. It was on this day itself that Guru Gobind Singh's mother — Mata Gujari attained martyrdom; about a week ago, it was the Martyrdom Day of Guru Tegh Bahadur ji too", he said.

The PM provided "inter-



esting news" of increase in the population of lions, tigers and leopards in the country.

Modi's radio-talk came at a time when thousands of farmers are protesting on the outskirts of Delhi against new farm laws. The PM greeted coronavirus warriors saying people of the country applauded their work and learn new lessons in past several months and developed spirit of self-reliance.

"Every citizen has felt the changes triggered by the pandemic. The supply chain was completely disrupted but people learnt new lessons from challenges. We saw a new spirit among the people, we saw the spirit of Atmanirbhar Bharat in 2020," said Modi in his address.

Modi said in the drive towards "self-reliance" quality should not be compromised.

"I call upon our manufacturers and industry leaders that when people have taken determined step forward & when the mantra of 'Vocal for Local' is resonating in every house, it is time to ensure that our products are world-class", he said.

Modi said in May this year, the Kashmiri saffron was given the Geographical Indication Tag or GI tag. Through this, we want to make Kashmiri saffron a globally popular brand", he said.

The PM spoke about happy increase in the population of lions and tigers in the country from 2014 to 2018 and attributed the success to the non-governmental efforts, among others, of the civil society and other organisations.

"India has seen a rise in population of lions, tigers as well as a significant increase in forest cover. Main reason is that not only the Government but several other people, civil societies and other organisations are contributing towards forest and wildlife conversation," he said.

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## Farmers beat thali during Mann Ki Baat

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Farmers camping along Delhi's borders and protesting against the Central Government's new agricultural laws on Sunday were seen marching while striking utensils and chanting slogans during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's monthly "Mann Ki Baat" radio address.

Earlier this week, several farmer leaders had appealed to people to join them in boycotting Modi's radio programme on December 27 by beating "thaalis", in the same way the PM had asked the country to bang utensils during the early days of the coronavirus-induced lockdown.

"The common people too are with farmers in their agitation against the farm laws," said a protester in Amritsar as he beat a "thali" with a spoon and raised "Jai Kisan" slogan.

He had also urged people to skip a meal in solidarity with the protesting farmers on Wednesday on the occasion of National Farmers' Day.

On Saturday, the protesting farmer unions decided to resume the dialogue with the Centre and proposed



December 29 as the date for the next round of talks, farmer leader Rakesh Tikait said. So far, five rounds of talks have already taken place between farmers and the Government.

## 176 more telecom towers damaged, Punjab CM fails to pacify farmers

Chandigarh: Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh's appeal to protesting farmers to not damage telecom infrastructure seems to have failed to deter new attacks, with more than 176 signal transmitting sites being vandalised in the last 24 hours, sources said on Sunday.

This has taken the total number of telecom tower sites damaged to 1,411, they said.

## Cong readies to elect next party chief in virtual polls

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress is in advance stage of updating the list of party delegates and preparing the schedule to elect its next chief in a digital AICC meeting via the electoral college process in January-February 2021.

"CEA is drawing up a voters' list of around 1,500 AICC delegates and is planning to hold digital elections, marking a first — with the term of the presidency to be only for two years," AICC sources said.

The five-member CEA is headed by Madhusudan Mistry and its members are Rajesh Mishra, Krishna Byre Gowda, S Jothimani and Arvinder Singh Lovely. Lovely is one of the 23 signatories to a letter written to Sonia Gandhi in August this year seeking complete overhaul of the party and a full-time leadership to stem the steady decline of the 135-year-old organisation.

The party is likely to announce the schedule for the internal polls in the first week of January. Sources in CEA said the panel was to announce the schedule by December-end but got delayed as efforts to build consensus on the presidential candidate are still on.



A senior AICC functionary said the delay could be because of the former party chief Rahul Gandhi's visit to Italy beginning Sunday for about a week.

"We will meet in the first week of January and finalise the schedule," said CEA sources, adding after that the party's highest decision making body, Congress Working Committee (CWC), will meet to clear the name of the chief post.

At a meeting convened by Sonia early this month with dissenters and other senior leaders there was a renewed call for Rahul to return as the party chief. While Rahul said it would not be appropriate to interfere in the ongoing inter-

nal election process, the dissenters are firm that they will not accept a "proxy" candidate and insisted that polls should be held at all levels, including the CWC.

As per the Congress constitution, 12 of the 25 CWC members have to be elected by All India Congress Committee (AICC) delegates and the rest are appointed by the party president. The CWC has not witnessed any election in over two decades now. The last time there was an election to the CWC was in 1997 during the Kolkata plenary. Prior to that, the CWC polls took place in 1992 at the Tirupati session.

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## Centre extends validity of DL, RC till Mar 31

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Sunday extended the validity of vehicular documents like driving licences, registration certificates, permits etc., till March 31, 2021 in the light of need to prevent spread of Covid -19.

The Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has issued directives to the States and Union Territory administrations in the regard.

"Taking into consideration the need to prevent the spread of Covid-19, it is further advised that the validity of all of the above referred documents may be treated to be valid till March 31, 2021. This covers all documents whose validity has expired since February 1, 2020 or would expire by March 31, 2021."

It further added the

enforcement authorities are advised to treat such documents valid till March 31, 2021. "This will help out citizens in availing transport related services, while maintaining social distancing," the statement said.

MoRTH had earlier issued advisories regarding extension of validity of documents related to Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 and Central Motor Vehicle Rules, 1989. It was advised that the validity of fitness, permit (all types), license, registration or any other concerned document(s) may be treated to be valid till December 31, 2020. Two days earlier the Delhi High Court had suggested to the Delhi Government to give more time to people to obtain colour-coded fuel stickers and high-security registration plates (HSRP) before it starts fining them.

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## TN setback for BJP! ADMK says no allies in next Govt

PNS ■ CHENNAI

The possibility of an AIADMK-BJP alliance suffered a major setback on Sunday as the former made it clear in unequivocal terms that there would be no coalition Government in Tamil Nadu in the aftermath of the upcoming assembly election.

"It will be an AIADMK Government led by Edappadi Palaniswami and there is no place for our electoral allies in the Government," declared KP Munusami, Rajya Sabha member and a senior leader of the party. He was addressing the meeting convened by the party leadership to launch AIADMK's election campaign 2021.

Interestingly, Munusami did not mention the name NDA part-

nners even once in his speech which was heard in rapt attention by Chief Minister Palaniswami and his deputy O Panneerselvam.

The AIADMK had taken note of BJP leader Murugan's statement the other day that the name of the NDA's Chief Ministerial candidate has to be endorsed by JP Nadda, BJP's national president.

Munusami also declared that AIADMK would not yield or compromise with its stance on Dravidianism. "There is no place for nationalist parties in our alliance" declared the AIADMK leader amidst thunderous applause from the party delegates.

The AIADMK had made it known in the month of August that Tamil Nadu would not have three-language policy and

the State would shun Hindi.

He hinted that the BJP should accept that AIADMK was the senior partner, endorse the candidature of Palaniswami or the saffron party may reconsider its electoral options for the 2021 polls. Though Munusami did not mention BJP by name directly, it was clear that the message was intended for the national party that led the Central Government.

"Be it a national party or State party....the Government will be led by the AIADMK. There is no necessity for a coalition Government. If any political party comes forward for an alliance arrangement with an idea of a coalition Government, let them please think about it," he said.

## Saradha tainted firm's salaries paid from CM relief fund: CBI to SC

IANS ■ WEST BENGAL

In a development which may further increase the political heat in West Bengal where Assembly polls are slated early next year, the CBI in a contempt plea in the Saradha chit fund scam has informed the Supreme Court that the Chief Minister's Relief Fund of West Bengal regularly paid for a period of 23 months, purportedly towards the salaries of employees of Tara TV which was under investigation for being part of Saradha Group of companies.

In an application, the CBI said the CM Relief fund has regularly paid the amounts — at the rate of Rs 27 lakh per month — for a period of 23 months from May 2013 to April 2015. It is submitted that the said amounts were pur-

portedly given towards salary payments of the employees of the said media company that was under investigation being part of group companies of Saradha Group of Companies," said the application.

A total of ₹ 6.21 crore was paid to the Tara TV Employees Welfare Association from the Chief Minister Relief Fund of West Bengal. The CBI said in order to further look into the gravely suspicious payments to a private media entity, a letter dated October 16, 2018 was written to the Chief Secretary, West Bengal to provide information about the constitution and functioning of the Chief Minister's Relief Fund.

Despite repeated efforts, the State Government has parted with incomplete and evasive replies, said the CBI.

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## UP govt bans display of 'caste' stickers on vehicles

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Following the intervention of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), the Uttar Pradesh government has banned display of 'caste' stickers on vehicles with immediate effect. The Transport department has sent orders to all the RTOs to check vehicles with caste stickers pasted on them and take action as per the law.

In recent years, it has apparently become fashionable to paste caste stickers like 'Yadav', 'Jat', 'Gurjar', 'Brahmin', 'Pandit', 'Kshatriya', 'Lodhi', 'Mauria' etc on the wind-screens or number plates of vehicles in the state, and the

Continued on Page 11



# Akhilesh says govt is hurting foundation of democracy

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Sunday accused the BJP-led state government of hurting the ‘foundation of democracy’ by dissolving village panchayats without conducting elections. Yadav’s allegation prompted a rebuttal from the UP BJP vice-president and party’s incharge of panchayat elections Vijay Bahadur Pathak, who said Yadav had been the chief minister and should know that the panchayat elections could not have been held in the midst of Covid-19 pandemic. Pathak added that the government was committed to holding the panchayat elections within six months.

“The BJP government in Uttar Pradesh has dissolved the village panchayats without conducting fresh elections. Major elections are being conducted, but the government has been finding itself unable to hold elections of the smallest units of public representation. How will this government-run Uttar Pradesh?” Yadav said in a tweet in Hindi on Sunday. “The BJP must not hurt the foundation of democracy,” the former UP chief minister added.

Rebutting Yadav’s claims, Pathak said: “Akhilesh Yadav has been the chief minister of UP. He should know that the elections have been delayed because of the pandemic. The UP government is committed to holding elections within six months, for which preparations are already going on,” Pathak said.

He added that those accusing the government of not holding the elections for these “smallest units of public representation” had actually crushed them for their own vested interests. “The BJP has faith in democratic values,” Pathak said.

Uttar Pradesh has a total of 58,758 gram panchayats and as many panchayat heads. As per a state government notification, the five-year tenure of 58,660 gram panchayats, barring 88 of Gautam Budhh Nagar and 10 of Gonda where gram panchayat elections were held later, ended on December 25. Following the expiry of terms of village panchayats, the state government has appointed assistant development officers of districts as panchayat administrators of their districts, vesting in them the powers of panchayat committees and village panchayat heads.

## Kaushambi jail finds mention in PM’s ‘Mann Ki Baat’

Lucknow (PNS): The Uttar Pradesh jail authorities are elated after Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his ‘Mann Ki Baat’ on Sunday, mentioned Kaushambi jail where inmates make warm covers for cows. “In UP’s Kaushambi jail, the inmates are stitching covers for cows from old and torn blankets. These blankets are being collected from Kaushambi and other jails of the state. Once the covers are prepared, they are being sent to *gaushalas* across the state,” Modi said. He added that the inmates were stitching covers for cows every week, and everyone should encourage and promote such efforts for helping others. Reacting to this, DG, Jails, Anand Kumar thanked the PM for mentioning the efforts of inmates in his ‘Mann Ki Baat’ and assured that such initiatives would be made in other jails in future.

Superintendent of Kaushambi district jail BS Mukund said: “We have got a new energy after the prime minister appreciated the efforts of inmates for stitching covers for cows.” The inmates of Kaushambi district jail are currently stitching 50 covers for cows in a week using old and torn blankets. The woollen covers are supplied to *gaushalas* across the state. A blanket allotted to an inmate during winter usually lasts around three years.



### NOTICE

Swearer Rajesh Kumar Singh son of Fateh Bahadur Singh is a resident of Lal Rajendra nagar Alampur road Lalgaon Raebareilly.swearer was posted in Indian army on post of hawaladar having army number 14608639x.Mrs Neeta Singh wife of swearer has date of birth 08-07 -1969 registered in all her educational certificates but by mistake her date of birth is 06-07-1969 on army papers of swearer. Swearer appeals to change date of birth of his wife to 08-07-1969 on his army record and appeals this date of birth to be real date of birth .

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY										Notification No.163/2020			
Important Notice for the Rail Passengers													
It is notified for information of General Public that following Puja Special Trains will run with extension of Periodicity, Revised Timings & Stoppage w.e.f. 01.01.2021 as under:-													
(1) 02511/02512 Gorakhpur — Kochuveli — Gorakhpur Bi-Weekly Special Train													
Train No. 02511 Ex. Gorakhpur upto 28.03.2021 (Every Friday & Sunday)													
Train No. 02512 Ex. Kochuveli upto 31.03.2021 (Every Tuesday & Wednesday)													
02511 Gorakhpur—Kochuveli					02512 Kochuveli—Gorakhpur								
Arr.	Dep.	Station	Arr.	Dep.	Arr.	Dep.	Station	Arr.	Dep.				
—	06.35	Gorakhpur Jn.	15.40	—	—	—	—	—	—				
07.13	07.15	Khalilabad	14.32	14.34	—	—	—	—	—				
07.41	07.44	Basti	14.05	14.08	—	—	—	—	—				
08.26	08.28	Mankapur Jn.	13.17	13.19	—	—	—	—	—				
09.00	09.05	Gonda Jn.	12.50	12.55	—	—	—	—	—				
10.25	10.27	Barabanki Jn.	11.33	11.35	—	—	—	—	—				
11.01	11.04	Badshahnagar	10.39	10.42	—	—	—	—	—				
11.40	11.50	Aishbagh	10.10	10.20	—	—	—	—	—				
12.40	12.42	Unnao Jn.	09.05	09.07	—	—	—	—	—				
13.17	13.22	Kanpur Central	08.35	08.40	—	—	—	—	—				
14.13	14.15	Pokhrayan	06.38	06.40	—	—	—	—	—				
14.50	14.52	Orai	05.58	06.00	—	—	—	—	—				
16.35	16.45	Jhansi Jn.	04.15	04.25	—	—	—	—	—				
17.48	17.50	Lalitpur	02.43	02.45	—	—	—	—	—				
20.55	21.00	Bhopal	00.00	00.05	—	—	—	—	—				
22.40	22.50	Itarsi Jn.	21.58	22.05	—	—	—	—	—				
23.49	23.50	Ghoradongri	19.56	19.57	—	—	—	—	—				
00.30	00.32	Betul	19.18	19.20	—	—	—	—	—				
00.52	00.54	Amla Jn.	18.58	19.00	—	—	—	—	—				
03.55	04.00	Nagpur	16.30	16.35	—	—	—	—	—				
05.00	05.02	Sevagram	14.58	15.00	—	—	—	—	—				
06.33	06.35	Chandrapur	13.13	13.15	—	—	—	—	—				
07.40	07.45	Balharshah	12.50	12.55	—	—	—	—	—				
08.50	08.51	Sirpur Kagaznagar	11.05	11.06	—	—	—	—	—				
09.35	09.36	Belampalli	10.26	10.27	—	—	—	—	—				
09.44	09.45	Manchera	10.12	10.13	—	—	—	—	—				
09.53	09.54	Ramgundam	10.00	10.01	—	—	—	—	—				
11.39	11.41	Warangal	08.34	08.36	—	—	—	—	—				
13.07	13.09	Khammam	07.22	07.24	—	—	—	—	—				
15.20	15.30	Vijaywada Jn.	05.50	05.55	—	—	—	—	—				
16.48	16.50	Chirala	03.59	04.00	—	—	—	—	—				
17.23	17.25	Ongole	03.19	03.20	—	—	—	—	—				
18.48	18.50	Nellore	02.01	02.02	—	—	—	—	—				
19.48	19.50	Gudur Jn.	01.30	01.32	—	—	—	—	—				
22.45	23.10	Chennai Central	23.05	23.30	—	—	—	—	—				
01.18	01.20	Katpadi Jn.	21.08	21.13	—	—	—	—	—				
02.23	02.25	Jolarpettai	19.53	19.55	—	—	—	—	—				
03.52	03.55	Salem Jn.	18.02	18.05	—	—	—	—	—				
04.55	05.00	Erode Jn.	17.00	17.05	—	—	—	—	—				
05.43	05.45	Tiruppur	16.08	16.10	—	—	—	—	—				
06.47	06.50	Coimbatore Jn.	15.22	15.25	—	—	—	—	—				
07.55	08.00	Palghat	13.35	13.40	—	—	—	—	—				
08.24	08.25	Ottappalam	12.58	13.00	—	—	—	—	—				
09.16	09.17	Wadakkancheri	11.53	11.54	—	—	—	—	—				
09.32	09.35	Thrisur	11.30	11.33	—	—	—	—	—				
09.54	09.55	Irinjalakuda	11.08	11.09	—	—	—	—	—				
10.02	10.03	Chalakudi	11.00	11.01	—	—	—	—	—				
10.22	10.23	Angamali	10.46	10.47	—	—	—	—	—				
10.33	10.35	Aluva	10.35	10.37	—	—	—	—	—				
10.58	11.00	Ernakulam Town	—	—	—	—	—	—	—				
11.20	11.25	Ernakulam Jn.	10.10	10.15	—	—	—	—	—				
11.59	12.00	Cherthala	08.59	09.00	—	—	—	—	—				
12.27	12.30	Alappuzha	08.29	08.32	—	—	—	—	—				
12.49	12.50	Ambala Puzha	08.16	08.17	—	—	—	—	—				
13.14	13.15	Haripad	08.00	08.01	—	—	—	—	—				
13.43	13.45	Kayankulam	07.43	07.45	—	—	—	—	—				
14.32	14.35	Kollam Jn.	07.05	07.08	—	—	—	—	—				
16.20	—	Kochuveli	—	06.15	—	—	—	—	—				
Note:-Train No. 02511/02512 Terminal changed from Thiruvananthapuram Central to Kochuveli.													
(2) 05115/05116 Chhapra — Delhi Jn. — Chhapra Weekly Special Train													
Train No. 05115 Ex. Chhapra upto 27.03.2021 (Every Saturday)													
Train No. 05116 Ex. Delhi Jn. upto 28.03.2021 (Every Sunday)													
05115 Chhapra — Delhi Jn.					05116 Delhi Jn. — Chhapra								
Arr.	Dep.	Station	Arr.	Dep.	Arr.	Dep.	Station	Arr.	Dep.				
—	11.20	Chhapra	13.20	—	—	—	—	—	—				
12.55	13.00	Ballia	11.52	11.57	—	—	—	—	—				
13.38	13.40	Yusufpur	10.55	10.57	—	—	—	—	—				
14.15	14.20	Ghaziपुर City	10.32	10.37	—	—	—	—	—				
14.53	14.58	Aunrihar Jn.	09.33	09.35	—	—	—	—	—				
15.14	15.16	Dodhi	09.07	09.09	—	—	—	—	—				
15.24	15.26	Kirakat	08.54	08.56	—	—	—	—	—				
16.15	16.40	Jaunpur Jn.	08.05	08.30	—	—	—	—	—				
17.10	17.12	Shahganj Jn.	07.06	07.08	—	—	—	—	—				
17.52	17.54	Akbarpur	06.13	06.15	—	—	—	—	—				
19.05	19.10	Faizabad Jn.	04.35	04.40	—	—	—	—	—				
22.35	22.45	Lucknow Jn.	01.10	01.20	—	—	—	—	—				
00.56	00.58	Hardoi	23.30	23.32	—	—	—	—	—				
02.51	02.53	Shahjehanpur	22.38	22.40	—	—	—	—	—				
04.38	04.40	Aonla	19.53	19.55	—	—	—	—	—				
06.00	06.05	Chandausi Jn.	18.52	19.00	—	—	—	—	—				
07.25	07.35	Moradabad	17.22	17.30	—	—	—	—	—				
08.33	08.35	Amroha	16.28	16.30	—	—	—	—	—				
09.34	09.36	Hapur	15.28	15.30	—	—	—	—	—				
10.25	10.27	Ghaziabad	14.50	14.52	—	—	—	—	—				
10.49	10.51	Delhi Shahdara	14.14	14.16	—	—	—	—	—				
11.20	—	Delhi Jn.	—	14.00	—	—	—	—	—				
(3) 05029/05030 Gorakhpur — Pune — Gorakhpur Weekly Special Train													
Train No. 05029 Ex. Gorakhpur upto 25.03.2021 (Every Thursday)													
Train No. 05030 Ex. Pune upto 27.03.2021 (Every Saturday)													
05029 Gorakhpur — Pune					05030 Pune — Gorakhpur								
Arr.	Dep.	Station	Arr.	Dep.	Arr.	Dep.	Station	Arr.	Dep.				
—	17.25	Gorakhpur Jn.	18.50	—	—	—	—	—	—				
18.03	18.05	Khalilabad	17.45	17.47	—	—	—	—	—				
18.32	18.35	Basti	17.15	17.18	—	—	—	—	—				
19.20	19.22	Mankapur Jn.	16.17	16.19	—	—	—	—	—				
19.55	20.00	Gonda Jn.	15.50	15.55	—	—	—	—	—				
22.35	22.50	Lucknow Jn.	13.30	13.40	—	—	—	—	—				
23.55	23.57	Unnao Jn.	12.18	12.20	—	—	—	—	—				
00.30	00.40	Kanpur Central	11.40	11.50	—	—	—	—	—				
02.00	02.02	Orai	09.08	09.10	—	—	—	—	—				
04.15	04.25	Jhansi Jn.	07.45	07.55	—	—	—	—	—				
06.50	06.55	Bina Jn.	05.30	05.35	—	—	—	—	—				
08.55	09.00	Bhopal	03.35	03.40	—	—	—	—	—				
09.13	09.15	Habibganj	03.20	03.22	—	—	—	—	—				
(4) 02595/02596 Gorakhpur—Anand Vihar(T.) —Gorakhpur Tri-Weekly Special Train													
Train No. 02595 Ex. Gorakhpur upto 30.03.2021 (Every Monday, Tuesday & Thursday)													
Train No. 02596 Ex. Anand Vihar (T.) upto 31.03.2021 (Every Tuesday, Wednesday & Friday)													
02595 Gorakhpur—Anand Vihar (T.)					02596 Anand Vihar (T.)—Gorakhpur								
Arr.	Dep.	Station	Arr.	Dep.	Arr.	Dep.	Station	Arr.	Dep.				
—	20.00	Gorakhpur Jn.	07.40	—	—	—	—	—	—				
21.00	21.03	Basti	06.05	06.08	—	—	—	—	—				
22.25	22.30	Gonda Jn.	05.00	05.05	—	—	—	—	—				
01.15	01.25	Lucknow Jn. (NR)	02.11	02.21	—	—	—	—	—				
03.00	03.05	Kanpur Central	00.50	00.55	—	—	—	—	—				
08.25	—	Anand Vihar (T.)	—	20.00	—	—	—	—	—				
(5) 05101/05102 Chhapra — Lokmanya Tilak (T.) — Chhapra Weekly Special Train													
Train No. 05101 Ex. Chhapra upto 30.03.2021 (Every Tuesday)													
Train No. 05102 Ex. Lokmanya Tilak(T.) upto 01.04.2021 (Every Thursday)													
05101 Chhapra-Lokmanya Tilak (T.)					05102 Lokmanya Tilak (T.)-Chhapra								
Arr.	Dep.	Station	Arr.	Dep.	Arr.	Dep.	Station	Arr.	Dep.				
—	17.35	Chhapra	08.30	—	—	—	—	—	—				
18.25	18.30	Siwan Jn.	07.12	07.17	—	—	—	—	—				
19.08	19.13	Bhatni Jn.	06.31	06.33	—	—	—	—	—				
19.35	19.40	Deoria Sadar	06.08	06.10	—	—	—	—	—				
21.00	21.15	Gorakhpur Jn.	05.05	05.15	—	—	—	—	—				
22.21	22.24	Basti	03.27	03.30	—	—	—	—	—				
23.13	23.18	Mankapur Jn.	02.33	02.35	—	—	—	—	—				
00.40	00.45	Ayodhya	01.55	02.00	—	—	—	—	—				
01.10	01.15	Faizabad Jn.	00.54	00.56	—	—	—	—	—				
02.33	02.35	Sultanpur	22.50	22.52	—	—	—	—	—				
03.28	03.30	Partapgarh Jn.	21.49	21.54	—	—	—	—	—				
05.25	05.35	Prayagraj Jn.	20.00	20.05	—	—	—	—	—				
06.50	06.52	Fatehpur	17.40	17.42	—	—	—	—	—				
08.05	08.10	Kanpur Central	16.30	16.35	—	—	—	—	—				
09.40	09.42	Orai	12.32	12.34	—	—	—	—	—				
11.45	11.55	Jhansi Jn.	10.55	11.05	—	—	—	—	—				
16.10	16.20	Bhopal	06.45	06.50	—	—	—	—	—				
18.05	18.10	Itarsi Jn.	04.55	05.05	—	—	—	—	—				
20.42	20.45	Khandwa	02.32	02.35	—	—	—	—	—				
22.30	22.35	Bhusaval Jn.	00.25	00.30	—	—	—	—	—				
00.58	01.00	Manmad Jn.	21.57	22.00	—	—	—	—	—				
01.57	02.00	Nasik Road	20.40	20.45	—	—	—	—	—				
04.17	04.20	Kalyan Jn.	17.17	17.20	—	—	—	—	—				
05.30	—	Lokmanya Tilak (T.)	—	16.40	—	—	—						



sd/  
Sr. Administrative Officer/CA-V  
Dapv- 51101/ 11/0001/2021



# Congress to fight panchayat polls with more vigour

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

UP Congress has announced to fight the panchayat polls in Uttar Pradesh with more vigour and enthusiasm next year even as it hopes to set the tone for the assembly elections in 2022. Congress will celebrate its 135 Foundation Day on Monday and the party will complete its 135 years.

“The new decade beginning January 1, 2021 will herald a new beginning for the party in Uttar Pradesh. Two office-bearers of the Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee (UPCC) will be doing night halts at panchayat level (in villages). They will listen to the woes, problems and grievances of people, youngsters and farmers, and seek their feedback. The programme will continue in February as well,” Congress state spokesperson Ashok Singh said on Sunday.

He said the party would be aiming to win most of the zila panchayats as also village pradhan seats in the state.

According to the official website of the Congress, the first session of the grand old party was held in Bombay

(now Mumbai) from December 28 to 30 in 1885. It was chaired by Womesh Chandra Bonnerjee.

Asked to comment on state president Ajay Kumar Lallu going untraceable for a few hours late on Saturday night, Singh said, “If there is any leader among the opposition parties on whom the most number of cases have been registered by this government, it is Lallu. Why did it take the police so much time to bring him from Jhansi to Lucknow? The police were unable to tell us about the location of our leader.”

Meanwhile, president of Uttar Pradesh unit of Congress Sewa Dal Pramod Pandey said: “2021, which marks the starting point of a new decade, will see the Congress Sewa Dal in a new incarnation. We are going to analyse the reasons for the consecutive defeats for a period of 20 years in 10 Lok Sabha and 30 assembly seats in the state.”

He said the organisation has started holding ‘kisan panchayats’ and ‘khaat sabhas’ to reach out to farmers. He added that the programmes were launched four days ago.

## Irani: Congress has always promoted cow slaughter

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Hitting out at the Congress, Union Textile Minister Smriti Irani said that the grand old party of India has always promoted cow slaughter. Reacting on the march of UP Congress leaders over the poor condition of cows in shelter homes in the Bundelkhand region, Irani, who listened to the PM’s ‘Mann Ki Baat’ at Hajipur village under Deh block, told reporters that in Kerala, the Congress leaders advertised slaughter of cows but were shedding crocodile tears in UP.

“This is the double standard of the Congress and people should be aware of it,” Irani said. She added that people know how BJP was working for the people and providing them all kinds of facilities and benefits.

UP Congress had taken out ‘Save Cow March’ in Bundelkhand region on Saturday to highlight the poor condition of cows at government-run shelters.

Irani, who was on a three days visit to her Amethi parliamentary constituency, also inaugurated projects worth over Rs 80 crore.

# Bid to ensure better future for poor kids

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With a view to ensuring a better future for children living below poverty line, the UP government has started identifying kids engaged in child labour and begging. The exercise has been started under the ‘Mission Shakti’ campaign, which was launched by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in October.

The theme of January 2021 has been designed with special focus on children under the

‘Mission Shakti’ campaign and it is based on kids engaged in child labour and begging.

To improve the scenario for the poor children and to ensure protection and respect to them, the Women and Child Development department has started working extensively in all districts of UP, including the state capital. Under this, such children are being admitted to primary schools and they are also being empowered financially. Officials are also preparing a list of ration card holders

at district level.

“In this task, teams of Labour, Police, Women & Child Development and Health departments are identifying and surveying the children at the ground level,” said Sarvesh Kumar Pandey, who is the chief probation officer of Lucknow division.

After identifying these children, they are being admitted to primary schools and are also being provided primary kits along with hygiene kits and food items, Pandey added.

“In view of January’s theme of Mission Shakti, an action plan has been prepared and for providing benefits of government schemes to the children, government and non-government institutions are being encouraged to adopt city crossings and blocks,” said Sudhakar Sharan Pandey, who is the district (Lucknow) probation officer.

“Fifty NGOs, including Childline and Bal Kalyan Samiti, have adopted 31 city crossings of Lucknow. With the

commencement of the adaptation process, the children identified by the institutions are directly benefiting from the schemes,” he added.

The campaign against forced child labour and begging from poor children is being carried out at a large scale in the state. Due to this campaign, cases of child labour and crime against children are declining in the state and the number of families migrating to other states for employment is also coming down.



Maulana Syed Aqeel-ul-Gharavi addressing ‘Chaleesvan’ majlis of Maulana Dr Kalbe Sadiq at Imambara Ghufuran Ma’ab in Lucknow on Sunday

## CISH developing new varieties of guava

**Lucknow (PNS):** Central Institute for Subtropical Horticulture is developing new guava varieties, as per consumers’ choice. Director Shailendra Rajan said that consumers and farmers are also demanding crunchy and sweet varieties.

“CISH has started a breeding programme for developing guava varieties, as per the choice of consumers and growers. The farmers are interested in cultivating these varieties so that they can get better prices in the market. Thai guavas are being sold at a very high price of Rs 150 to 200 a kg in metro cities. These guavas have a longer

shelf life and can be easily kept without fridge for about 8 to 10 days, whereas the traditional varieties lose their taste and texture after 2 to 3 days,” he said.

“The institute has developed five guava varieties. Most people prefer to consume guavas with less or soft seeds, higher pulp content and sweetness. Presently as per the demand of the consumers for crispy guavas, hybridisation programme has been started and crunchy varieties and traditional sweet guavas in the market. The breeding population is being grown and being evaluated before releasing as a new variety,” he said.

# Food vendor, two sons attacked by customers

**Lucknow (PNS):** A man and his sons were attacked by a group of youths and later pushed towards a pan filled with boiling oil in Gomti Nagar on Saturday. The victims were identified as Ramnath Yadav and his sons Pradeep & Ranjeet.

As per reports, Ramnath of Barabanki runs a shop under Takhma flyover in the area and Pradeep and Ranjeet are his helpers. Around evening, a person, identified as Mukul, along with his friend Abhishek and few others, reached the shop and asked for puri-sabzi and samosas.

Ramnath asked for money as they started moving away without making the payment. This irked the accused who attacked Ramnath and his sons. They then pushed Ramnath and Pradeep towards the pan filled with boiling oil. The pan overturned, scalding the trio. The accused fled the scene as

neighbouring shop-keepers started converging on the scene. The victims were rushed to a hospital while police registered a case in this connection.

In another case, a man attacked his wife during a verbal spat at their house in Vibhuti Khand police station area on Sunday evening. The victim, identified as Geeta, suffered injuries and was rushed to RMLIMS where doctors referred her to KGMU Trauma Centre. Her condition was said to be critical. The accused, identified as Amit Kumar, was later arrested.

As per reports, Amit returned home in a drunken state around 5 pm and Geeta confronted him for his drinking habit. As a verbal duel ensued, Amit attacked her with a sharp-edged weapon. The woman suffered injuries on her throat and she started bleeding profusely.

# Terrorists with explosives arrested in Poonch

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

A joint team of security forces on Sunday apprehended terrorists with explosive material near Galuthi area of Mendhar in Poonch district.

Meanwhile, in Kashmir valley a Special police officer (SPO) who had decamped with service weapons was also apprehended along with three other associates by the police.

According to police records, the SPO identified as Altaf Hussain had earlier decamped with two AK 47 rifles along with one Jahangir who was later on arrested by the security forces in a cordon and search operation.

This is the third incident of weapon recovery in the last 48 hours and has alerted Jammu and Kashmir police to uncover

the nexus between the local conduits and terrorist handlers sitting across the border.

Earlier on Friday evening two Kashmiri youth were also apprehended after a long chase in Narwal area of Jammu along with weapons and ammunition.

Sharing details of the operation launched in Mendhar tehsil of Poonch, a Jammu based Defence PRO Lt-Col Devender Anand said, “The terrorists apprehended possibly belong to a terror outfit ‘Jammu and Kashmir Ghaznavi Force’.

He said, the apprehended terrorists were likely to carry out a blast in Rajouri district and were probably attempting to disrupt the communal harmony prevailing in the region. Defence PRO said, “with the arrest of these terrorists, the security forces have unearthed



a nexus involving local terrorists which were involved in ferrying war like stores and narcotics”. He said a thorough search operation was still going on to recover more arms or explosive material from

their hideouts.

Earlier, on December 13, two foreign terrorists possibly belonging to Jammu and Kashmir Ghaznavi Force were also killed in an encounter at Dogrian (Poonch) on old

Mughal Road. He said, their connection to Pak handlers is also being probed. In Srinagar, a police spokesman said, in a joint operation Budgam police along with 53RR and 181 Bn CRPF launched a CASO at Hayatpora, Chadoora. During search, one vehicle tried to flee from the cordon which was stopped tactfully, the occupants tried to resist who were overpowered by the security forces.

Out of them one was identified as Deserter SPO turned terrorist Altaf Hussain. The other 3 have been identified as Shabir Ahmad Bhat, Jamshed Magray, and Zahid Dar all residents of Pulwama. On their search, arms & ammunition and other incriminating material were recovered.

On further enquiry, it was found that the group is associ-

ated with banned terror organization JEM and were operating in the area with the intention to carry out some subversive activities.

The two terrorist associates apprehended in Jammu were identified as Raees Ahmad Dar, son of Ghulam Hassan Dar of Churath, Qazigund and Subzar Ahmad Sheikh, son of Ghulam Ahmad Sheikh of Ashmuji, Kulgam. One AK rifle, one pistol, two magazines and some rounds have been recovered from their possession. According to police records, Raees Ahmad Dar had a previous history of involvement in terror activities having four cases registered against him. Initial investigation revealed that he is working for terrorists. The role of his associate is also being ascertained.

# Pakistan may try to escalate border tensions: Lt-Gen Raju

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

A senior Army officer headed Srinagar based 15 corps headquarters on Sunday said in order to divert the attention of its people from internal issues, Pakistan may try to escalate tensions along the border by pushing in terrorists even during peak of winter or resorting to ceasefire violations. In both eventualities, we are ready and will give a befitting response to any such misadventure”, Lt-Gen BS Raju said in Srinagar.

Referring to the prevailing security situation along the LoC in the region, Lt-Gen Raju claimed there are more than 200-250 terrorists waiting for their turn across different launch pads to infiltrate inside the Indian territory. The fron-

**Referring to the prevailing security situation along the LoC in the region, Lt-Gen Raju claimed there are more than 200-250 terrorists waiting for their turn across different launch pads to infiltrate inside the Indian territory**

tier districts of Rajouri and Poonch this season have already witnessed a spike in the number of ceasefire violations and infiltration bids under the garb of cover firing by the forward posts across the line of control.

Sharing his assessment about the recently concluded DDC polls in Jammu and Kashmir the senior army commander said these polls were held peacefully and the people got to vote to invigorate grass-

roots democracy in Jammu and Kashmir.

“It is now time for the elected representatives to work for the people and for the people to seek delivery in terms of development activity,” he said.

On winter posturing along the LoC wherein infiltration is more likely through lower heights, he said there are continued reports of 200-250 terrorists in launch pads in PoK looking for a chance to infiltrate.

“They will try to exploit bad weather to infiltrate, but the security forces are focusing on both direct infiltration into Kashmir through the LoC and those attempted through the south of Pir Panjal.

The deployment on the LoC is robust and supported by layers of surveillance devices,” he added.

# J&K police file chargesheet against Army officer, 2 others

PNS ■ JAMMU

After the Jammu and Kashmir police on Saturday submitted a 1,400 page chargesheet against the accused Army captain and others in the Amshipora encounter, in which three labourers from Rajouri were killed on July 18, 2020, in the local court in Shopian, the Chief Judicial Magistrate has issued a fresh order asking the Army authorities under relevant sections of law to give their opinion whether the accused Captain Bhoopendra Singh @ Major Basheer Khan of 62 RR be tried by the Criminal Court of ordinary jurisdiction or by the Court Martial.

According to a statement issued by the spokesman of the Jammu and Kashmir police late Sunday evening, “a 1400 page chargesheet was presented before the CJM, Court Shopian against the accused Captain

## SHOPIAN FAKE ENCOUNTER

Bhoopendra Singh @ Major Basheer Khan of 62 RR and Tabish Nazir S/O Nazir Ahmed Malik R/O Chowgam, for commission of offences u/s 302,364,201,436,120B,182 IPC r/w 7/25 IA Act”.

During the investigation, a statement of 49 witnesses was recorded under relevant sections of law and a total of 75 witnesses were listed under the list of witnesses .

According to a police spokesman, “investigations revealed a conspiracy was hatched by accused Captain Bhoopendra Singh @ Major Basheer Khan of 62 RR, Tabish Nazir S/o Nazir Ahmed Malik R/O Chowgam and Bilal Ahmed Lone S/o Ghulam Nabi Lone R/O Arabal Nikas Pulwama to abduct and staged the encounter”.

“They deliberately and purposefully chose not to follow SOPs, they planted illegally acquired weapons and material on their dead bodies after stripping them of their identities and tagged them as hardcore terrorists in possession of war-like stores and deliberately providing false information to colleagues/senior”, police spokesman said.

During the course of investigation, the disclosure of accused persons led the SIT to recreate all the scenes of crime which includes routes used after meeting the victims and the place where the victims were murdered. During further investigation all the circumstantial evidence which includes two Vehicles, service rifle of Captain Bhoopendra Singh of 62 RR etc. were seized.

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

While the last Sunday of the year saw BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari and Trinamool Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee trading volleys of fire from two public rallies a silent development with suspected political ramifications took place at Raj Bhavan where BCCI president Sourav Ganguli met Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar for about two hours before exiting as quietly as he came.

Moments after the former India southpaw’s exit the Governor tweeted about his meeting with “Dada” and BCCI president saying he “accepted the invitation” extended to him to visit Eden Gardens.

While the former India captain before entering the

Governor’s house said that his was a “courtesy call” the Governor said that a lot of issues were discussed with him adding it was a great experience talking to him.

But none would dwell on the reasons behind an unusual rallyes a silent development with suspected political ramifications took place at Raj Bhavan where BCCI president Sourav Ganguli met Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar for about two hours before exiting as quietly as he came.

Moments after the former India southpaw’s exit the Governor tweeted about his meeting with “Dada” and BCCI president saying he “accepted the invitation” extended to him to visit Eden Gardens.

to Eden Gardens, oldest cricket ground in the country established in 1864.”

Though the Raj Bhavan sources too said that there was nothing much to be read into the discussion stories did the rounds that the BJP wanted one of India’s most successful captains to begin a new innings in politics while the star cricketer had not given his words regarding the issue.

Meanwhile, Adhikari a former Bengal Minister and close Mamata Banerjee aide who left that party early this month launched a scathing attack on the TMC leadership, particularly Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee’s nephew and Diamond Harbour MP Abhishek Banerjee saying every leaf turned in the TMC at the instance of the Bhaipo (read the nephew) and every

step was taken in his interest.

“It is a party of extortionists led by the Bhaipo,” he said adding how the villages were being ignored by the top TMC brass in the interest of a handful people in South Kolkata.

“Most ministries are enjoyed by a handful of people living in South Kolkata and the districts and villages are made to serve only ... I hate that party in which I was there for the past 21 years and saw things taking shape personally,” Adhikari said asking the people to “gift Bengal to Narendra Modi if you really want to save Bengal from the hands of ‘tolabaz’ (extortionists).”

There was a dire need for the State to be in the hands of a party that rules the Centre. “Then only an all round

development can come.. Continuous anti-Centre stance will lead us to nowhere,” he said telling a massive audience at Danton in West Midnapore that “the State must be protected from the hands of extortionists.”

Reacting sharply to his attacks Banerjee told an equally big rally at Diamond Harbour that “some people have sold their spines to the BJP and joined that party to save their skins ... today they call the Bhaipo an extortionist but I want to remind you that this was the man whose name appears in Narada, Sharada, Rose Valley and other scams ... This was the man who was seen collecting cash rapped in towel in Narada videos and now they call me an extortionist... these people are the real

extortionists... I am not afraid of the CBI or ED because there is no proof of extortion against me.”

He said “If they can prove that I am corrupt then they will need no CBI or ED ... I will go to the gallows myself,” wondering why Adhikari was asking Bengal to be handed over to Modi.

“Is Bengal a commodity like onion, potato or tomato that it can be handed over ...” he asked saying “till Mamata Banerjee is there no one can defeat TMC.”

Asking the “traitors” to quit the TMC in bigger numbers he said “Go out in as many numbers as you want because Mamata Banerjee is like Sachin Tendulkar ... till the time she is batting there is no tension even if the 9 wickets have fallen.”

**पावरग्रिड  
POWERGRID**

**NOTICE**

1. The applicant above-named has made an application before the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission, New Delhi for Asset-1: Central Sector Portion for 660.145 KM of Fibre Optic Communication System; Asset-2: UPPTCL Portion for 252.913 KM of Fibre Optic Communication System; Asset-3: Establishment of Fibre Optic Communication System in Northern Region Kishenpur-New Wanpoh Link (137.52 kms) (Central Sector Portion); Asset-4: Establishment of Fibre Optic Communication System in Northern Region Bairsat-Pong Link (96.77 kms) (Central Sector Portion) under ‘Establishment of Fibre Optic Communication System in Northern Region under fibre optic expansion project (Additional Requirement)’.

2. The beneficiaries for Combined Assets of the above mentioned Transmission system are: (1) Rajasthan Rajya Vidut Prasaran Nigam Limited (2) Ajmer Vidut Vitran Nigam Ltd. (3) Jaipur Vidut Vitran Nigam Ltd. (4) Jodhpur Vidut Vitran Nigam Ltd. (5) Punjab State Electricity Board (6) Haryana Power Purchase Centre (7) Power Development Deptt, Govt. of Jammu & Kashmir (8) Uttar Pradesh Power Corporation Ltd. (9) Delhi Transco Ltd. (10) BSES Yamuna Power Ltd. (11) BSES Rajdhani Power Ltd. (12) North Delhi Power Ltd. (13) Chandigarh Administration. (14) Uttaranchal Power Corporation Ltd. (15) North Central Railway (16) New Delhi Municipal Council (17) Himachal Pradesh State Electricity Board

S.No	Subject	Asset 1
1	Approved capital cost of the project (Rs. in Cr)	194.40
2	Authority which has approved the Capital Cost	Board Of Directors
3	Scheduled date of commercial operation	3.3.2018
4	Date of commercial operation	3.3.2019; 3.3.2019; 1.2.2018 and 25.8.2018
5	Capital cost on DOCO (Rs. in Cr)	33.64

3. Details of tariff: 2014-19 and 2019-24 (Rs.in Lakhs)

Sl No	Name of the asset	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
1	Asset-1	--	36.07	404.15	430.04	419.20	408.34	396.88
2	Asset-2	--	11.84	159.38	170.40	165.58	160.74	155.64
3	Asset-3	12.09	80.63	81.59	119.54	142.83	138.93	135.06
4	Asset-4	--	24.20	40.70	61.55	74.69	72.64	70.58

4. A copy of the application made for determination of tariff is posted on the website of the applicant at [www.powergridindia.com](http://www.powergridindia.com).

5. The suggestions and objections, if any, on the proposals for determination of tariff contained in the application be filed by any person, including the beneficiary before the Secretary, Central Electricity Regulatory Commission, 3 & 4th floor, Chandrakil Building, Janpath, New Delhi - 110 001 (or other address where the office of the Commission is situated), with a copy to the applicant at the address of its corporate office within 30 days of publication of this notice.

Place : GURUGRAM

Date : 23.12.2020

Sd/-

Sr. General Manager (Commercial)

**POWER GRID CORPORATION OF INDIA LIMITED**

(A Government of India Enterprise)

Corp. Office : ‘Saudamini’, Plot No. 2, Sector-29, Gurgaon-122001, (Haryana) Tel.: 0124-2571700-719

Reg. Office : B-9, Qutab Institutional Area, Kirti Khera, New Delhi-110 016. Tel.: 011-26560112, 26560121

[www.powergridindia.com](http://www.powergridindia.com), CIN : L40101DL1989GOI038121

**A Maharashtra PSU**



# 59 more test +ive in VNS

PNS ■ VARANASI

Varanasi crossed the 21,000-mark on Sunday with 59 more people testing positive for coronavirus infection during the past 24 hours.

With the new cases, the tally of confirmed cases in the city reached 21,009 on Sunday evening. The city also saw two more COVID-19 deaths, taking the toll to 353.

During the past 24 hours, 29 COVID-19 patients recovered in home isolation.

So far 20,197 COVID-19 patients have recovered and 459 active cases are undergoing treatment.

The recovery rate in the city is 96.13 per cent and the mortality rate 1.68 per cent.

Chief Medical Officer Dr VB Singh said that in the first report of the day, 51 positive patients were found out of 2,259 reports received. He said till then, the total test reports received were 5,06,093 and the results of 2,282 were awaited. Out of them, 4,85,092 reports were negative and 21,001 positive.

The health workers have so far collected 5,31,931 samples for testing.

Earlier, a female aged 46

from Hyderabad Colony (BHU) and a male (63) from Madanpura succumbed to COVID-19 at Sir Sundarlal Hospital, Banaras Hindu University (SSH BHU).

With the addition of six new red zones, the total number of hot spots has increased to 2,632, including 196 red zones. There are 2,436 green zones with nine new ones.

Meanwhile, mass/group antigen tests continued at the static booths and stations of the district under the direction of District Magistrate Kaushal Raj Sharma.

All the 182 tests were found negative at SSPG Hospital at Kabirchaura apart from 145 at District Women's Hospital, 36 at Shivpur CHC, 46 at Vivekananda Hospital Bhelupur, 125 at LBS Hospital in Ramnagar and 104 at SSH BHU.

Apart from this, all the 50 tests at Varanasi Junction (Cantonment) railway station and 36 at Manduadhi were also found negative.

Along with this, samples of 173 people were sent from SSPG, 60 from Women's Hospital, 14 from Vivekananda and 100 from LBS for RT-PCR investigation.

# Campaign begins to search TB patients

PNS ■ VARANASI

A month-long active case finding campaign under the National Tuberculosis Eradication Programme (NTEP) 'TB Harega Desh Jeetega' has been started from Saturday.

The three-phase campaign will run till January 25.

A total of 796 people were screened in the district on the first day of the campaign and the health workers took 47 samples for mucus tests.

District Tuberculosis Officer Dr Rakesh Kumar Singh said that 20 per cent population of the district would be screened and their main goal was to make TB treatment facilities available to the people.

During the campaign, the 'hidden' TB patients will be searched in addition to patients suffering from HIV and diabetes. Private clinics, labs and medical stores will also participate in the campaign.

In the first phase, 342 undertrails lodged in the District Jail at Chowkaghat were screened and the samples of 19 were taken for testing. Besides, 355 prisoners were screened in the Shivpur Central Jail and samples of 12 of them were taken for test.

The health workers also screened 27 children at Kashi Anathalaya (orphanage) and collected samples of two of



ACF team at District Jail to search TB patients in Varanasi on Saturday

them while 53 children at Child Remand Home in Ramnagar were screened and samples of 14 of them were taken for test. Besides, 23 inmates of Old Age Home at Durgakund were screened and the sample of one of them was collected for the test.

The first phase of the TB detection campaign will continue till January 1 during which mainly child, women and old age protection homes will be searched while during the second phase from January 2 to 12, the active case finding campaign will be launched to find TB patients in slums and

high risk population of urban and rural areas.

In the third phase of the campaign from January 13 to 25, all the registered private doctors will be contacted to notify the TB patients.

Dr Singh said that 10 teams had been deployed in the ongoing campaign for screening and sample collection.

"If a person complains of coughing for more than two weeks, there is bleeding while coughing, chest pain, fever and loss of weight, he/she should get his mucus tested immediately. Detection and treatment of TB patients is completely

free of cost," he said.

Dr Singh also said that a total of 9,221 TB patients had been notified in the district since January last, out of which 5,872 patients had been notified in the public sector and 3,349 in the private sector.

He said at present, 7,665 TB patients were undergoing treatment.

"After getting new patients under the Nutrition Scheme, everyone will be provided assistance of Rs 500 per month for nutritious food and the assistance will be for six months. It will be discontinued when a patient recovers," he added.

# Lawyer attacked in Civil Lines

PNS ■ ALLAHABAD

A lawyer was attacked on Saturday night near the head post office in the Civil Lines police station area.

The goons, who were in a four-wheeler, first opened fire on the lawyer and when the bullet missed him, they hit and injured the lawyer by the pistol butt.

When the advocate collapsed on the ground bleeding profusely, the assailants fled, threatening to kill him.

An FIR was registered against more than six unidentified persons while four persons were known to the advocate.

Ahmad Siddiqui, a resident of Basera Colony Rahmat Nagar in Kareli police station area, is a practising lawyer.

He told the police that on Saturday night, he was having a conversation with his friend, Siphek, on the road near a hotel near the head post office in Civil Lines when many people came on a four-wheeler. The advocate identified four of them.

Siddiqui alleged the men came out of the car and hurled abuses at him and when he protested they fired on him.

When the bullet missed the

target, all of them beat up the advocate.

Police registered a report against six persons on the basis of the written complaint, including Waqas Usmani resident of Chowk, Fahd Alim resident of Chowk, Adil resident of Meerapur Kalyani Devi and Asif resident of Dariyabad Attarsuiya.

Police said that prima facie it appeared that old enmity was behind this attack, but only after the arrest of the assailants a clear picture would emerge.

Meanwhile, the advocates condemned the incident in Etah, and a submitted a memorandum to the district magistrate.

In the Etah district, the District Advocates Association held the general assembly on Sunday in protest against the indecency and vandalism committed by the police-administration with advocate Rajendra Sharma.

A memorandum addressed to the chief minister was handed over to the district magistrate demanding strict action in the Etah case.

The general assembly was presided over by association's President Hari Sagar Mishra and conducted by Rakesh Kumar Dubey.

# Aprajita mesmerises audience

PNS ■ VARANASI

Promising dancer Aprajita Patel mesmerised the audience with her kathak performance at Deendayal Hastkala Sankul, popularly known as Trade Facilitation Centre (TFC), in Badalapur here on Saturday in a cultural evening programme organised under the joint auspices of Office of Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Union Textiles Ministry and Subeh-e-Banaras.

She began her programme with a Ganesh Vandana written by Sant Tuls Das — 'Gaiye Ganapati jag bandan...' Then she presented Ladi, Paran, Jodi, Amad, Tihai, Tukda etc. in Teen Taal, mesmerising the audience present there. Her steps and facial impressions were commendable.

Then she presented a Tarana in Raag Desh. She concluded her programme with a dance on a Thumri based on Radha-Krishna.

In the beginning, the programme was inaugurated by the director of Museum, Ajay Srivastava, along with Aprajita. The function was conducted by Dr Preetesh Acharya.

Later, on Sunday morning at Subeh-e-Banaras stage at Assi Ghat, emerging teenaged vocalist Jayteenka Dey presented her programme.

She is a disciple of her father Pt Debashish Dey.

She was supported by Pt Kishore Mishra on Tabla and Manish Parda on Harmonium.



She began with Raag Lalit in Vilambit Ek Taal 'Bhor hi aaye...' and then presented a Bandish in Madhya Teen Taal 'Chhayi lalima Ganga ke teere...'

She also presented a Rachana in Dhrut Ek Taal 'Anaadi Devi Ambike...' and concluded her programme with a Bhajan in Raag Bhairvi 'Aayogye kab aayogye...'

Pt Kishore Mishra presented a memento to the artiste while organising secretary Dr Ratnesh Verma proposed the vote of thanks.

The function was conducted by Dr Preetesh Acharya. Later, under the guidance of Yoga Guru Pt Vijay Prakash, a regular yoga exercise programme was held.

# PM Modi to dedicate EDFC's 351-km section tomorrow

PNS ■ ALLAHABAD

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will dedicate 351-km New Bhaupur-New Khurja section of the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor to the nation and will inaugurate the Operation Control Centre (OCC) at Prayagraj virtually on Tuesday.

Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel, UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Railway Minister Piush Goel will grace the occasion.

This 351-km section will boost freight and logistics of the region, while the Operation Control Centre of Prayagraj will act as Sangam of growth and prosperity from Ludhiana to Dankuni, spanning six states.

As much as 40 per cent of the Dedicated Freight Corridor will be commissioned by March 2021 and the remaining 60 per cent by June 2022.

The Indian Railways is the lifeline of the nation. To make India a 5-trillion economy it is essential to develop transport

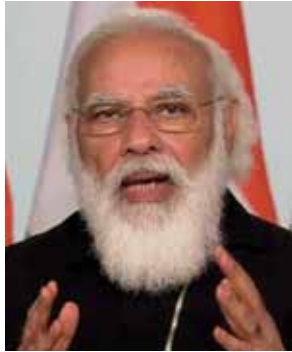
networks at a fast pace. Development of transport infrastructure will give a major fillip for the growth of industries, commerce, export and import and agriculture.

To develop transport infrastructure, the Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India was set up by the Government of India.

The Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India is constructing the Western DFC (1504 route km) and Eastern DFC (1856 route km including Sonnagar-Dankuni PPP Section).

The EDFC starting from Sahnewal near Ludhiana (Punjab) will pass through the states of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand and terminate at Dankuni in West Bengal.

The western corridor connecting Dadri in Uttar Pradesh to Jawaharlal Nehru Port (JNPT) in Mumbai will traverse through the states of UP, Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra of WDFC.



This 351-km New Bhaupur-New Khurja section of Eastern DFC is an important section in India's most populous state of Uttar Pradesh and is built at a cost of Rs 5,750 crore.

This section is funded by the World Bank.

The new stations in this section are Bhaupur, Kanchausi, Achalda, Ekdil, Bhadan, Makhanpur, Tundla, Hathras, Daudkan and Khurja.

Some of the important industrial Areas that straddle this section are Aligarh, Khurja,

Firozabad and Agra.

Decongestion of existing Kanpur-Delhi main line will be done successfully with the commissioning of this corridor. Presently, the Kanpur (Bhaupur) Khurja section is among the most congested sections of Indian Railways and line capacity utilisation is more than 150 per cent.

With the release of freight trains to DFC route, IR section will be able to run faster and punctual trains and will get time to do routine maintenance which was earlier a daunting challenge.

It will ensure more coaching train and enhanced punctuality on existing NCR Routes. Increase in average speed of goods train up to 60-70 KMPH from present average speed of 25-30 kmph will be achieved. Kanpur Dehat, Aurayia, Ethwah, Firozabad, Hathras, Aligarh and Bulandshahr districts will get a major boost in the economy because the opening of the DFC stations in the hinterland area of

these districts in Uttar Pradesh state.

Already existing important industrial areas of Aligarh, Khuja, Firozabad, Agra and Bhaupur will become major growth centres of the area. These areas are hubs of agriculture produce specially potato, paddy and maize. These produce will get pan-India market because of cheaper and faster DFC connectivity.

During foggy weather this section will provide major relief to the Indian Railways in both passenger and freight movement. Impact of fog will be nullified due to super-extra capacity to run the trains on this corridor.

The DFCCIL has set up a state-of-the-art Operation Control Centre (OCC) at Prayagraj which will act as the command centre for the entire route length of 1856 km of the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC), controlling and monitoring the system including train operation and power supply system.

# Preparations underway for Covid vaccination

PNS ■ ALLAHABAD

Preparations are underway at different points for the COVID-19 vaccination. As per the guideline framed by the government, the Health department is making necessary arrangements for the vaccination drive.

For vaccination, the Health department is first focusing on the availability of rooms at the centres.

This requires a three-room building. One room will be made as waiting room where the persons who will be vaccinated will sit. The second room will operate as a vaccination chamber. Here the staff fixed will be present. The third chamber will act as a monitoring room. After administering the vaccine, the health of the person concerned will be monitored for 30 minutes in this room.

According to the guide-

## 61 new Covid cases in Prayagraj

**Allahabad(PNS):** Prayagraj reported 61 new coronavirus positive cases during the past 24 hours,

With the death of one more COVID-19 patient on Saturday, the death toll stood at 369 on Sunday evening.

According to the CMO office, 82 COVID-19 patients recovered during the past 24 hours. Out of these, 14 were in Covid hospitals and 68 in home isolation. So far, 20,304 COVID-19 patients have recovered in the district.

On Saturday, the health workers took the samples of 6,027 people for testing.

The health officials said that thought the number of fresh coronavirus positive cases was

steadily decreasing in the district, people should not lower their guard and remain vigilant by following physical distance and wearing masks.

The Ganga Army will also be active in keeping the Magh Mela free from coronavirus infection.

The workers of the organisation will distribute free masks and sanitiser in the fair area and will also organise awareness programmes at various places.

In its camp, the Ganga army will run the 'anna kshetra' programme and keep the devotees within two yards and follow the government's guidelines for containing the coronavirus.

lines, the Covid rules have to be followed in all three rooms. Apart from arrangement of soap, water sanitiser, two-yard distance has to be maintained besides wearing masks.

According to Dr Rishi Sahay, the nodal officer for

COVID-19, the temperature of every person entering the vaccination centre and chamber would be scanned and the security personnel would check the person administered the vaccine, besides the doctor and the staff.

As per the directive of the government, a supervisor has to be appointed at the vaccination centre.

The supervisor will have the kit to deal with AEFI (adverse effect following immunisation).



Union Minister Dr MN Pandey addressing people in Shivpur area in Varanasi on Sunday



# UPPCB teams to keep tab on tanneries during Magh Mela

PNS ■ KANPUR

The UP Pollution Control Board has constituted seven teams to check the functioning of tanneries in Kanpur and keep a tab on them during the upcoming Magh Mela.

About six of these teams would be deputed in the Jainmau area that has the maximum number of tannery units, while one would be deployed at the Panki industrial area site in the city.

The UPPCB has issued a roster for all industrial units which are likely to pollute water during the Magh Mela, to stop all production activities for three days before each bathing day at the festival.

According to the cultural calendar, the Magh Mela will be held from January 14 to March 11 and will have six bathing days.

The Magh Mela is a festival which witnesses several fairs in the Hindu month of Magh, every year, that corresponds to the Gregorian months of January-February.

This festival is held near water banks and tanks, in the vicinity of Hindu temples.

This annual festivity is what elevates the grandeur of the auspicious Kumbh Mela, once in every 12 years, when the Sun, Moon and Jupiter align astronomically.

UPPCB Regional Officer at Kanpur, Anil Mathur, said, "Each of seven teams will be led by an additional city magistrate and will consist of one member each from the UP Pollution Control Board, Ganga pollution control unit, Jal Nigam and the police."

He added that besides the Magh Mela roster, the earlier schedule authorising the oper-

**THE UPPCB HAS ISSUED A ROSTER FOR ALL INDUSTRIAL UNITS WHICH ARE LIKELY TO POLLUTE WATER DURING THE MAGH MELA, TO STOP ALL PRODUCTION ACTIVITIES FOR THREE DAYS BEFORE EACH BATHING DAY AT THE FESTIVAL**

ations of tanneries and other production units would also be enforced.

According to the earlier roster, tanneries attached to pumping station Nos. 1 and 2 will operate with 50 per cent capacity in the first fifteen days, and tanneries attached to pumping station Nos. 3 and 4 will operate in the next 15 days.

The regional pollution control board officer of Kanpur Dehat and in-charge of Kanpur

office said the teams would check the industrial units and their discharge from time to time and take action in case of violation.

The first bathing day in the Magh Mela is on January 14, on the occasion of Makar Sankranti, and hence all units will be shut from January 11 to 14.

Likewise, the second bathing date is on January 28 on Poush Purnima, so the units will once again be shut

from January 25 to 28.

The third bathing date is on Mauni Amavasya, on February 11 for which the production will remain shut from February 8 to 11.

The fourth bathing day will be on February 16 and the units will be closed from February 13 to 16.

The fifth and sixth holy bathing days will be on February 27, marking Maghi Purnima, and March 11 respectively and hence the tanneries will shut down production from February 24 to 27 and then from March 8 to 11.

This shutdown will buffer the discharge of toxic waste discharged by the city tanneries, ensuring that people attending and participating in the ritual are not exposed to the hazardous wastes released by the production units.

## Two groups clash over possession on land

PNS ■ KANPUR

Two groups clashed over a dispute over possession on 16 biswa land in Ramaipur village in Vidhnu police station area on Sunday afternoon.

Both the groups pelted stones and exchanged fire during the clash.

Both the sides beat up their rivals after snatching the lathis from the cops. Later, seeing a heavy police force reaching there, members of both the groups disappeared from the spot.

According to reports, Rajesh Singh of Ramaipur owns 880 square yards of land in Arazi No. 1071 (K) near Ramaipur Junior High School.

The adjacent 22 biswa land was purchased by Vikas Agarwal of Kidwai Nagar a few days ago.

As Vikas, along with his land, had also secured possession on 880 square yards land of Rajesh Singh, there was enmity between them.

On Sunday, Rajesh removed the hut built on his land. On coming to know about the incident, Vikas Agarwal along with over two-dozen accomplices reached the spot and had a heated argument with Rajesh.



Two groups clashed after removal of hut from the land in Ramaipur, Vidhnu, on Sunday afternoon.

Later, both the groups clashed and indulged in scuffle.

Cops from Majhawan outpost reached the spot and tried to pacify both the groups. Meanwhile, Vikas' sup-

porters snatched the lathis from the cops and began to beat up Rajesh's accomplices. This led to a pitched battle as members of both the groups indulged in stone pelting.

During the clash, Vikas' henchmen took out guns and pistols from their vehicles and opened fire on the rivals.

Hearing about the incident, a police force from Vidhnu police station rushed to the spot.

Seeing the force, all the assailants disappeared from the spot.

Circle Officer of Ghatampur, Ravi Kumar Singh, along with force, also reached the spot and carried out investigations.

Rajesh Singh said he had lodged a complaint at the Thana police and senior police officers about the unauthorised possession on his land.

About a month ago, he had submitted an application to the then SDM Upma Pandey for getting his land measured and freed from unauthorised possession.

On this, as the Lekhpal Snehans had demarcated his land after its measurement and he had reached there on Sunday to get the hut removed from there.

Station Officer Pushpraj Singh said two groups had clashed over possession on land. He said penal action was being initiated against the guilty.

## 35 more test positive in KNP

PNS ■ KANPUR

Chief Medical Officer Dr Anil K Mishra said 35 more people tested positive of coronavirus infection in Kanpur Nagar during the past 24 hours.

With this, the tally of confirmed coronavirus infections detected in the city reached 32,150 on Sunday evening.

The CMO said one COVID-19 patient was discharged. He said no COVID-19 death reported on in the city during the past 24 hours.

Dr Mishra said 583 active cases were undergoing treatment in the city at present. He said 2,532 samples were taken in the city on Saturday for testing.

## KDA to give alternative plots to 798 allottees

PNS ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Development Authority (KDA) will present the New Year's gift by allotting alternative plots to 798 allottees of its four housing projects through a lottery to be organised at the Atal Behari Vajpayee Conference Hall on December 30, 31 and January 2.

These allottees could not get possession of their allotted plots following some disputes on them.

The allottees having a registry of their plots would be given priority in allotment of alternative plots. It may be recalled that after allotment, 798 plots were found to

be disputed in Jawaharpuram (159 plots), Highway City (85), Highway City Extension (135) and Alankanda Enclave (419).

KDA Vice Chairman Rakesh Kumar Singh has already set up a probe into this issue.

KDA Additional Secretary Gudakesh Sharma said the allottees having the registry would immediately be given possession of the alternative plot.

He said in the event of alternative plot area being less than plot earlier allotted, the excess amount collected from the allottees would be refunded with ordinary bank interest.

## Manhandling of lawyer, family members in Etah condemned

**Kanpur lawyers demand stern action**



PNS ■ KANPUR

Members of Kanpur Bar Association and Lawyers Association demanded action against the guilty cops and employees involved in manhandling senior lawyer Rajendra Sharma and his family members in Etah.

They handed over a memorandum, addressed to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, to ACM (VII) on behalf of the district magistrate.

Addressing the gathering, Kanpur Bar Association general secretary Rakesh Kumar Tewari said on the call of the State Legal Council, the lawyers struck work on Saturday.

He said the inhuman behaviour with the senior lawyer of Etah by the police officers

and employees deserved strong condemnation.

Lawyers Association general secretary Raghvendra Pratap Singh said the loss of property at the house of the senior lawyer in Etah should be compensated from the salary of the cops and other employees and the guilty should be penalised accordingly.

The Adhivakta Kalyan Sangharsh Samiti convenor said the chief minister should issue a directive to initiate stern penal action against the guilty and ensure the security of the fraternity and their family members.

Prominent lawyers present on the occasion included Kuldeep Sonkar, Anurag Mishra, BL Gupta, Devendra Kumar Sharma, Mohd Imtiyaz, Ankur Goel, Umar Danish, Somendra Sharma, Kanchan Gupta, Virendra Singh, Ved Uttam and KK Yadav.

## Gkp-Pune puja spl to run till March 25

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The railway administration for the convenience of the people has extended the run of the following puja special trains. Changes have been made in the timings and stoppages of these trains from January 1, 2021. However, the coach composition of these trains will remain as before. All coaches will be of reserved category and passengers will have to follow the Covid-19 prevention guidelines, CPRO PK Singh said.

**GKP-KOCHUVELI PUJA SPL:** The 02511 Gorakhpur-Kochuveli biweekly puja special train has been extended till March 28, 2021. Its destination has been changed from Thiruvananthapuram to Kochuveli. From January 1, 2021, as per the changed terminal and timing the 02511 Gorakhpur-Kochuveli bi-weekly puja special train will leave Gorakhpur every Friday and Sunday at 06.35 hrs, Khalilabad at 07.15 hrs, Basti at 07.44 hrs, Mankapur at 08.28 hrs, Gonda at 09.05 hrs, Barabanki at 10.27 hrs, Badshahnagar at 11.04 hrs, Aishbagh at 11.50 hrs, Unnao at 12.42 hrs, Kanpur Central at 13.22 hrs, Pokhrayan at 14.25 hrs, Orai at 14.52 hrs, Jhansi at 16.45 hrs, Lalitpur at 17.50 hrs, Bhopal at 21.00 hrs, Itarsi at 22.50 hrs, Ghoradongri at 23.50 hrs, Betul at 00.32 hrs, Amla at 00.54 hrs, Nagpur at 04.00 hrs, Sewagram at 05.02 hrs, Chandrapur at 06.35, Balharshah at 07.45 hrs, Sirpur Kagajinagar at 08.51 hrs, Belampalli at 09.36 hrs, Manchiryal at 09.45 hrs, Ramagundam at 09.54 hrs, Warangal at 11.41 hrs, Khammam at 13.09 hrs, Vijayawada at 15.30 hrs, Chirala at 16.50 hrs, Angola at 17.25 hrs, Nellore at 18.50 hrs, Gudur at 19.50 hrs, Chennai Central at 23.10 hrs, Katpadi on third day at 01.20 hrs, Jolarpettai at 02.25 hrs, Salem at 03.55 hrs, Erode at 05.00 hrs, Tiruppur at 05.45 hrs, Coimbatore at 06.50 hrs, Palghat at 08.25 hrs, Wadakkancherry at 09.17 hrs, Thrissur at 09.35 hrs, Irinjalakkuda at 09.55 hrs, Chalakudy at 10.03 hrs, Angamali at 10.23 hrs, Aluva at 10.35 hrs, Ernakulam Town at 11.00 hrs, Ernakulam Jn at 11.25 hrs,

Cherthala at 12.00 hrs, Alappuzha at 12.30 hrs, Ambalappuzha at 12.50 hrs, Harippad at 13.15 hrs, Kayankulam at 13.45 hrs, Kollam at 14.35 hrs and reach Kochuveli at 16.20 hrs. Meanwhile the 02512 Kochuveli-Gorakhpur biweekly special train has been extended till March 31, 2021. Its starting station has been changed from Thiruvananthapuram to Kochuveli. As per the changed starting station and timing from January 1, 2021, the 02512 Kochuveli-Gorakhpur biweekly puja special train will leave Kochuveli every Tuesday and Wednesday at 06.15 hrs, Kollam at 07.08 hrs, Kayamkulam at 07.45 hrs, Harippad at 08.01 hrs, Ambalappuzha at 08.17 hrs, Alappuzha at 08.32 hrs, Cherthala at 09.00 hrs, Ernakulam at 10.15 hrs, Alua at 10.37 hrs, Angamali at 10.47 hrs, Chalakkudy at 11.01 hrs, Irinjalakkuda at 11.09 hrs, Thrissur at 11.33 hrs, Wadakkanchery at 11.54 hrs, Ottappalam at 13.00 hrs, Palghat at 13.40 hrs, Coimbatore at 15.25 hrs, Tiruppur at 16.10 hrs, Erode at 17.05 hrs, Salem at 18.05 hrs, Jolarpettai at 19.55 hrs, Katpadi at 21.13 hrs, Chennai Central at 23.30 hrs, second day Gudur at 01.32 hrs, Nellore at 02.02 hrs, Angole at 03.20 hrs, Chirala at 04.00 hrs, Vijayawada at 05.55 hrs, Khammam at 07.24 hrs, Warangal at 08.36 hrs, Ramagundam at 10.01 hrs, Manchiryal at 10.13 hrs, Belampalli at 11.27 hrs, Sirpur Kagaznagar at 11.06 hrs, Balharshah at 12.55 hrs, Chandrapur at 13.15 hrs, Sewagram at 15.00 hrs, Nagpur at 16.35 hrs, Amla at 19.00 hrs, Betul at 19.20 hrs, Ghoradongri at 19.57 hrs, Itarsi at 22.05 hrs, on the third day Bhopal at 00.05 hrs, Lalitpur at 02.45 hrs, Jhansi at 04.25 hrs, Orai at 06.00 hrs, Pokhrayan at 06.40 hrs, Kanpur Central at 08.40 hrs, Unnao at 09.07 hrs, Aishbagh at 10.20 hrs, Badshahnagar at 10.42 hrs, Barabanki at 11.35 hrs, Gonda at 12.55 hrs, Mankapur at 13.19 hrs, Basti at 14.08 hrs, Khalilabad at 14.34 hrs and reach Gorakhpur at 15.40 hrs.

**GKP-PUNE PUJA SPL:** The 05029 Gorakhpur-Pune weekly puja special train will be run till March 25, 2021. Changes have been made in its timing and stoppage. From January 1 as per the changed timing the 05029 Gorakhpur-Pune weekly puja special will on every Thursday leave

Gorakhpur at 17.25 hrs, Khalilabad at 18.05 hrs, Basti at 18.35 hrs, Mankapur at 19.22 hrs, Gonda at 20.00 hrs, Lucknow at 22.50 hrs, Unnao at 23.57 hrs, Kanpur Central on the second day at 00.40 hrs, Orai at 02.02 hrs, Jhansi at 04.25 hrs, Bina at 06.55 hrs, Bhopal at 09.00 hrs, Habibganj at 09.15 hrs, Itarsi at 10.50 hrs, Khandwa at 14.00 hrs, Bhusaval at 15.55 hrs, Manmad at 18.45 hrs, Kopergaon at 20.45 hrs, Ahmednagar at 23.05 hrs and will reach Pune at 02.45 hrs on the third day. The 05030 Pune-Gorakhpur weekly puja special train will be run till March 27. Changes have been made in its timing and stoppage. From January 1 as per the changed timing the 05030 Pune-Gorakhpur weekly puja special train will leave Pune every Saturday at 11.30 hrs, Ahmednagar at 13.30 hrs, Kopergaon at 15.30 hrs, Manmad at 17.25 hrs, Bhusaval at 19.50 hrs, Khandwa at 23.10 hrs, the second day Itarsi at 02.00 hrs, Habibganj at 03.22 hrs, Bhopal at 03.40 hrs, Bina at 05.35 hrs, Jhansi at 07.55 hrs, Orai at 09.10 hrs, Kanpur Central at 11.50 hrs, Unnao at 12.20 hrs, Lucknow at 13.40 hrs, Gonda at 15.55 hrs, Mankapur at 16.19 hrs, Basti at 17.18 hrs, Khalilabad at 17.47 hrs and reach Gorakhpur at 18.50 hrs.

**GKP-ANAND VIHAR TERMINUS PUJA SPL:** The 02595 Gorakhpur-Anand Vihar Terminus triweekly puja special will be run till March 30, 2021. From January 1 next year as per the changed timing the 02595 Gorakhpur-Anand Vihar Terminus puja special will on every Monday, Tuesday and Thursday leave from Gorakhpur at 20.00 hrs, Basti at 21.03 hrs, Gonda at 22.30 hrs, on the second day Lucknow at 01.25 hrs, Kanpur Central at 03.05 hrs and reach Anand Vihar Terminus at 08.25 hrs. The 02596 Anand Vihar Terminus-Gorakhpur tri-weekly puja special will be run till March 31. The 02596 Anand Vihar Terminus-Gorakhpur puja special as per changed timing from January 1 will every Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday leave Anand Vihar Terminus at 20.00 hrs, the second day Kanpur Central at 00.55 hrs, Lucknow at 02.21 hrs, Gonda at 05.05 hrs, Basti at 06.08 hrs and reach Gorakhpur at 07.40 hrs.

## DRM inspects railway stations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) of Varanasi Vijay Kumar Panjiar with the objective of ensuring safe operations and implementation of doubling-cum-electrification projects in view of low visibility resulting from cold and foggy weather inspected the Mau-Azamgarh rail section and Mau, Khurhat, Muhammadabad and Azamgarh railway stations. The DRM first reached the Mau Junction railway station on his inspection vehicle. He inspected the operational arrangements at the Mau station, compliance of the Covid-19 guidelines there, cleanliness and amenities for passengers etc. Thereafter he reached the Khurhat railway station situated on the Mau-Azamgarh rail section and conducted a thorough inspection of the station. At Khurhat station he also inspected the operational systems, safety equipment, sanitation and development plans for passenger facilities. After this Panjiar while inspecting the Mau-Azamgarh rail section on his inspection vehicle reached the Muhammadabad railway station. There he inspected the operational systems, safety equipment, sanitation and development plans for passenger facilities. During this period public representatives and traders



of the area made the DRM aware about their demands and requirements. Panjiar assured them to meet the reasonable demands and include them in work plans. In the final phase of the inspection the DRM reached Azamgarh and at the station inspected the operational arrangements, safety-related devices, relay room, battery room, diesel generator, platforms, entry and exit routes for compliance of various Covid-19 guidelines besides several amenities available for passengers there. Under the Shahganj-Phephna doubling-cum-electrification project on the Mau-Azamgarh rail section, he reviewed preparations of this work plan. He also discussed arrangements for doubling-cum-electrification works of this section while continuing normal operations and gave directions to the authorities concerned. On the occasion along with DRM Senior Divisional Operations Manager Rohit Gupta, Senior Divisional Commercial Manager Sanjeev Sharma, Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer Satyendra Yadav, Senior Divisional Signal and Telecommunication Engineer Trimbak Tiwari, Project Director of Rail Vikas Nigam Limited Santosh Shukla, officers of RVNL and main officers of Varanasi division were present, PRO Ashok Kumar said.

### Blankets distributed

CORRESPONDENT ■ JALAUIN

Blankets were distributed among 51 prisoners in the district jail recently. The chief guest during the blanket distribution ceremony was city magistrate Sunil Kumar Shukla. Jail Superintendent Sitaram Sharma welcomed the chief guest. In his speech he said they were taking utmost care of every prisoner according to the jail manual. He said that every



year they distributed blankets among the needy prisoners during winter. The chief guest said that life should be viewed positively. Meanwhile Pushpendra Vikram and Hoshila Devi was also present during the blanket distribution function.

## Thana Samadhan Divas held

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

Thana Samadhan Divas was held at each police station of the district on Saturday during which only five out of 67 applications could be disposed of. DM Sushil Kumar Patel and SP Ajay Kumar Singh jointly heard the problems of complainants at Chilh police station where out of seven applications only one could be disposed of. At City Kotwali out of two only one could be disposed of, at Vindhychal out of four only two, at Ahraura out of six only one, at Katra Kotwali only one application had been received, at Dehat Kotwali four, Kachhawaan three, Padari five, Chunar 12,

Halia 11, Jitna six, Madihan four and one each in Jamalpur and Lalganj. As per the police, for the matters which could not be disposed of on the spot, the team comprising revenue and police officials, had been sent with the direction to settle them. Meanwhile the DM and SP visited Barkachha Khurd village to inquire about the disposal of complaints lodged through IGRS. They met Babunandan who had lodged a complaint about encroachment on his field. He expressed satisfaction that his problem was solved by police and revenue officials. Jay Prakash Maurya had lodged a complaint about threat to his life and said following the intervention of police he was now feeling safe. Shivkumari had complained about her husband's second marriage but she could not be contacted and her mother-in-law said she had gone to her maternal house and her son was doing a job in Mumbai and did not remarry.

**INSPECTED:** CDO Avinash Singh inspected Ramgarh village of Seekhad block to see farming of fruits done under the guidance of horticulture department. He interacted with farmers, Manoj Singh and Sohan Singh, who had planted saplings of apple ber and papaya in their fields. They said that they on an average earned more than ₹1 lakh in a year through one bigha area. The CDO directed the DHO to conduct a programme for farmers of other areas to visit such progressive farming and earn more. He patted the back of the DHO that farming of fruits was being done in the other blocks too, including Madihan, Rajgarh and Chhanbey.

## Pachauri inaugurates tubewell in JP Park

PNS ■ KANPUR

Bharatiya Janata Party MP BSatyadeo Pachauri inaugurated a tubewell installed at JP Park of Ward No. 33 on Sunday.

Speaking on the occasion, he said it was his priority to ensure door-to-door supply of water from the Ganga Barrage by the year 2021.

The tubewell inaugurated on Sunday will cater to the requirement of around 50,000 residents of Vijay Nagar and Ambedkar Basti, he added.

Pachauri said as the tubewell of this area was out of order for the past several years, it was very difficult for the residents to get potable water.

On coming to know about their problems, the MP got the tubewell re-bored and supply of



BJP MP Satyadeo Pachauri inaugurates the tubewell at JP Park on Sunday

water restored. Now, the residents of this ward will not have

to go anywhere to get water. During the inaugural cer-

emony, corporator Ghanshyam Gupta, Vijay Mishra,

Raghvendra Mishra, Jagdish Yadav, Dheeraj Balmiki, Deepak Tewari, Akshay Dwivedi, Rajiv Bhatia, Abhay Pandey and Suraj Pal were also present.

For the solution of water supply problem in ward No. 33 (Vijay Nagar), the local residents and corporator Ghanshyam Gupta had informed Pachauri in writing on June 3, 2019.

They had also informed him about the non-functional tubewell installed at the JP Park and urged the MP to arrange its re-boring.

Pachauri, in turn, immediately sent a proposal for the re-boring of the tubewell to the general manager of Jalkal Vibhag, on June 22, 2019.

The re-boring of the tubewell involved an expenditure of Rs.60 lakh, corporator Ghanshyam Gupta said.



# India reports lowest daily Covid spike

## 18,732 new cases seen on Sunday; Union Health Ministry calls it landmark

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India reported its lowest daily spike in Covid infections since June at 18,732 new cases on Sunday. The Union health ministry termed this a “landmark peak in country’s infection trajectory”.

This is the second time in the week that the daily cases number has dropped below 20,000, said the Health Ministry adding that of the 1.01 crore cases, active infections stand at 2.78 lakh.

“This is the lowest after 170 days. The total active cases were 2,76,682 on 10th July, 2020. The toll has remained below 300 level in the second consecutive day while India’s Covid-19 tally of cases climbed to 1,01,87,850 on Sunday,” said the Ministry.



“Landmark peak in India’s Covid-19 trajectory as daily new cases drop to 18,732 after 6 months. India’s total active caseload has fallen to 2.78 lakh (2,78,690) today. This is the lowest after 170 days, the min-

istry tweeted.

It also said that India has reported a trend of sustained decrease in the number of active cases. “India’s present active caseload consists of just 2.74 per cent of India’s total

positive cases,” it said adding that the total recovered cases stand at 97,61,538, with 21,430 new discharges in the last 24 hours, according to health ministry tally.

The gap between recovered

and active cases, that is steadily increasing, is nearing 95 lakh and presently stands at 94,82,848, it said.

Maharashtra has 59,223 active cases while Kerala has 63,927 active Covid-19 cases. 72.37% of the new recovered cases were concentrated in ten States/UTs with Kerala reporting the maximum number of single day recoveries at 3,782 newly recovered cases. 1,861 people recovered in West Bengal followed by 1,764 in Chhattisgarh.

Meanwhile, a total of 16,81,02,657 samples were tested for Covid-19 up to December 26. Of these, 9,43,368 samples were tested yesterday, according to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)

# Race for CBI chief hots up, many top cops in fray

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The race for the CBI chief post hots up with the names of Gujarat cadre IPS officer Rakesh Asthana, Kerala cadre IPS official Loknath Behera and Director General of Police of Uttar Pradesh HC Awasthi doing the rounds in bureaucratic circles.

The CBI Director RK Shukla is scheduled to retire on February 1 after completion of the fixed two-year tenure in the agency.

While Asthana, a 1984-batch IPS officer, was removed from the post of Special Director in the CBI following an ugly spat with the then agency chief Alok Verma, Behera, a 1985-batch IPS officer, was shunted out from the

National Investigation Agency (NIA) over allegations of leaking information about the arrest of Indian Mujahideen operative Yasin Bhatkal.

Asthana is currently the Director General of the Border Security Force (BSF) and also heads the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB). Behera is currently the police chief of Kerala.

While Asthana is considered close to the top political executive at the Centre, Behera is a Kerala cadre Indian Police Service (IPS) officer. National Security Advisor Ajit Doval is also from the same cadre. Both Asthana and Behera have experience of postings in the CBI. The possibility of granting an extension of service to the outgoing CBI boss cannot

be ruled out given his handling of the agency in a non-controversial manner, especially after the removal of the then CBI chief Alok Verma.

Uttar Pradesh police chief Awasthi, an IPS officer of 1985 batch, may emerge as a dark horse for the top post in the CBI given his 12-years of experience in the Central anti-corruption agency. He also headed the vigilance department of the State police and also enjoys proximity to UP CM, the sources said.

The posting of the CBI chief is cleared by a three-member panel headed by the Prime Minister. The Chief Justice of India and the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha being are two other members.

# Vaping increases risk for respiratory diseases by 43%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Those who used e-cigarettes or vaping in the past are 21 per cent more likely to develop a respiratory disease while those who currently use them has a 43 per cent increased risk, a study has said. It warned that because of vaping, there might be an increase in respiratory disease as youth and young adults age into midlife, including asthma, COPD, and other respiratory conditions.

The new study is one of the first to look at vaping in a large number of otherwise healthy people over time, examining the effects of e-cigarette use independently from other tobacco product use. The findings have appeared in journal JAMA Network Open.

Because using e-cigarettes or (“vaping”) has been marketed as a less harmful alternative to smoking traditional cigarettes, it has been difficult to tell whether the association between vaping and disease is just a matter of smokers switching to vaping when they start experiencing health issues, pointed out the researchers.

Further, because e-cigarettes are relatively new to the scene, until recently it hasn’t been possible for researchers to conduct long-term studies tracking how vaping impacts health, they said.

“This provides some of the very first longitudinal evidence on the harms associated with e-cigarette products,” said lead study author Andrew Stokes, assistant professor of global health at

Boston University’s School of Public Health.

Evidence of the health effects of vaping, from this and other studies, “highlights the importance of standardizing documentation of e-cigarette product use in electronic health records,” said co-author Hasmeena Kathuria, a Pulmonary Center faculty member.

For this study, researchers used data on 21,618 healthy adult participants from the first four waves (2013-2018) of the nationally representative Population Assessment of Tobacco and Health (PATH), the most comprehensive national survey of tobacco and e-cigarette use to date.

To make sure their findings weren’t accounting for cigarette smokers switching

to e-cigarettes specifically because of existing health issues (rather than the vaping itself causing these issues), the researchers only included people in the study who reported having no respiratory issues when they entered PATH, adjusting for a comprehensive set of health conditions. The researchers found, overall, that former e-cigarette use was associated with a 21% increase in the risk of respiratory disease, while current e-cigarette use was associated with a 43% increase.

More specifically, current e-cigarette use was associated with a 33% increase in chronic bronchitis risk, 69% increase in emphysema risk, 57% increase in chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) risk, and 31% increase in asthma risk.

# Congressmen question Rahul, Priyanka’s frequent vacations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the farmer agitation and impending organisational elections of the party, former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi left for Milan on Sunday. His absence from India comes also at a critical juncture for Congress and its Central Election Authority (CEA) which is preparing for party’s presidential elections.

His departure Italy comes a day before Congress’ foundation Day.

Several senior Congress leaders have questioned the frequent vacations by Rahul Gandhi and his sister party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and urged them to spare time and effort for the revival of the party.

RJD leader Shivanand



Tewari had slammed Rahul for holidaying in Shimla during the Bihar election campaign and held him responsible e for the Grand alliance narrow defeat at the hands in NDA.

After facing criticism Rahul had to cancel a two day vacation in Jaisalmer.

Both Rahul and party Chief Sonia Gandhi had also missed the parliamentary debate on the three farm laws due to Sonia Gandhi’s ill-health- necessitating her visit to



the USA. Rahul had accompanied her.

Rahul had chosen to go abroad when Congress had been exchanging barbs with the BJP over the farm laws. Punjab Congress leaders have been providing logistical support to the protesting Punjab farmers.

Rahul Gandhi had recently met President Ram Nath Kovind as part of two separate Opposition delegations, demanding the repeal of the three controversial farm laws.

# Fresh spells of snowfall in J&K

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

Ahead of the New Year celebrations fresh spells of snowfall in different parts of Jammu and Kashmir brought cheer on the faces of those linked with the tourism and winter sports activity as more tourists are expected to arrive here to usher in the new year 2021.

The cave shrine of Mata Vaishno Devi also witnessed the season’s first snowfall late Sunday evening. Pilgrims present at the cave shrine welcomed the snowfall amid religious chants.

Chief Executive Officer, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board ,Ramesh Kumar also posted a video clip saying pilgrims at the cave shrine enjoying snowfall.

# BJP: MVA Govt’s selective approach helping builders make windfall gains

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Charging that the Maharashtra government policies aimed at helping real estate sector to mitigate Covid effect were being “implemented selectively” to provide “windfall gains”, former chief minister and senior BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis charged that the windfall gains made by a developer in just one big premium land parcel amounted to Rs 1805 crore.

In a letter written to Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray, Fadnavis threatened that “in case no corrective action” was taken in the matter, he would be compelled to move the Bombay High Court.

Alleging that the recommendations made by an expert committee appointed under the chairmanship of co-founder of HDFC Ltd Deepak Parekh to seek steps to revive the real estate sector which is ailing because of Corona pandemic were being “implemented selectively”, Fadnavis said: “It seems that certain vested interests have colluded for the purpose of extending benefits to a few handful parties at the expense of State exchequer”

“I must state here that the actions of the State Government must be free from the vice of arbitrariness and must conform to Article 14 of the Constitution of India,” Fadnavis said.

Fadnavis said that he always supported steps taken to boost the demand during pandemic and decisions like rationalisation of stamp duty rates. “Ready reckoner rates and Premiums are a necessary step. However, under the garb of reduction for rationalisation, windfall gains cannot be allowed to a handful few.” “There seems to be a systematic method devised to give windfall benefit to said real estate developers by fragmented & prejudiced reduction of ready reckoner of some of their self-owned & interest plots to the extent of 70% of the existing ready reckoners’ rates. The said reduction leads to reduction of payments to be made to the competent authorities,” he said.

“Following the success of this Modus operandi, it is now proposed using the Deepak Parekh committee report to further halve the statutory payments levied by the Corporations & State Government,” the former chief minister said. “The same was proposed in the last cabinet meeting of the Government of Maharashtra and was kept in abeyance till the next cabinet meeting. It was brought to my notice that when only a few projects of selected five developers were analysed to capture its effect, it was found out that this will lead to a wind-fall gain of more than 2000 crores,” he said. Fadnavis went onto add: “Total Windfall gain in one big premium land parcel is Rs 1185 crores + Rs 620 crores = Rs 1805 crores to one developer own-

**IN A LETTER WRITTEN TO MAHARASHTRA CHIEF MINISTER UDDHAV THACKERAY, FADNAVIS THREATENED THAT “IN CASE NO CORRECTIVE ACTION” WAS TAKEN IN THE MATTER, HE WOULD BE COMPELLED TO MOVE THE BOMBAY HIGH COURT**

ing 2 lakh metres of land parcel in western suburb. This is just one example and there are many such cases which are brought to my knowledge.”

“If the policy of 50% reduction comes into effect the midsize developers of Mumbai who undertake stand-alone redevelopment projects and SR Schemes would lose the competitive edge. Slum rehabilitation schemes won’t be financially viable. This would militate against the topmost priority of the government of Maharashtra which should ideally be to have a slum free Mumbai” he said.

“The cabinet proposal also says that in lieu of the 50% rate cut, the developers will have to bear the stamp duty on selling of an apartment. Looking at the windfall gain any developer stands to receive, he will happily do that, the former chief minister said.

“Every cabinet agenda is to be kept secret until a decision is taken but to my surprise the entire cabinet agenda with note and draft GR is in circulation and available with all developers and on social media and if rumours are to be believed some people are also doing some resource collection,” he said.

He urged the state to “take corrective action” and not to allow the state resources to be exploited and squandered for private gains “especially when day in and day out the government expresses its worry about its financial position”.

“It is surprising that on one hand we are not able to help our farmers and ‘bara balutedars’ and on other hand we are allowing windfall gains to private people,” he said.

“I reiterate that I am not against the rationalisation of govt charges to boost the demand, but my worry and concern is about the blatant misuse of power under the garb of reforms. I am therefore purposefully writing this letter to you in English because in case no corrective action is taken by you despite being made aware, I will be compelled to file a PIL in the Bombay High court at Mumbai,” Fadnavis said.

# NSDC collaborates with DigiVidyapeeth to formulate e-curriculum

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In keeping with the changed reality in Covid times, the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) has joined hands with online educational portal DigiVidyapeeth to formulate e-curriculum for skills upgrade for both professionals and students.

In this regard, the Media and Entertainment Skills Council (MSEC), a setup of the NSDC, has inked a pact with DigiVidyapeeth, under which the portal will develop online courses keeping with industry needs and the former will accord recognition to them.

The agreement was signed recently by MSEC CEO Mohit Soni and DigiVidyapeeth MD Pradeep Khatri here..

To begin with, DigiVidyapeeth has developed courses in the field of digital media marketing and mobile journalism to enhance the skills of professionals and will train them in line with latest technological advances. Later, new courses will be developed for other sectors too. On the occasion,



Soni said that DigiVidyapeeth has the capacity to give shape to the future career of youth. The e-platform engaged in providing online professional certificate courses, has developed solutions to the new challenges which will be faced by students in the changing post Covid scenarios, he said. Khatri added that the pact aims to give a boost to the Skill India Mission and Digital India Mission launched by the Government.

The Narendra Modi Government has set up a target of skill development through MSEC to over 12 lakh people till 2022. However, due to the covid crisis, it is pushing its skill development programs through digital mediums.

# 4 contacts of UK returnees in Andhra test Covid positive

**Amaravati:** Six returnees from the UK to Andhra Pradesh and four of their contacts have so far tested positive for Covid-19, health officials said on Sunday.

In all 1,216 people from the UK returned to Andhra Pradesh and of them 1,187 were traced. Efforts were on to trace the remaining 29.

A total of 1,162 returnees were in quarantine. Six of the returnees found infected by coronavirus. They include two from Guntur district and one each from East Godavari, Krishna, Anantapur and Nellore districts.

Officials also traced 3,282 contacts of UK returnees and sent their

samples for testing. Four of the contacts have tested positive. While three are from Guntur district, one person is from Nellore.

The samples of those tested positive were sent to National Institute of Virology, Pune and Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) for genome sequencing to find out if they are infected by the new strain of the virus found in the UK. “We have not yet received the reports,” said an official.

Meanwhile, Andhra Pradesh on Sunday reported 349 new Covid cases, pushing the state’s tally to 8,81,061.

# Women lawyers seek Bar’s intervention in Paracha raid issue

**New Delhi:** Days after the Special Cell of Delhi Police raided the office of advocate Mehmood Pracha, one of the defence counsels in the northeast Delhi riots case, the Delhi High Court Women Lawyers Forum has written to the President of the Delhi High Court Bar Association (DHCBA).

In its letter written to DHCBA President Mohit Mathur, the women lawyers expressed deep concerns over the investi-

gating agency arraigning lawyers as accused in criminal cases.

“We write to you as a group of lawyers who are deeply concerned about the recent instances where the investigating agency has been arraigning lawyers as accused in criminal cases,” the letter read.

The letter further said that though the proceedings initiated against such lawyers are ostensibly independent of the matters being handled by

them, but the pattern emerging from all such instances, where lawyers are being targeted, is hard to ignore.

“Raids in the office of Mr Mahmood Pracha, advocate is the latest example of such intimidation by the Delhi Police. Mr Pracha is representing several accused persons in the recent riot cases in Delhi.

The recent trend indicates that there are other lawyers too who are being intimidated and discour-

aged from representing their clients in these cases, the letter said.

The letter also said that this is also a larger issue that goes beyond the riots case, wherein lawyers who are vocal about defending civil liberties are being systematically targeted.

“This is clearly an act of vindictiveness on part of the investigating agencies whose actions are preventing lawyers from carrying their out professional duties,” it said.**IANS**



## A Christmas present

Dharavi is the first ward in Mumbai to register zero new Corona cases since the first one was detected on April 1



It is not very often that Indians feel proud of Mumbai's Dharavi, which has the dubious distinction of being Asia's largest slum. But make no mistake about it, where the flattening of the COVID-19 curve is concerned, the slum cluster has shown the privileged citizens of the country, and the world too, how it's done. On December 25, Dharavi gave the rest of Mumbai a Christmas gift by becoming the first ward in the metropolitan to register zero new Coronavirus infections from the time the first COVID-19 case was detected here on April 1. This is despite the fact that COVID-19 cases are on the rise in Mumbai and in other parts of Maharashtra. So much

so that the "Dharavi Model" has come in for high praise from the World Health Organisation (WHO) time and again, with the global health watchdog saying that the slum's success stemmed from following most of its instructions with regard to the management of the pandemic, plus a combination of customised solutions, community involvement and perseverance. And the praise is well deserved, given the constraints that the population of 6.5 lakh living in an area of just 2.5 km faces in following the golden mantras for fighting the pandemic, namely social distancing, frequent hand washing and living in well-ventilated spaces. This is because a minimum of seven to eight people live together in small, 100 sq ft dwellings and queue up for water each day as piped water at home is a luxury they can only dream of. A whopping 80 per cent of the slum dwellers are forced to use community toilets, and fresh air and good ventilation are a rarity as homes and factories coexist in single buildings lining the slum's narrow lanes. Dharavi's success in beating the virus can be attributed to the fact that to the WHO's instructions, the slum added its own touch by arranging quarantine facilities for those with mild symptoms and their close contacts, and it religiously and rigorously adhered to the 4Ts ie, Tracing (screening), Testing, Tracking and Treatment. In fact, the management of the Dharavi outbreak is a model example of how effective community engagement, awareness and deployment can tame the virus in resource-scarce and congested clusters.

Apart from the slum dwellers, a part of the credit for this goes to the Maharashtra Government, too. Especially, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, who was yet to settle into the Chief Minister's role before the State was hit by the Corona tsunami on March 9. This posed as much a challenge to the inexperienced Chief Minister as it did to the State's health-care systems. And before he could get a grip on it, Maharashtra became the State with the highest number of cases across India. Then the exodus of migrant labourers caught him by surprise, a fact played up by the BJP as an example of his ineptitude and lack of foresight. Still, Uddhav did not lose cool and went in for aggressive containment measures, testing and medical protocols as Dharavi put him on trial. In the end, Dharavi did better than the rest of the country in handling the pandemic despite its infrastructural weaknesses. One day, when this is all over, the residents of Mumbai and the Maharashtra Government will look back at the pandemic and the lessons that Dharavi taught them. They will certainly look upon this marginalised part of the nation's financial capital with new respect. Credit must also be given to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) which decided to take the bull by the horns and involved the community in its efforts to chase away the virus. The corporation set up teams to reach out to families and got doctors, private clinics and mobile vans to screen the residents of Dharavi. As the key to containing any pandemic is rigorous testing, the BMC also ran fever clinics to allow people to get themselves checked. They also checked people's oxygen saturation levels and, if it was below 95 per cent, took them to quarantine centres. The logic was that this was faster than testing. The BMC also employed local private practitioners and if someone was found to have symptoms, they could volunteer to be quarantined even without getting tested. Since home quarantine was never an option in Dharavi, local clubs and schools were converted into quarantine facilities where free food and health check-ups were provided. Thousands of the elderly were taken into protective quarantine and only the critically ill patients were admitted to hospitals while 90 per cent of the patients were treated inside the slum. A 200-bed hospital was also set up in a record 14 days. What Dharavi did to make a positive difference was that it focused on community engagement.

## Youth power

As 21-year-old Arya Rajendran is set to be India's youngest Mayor, the young nation needs more youth in politics



Arya Rajendran, a 21-year-old college student, is very likely to take office as the Mayor of Kerala's capital Thiruvananthapuram soon which will make her the youngest ever Mayor in the nation. While she is still too young to hold an office in either a State or Central legislative body, by taking up the top post available for any municipal councillor, she has set a new benchmark for young Indian politicians and should inspire many more young people to make it to office. The gradual decline in the standards of student politics in India over the past few decades has meant that youth have found it difficult to move into politics over the years and, even

in most municipalities, the councilmen and women are quite old. In a country where demographics favour the young, the move by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) should be commended and maybe other political parties would do well to take note of it. Maybe it is time where an upper age limit for politicians in municipal and panchayat bodies is set so as to encourage those between the ages of 20-40 to apply for such posts. Electoral and political experience that the youth thus gain will hold them in good stead as they rise through the political ranks. The lack of youth in India's politics is startling; most 'younger' politicians are almost always scions of political dynasties and have little interest in changing the *status quo*. After all, nepotism is as nepotism does.

While top leaders — from Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi — want to involve the youth into their politics, they should ideally get their political parties to revitalise their youth movements, the BJYM and the IYC, respectively, both of which have become social media activist forces rather than actual activism, although one expects big things from the BJYM's new face, Tejasvi Surya. Having young and articulate spokespersons and political leaders will hold both national parties in good stead and help them in future elections. The CPI(M), for decades the party of dyed-in-the-wool, septuagenarian leaders who are considered to fight shy of letting the younger generation take charge, has taken the lead and while the communist movement will remain moribund outside Kerala, this is an idea that the other parties would do well to copy. India has more than 50 per cent of its population below the age of 25 and more than 65 per cent below the age of 35. It is expected that, at the turn of 2020, the average age of all Indians will be 29 years, compared to 37 for China and 48 for Japan. Across the world too, there is a generational change in politics. Even in the United States, Joe Biden's Presidency will be the last hurrah of his generation. By giving those under 40 a political voice, the Government and political parties will pre-empt any possibility of any trouble occurring later because if you do not give the next generation members their rightful share of policy-making, they will take it by force later on. And that may lead to things turning quite ugly indeed.



AJOY KUMAR

There is a parable which is popular in the corridors of establishments where police officers and other security personnel are trained. The parable is of an old Bedouin who owned many horses, chickens, cattle and other farm animals. One night while the Bedouin was asleep, a chicken was stolen from his farm. The next morning, the Bedouin woke up to find the chicken missing and turned the whole farm upside down. He instructed his workers to look for the bird everywhere and asked fellow Bedouins to trace and catch the man who had stolen the chicken. Since the chicken was among the hundreds that the Bedouin reared on his farm, the workers were shocked by the fervour with which he pursued the chicken thief. After all, he owned many and this was hardly a loss. In light of the minimal loss, the search crew made little effort to discover the identity of the thief and gave up the hunt soon.

Understandably, with the lack of serious efforts to trace the chicken thief, they never did find him. Over the next few weeks, others who reared farm animals found that their cattle and horses were the target of repeated acts of theft. Perplexed, the younger Bedouins went to the senior Bedouin to seek counsel. The old Bedouin repeated what he had said numerous times before — "Find the chicken thief."

The moral of the story is fairly simple. It is a cautionary tale about dealing with petty crimes with seriousness because even such crimes have a habit of devolving into major ones. The principle is translatable to most walks of life, too. With this context in mind, this week I want to discuss the Supreme Court's recent directives that were issued while disposing a Special Leave Petition (SLP) raising issues regarding audio-video recording of statements and the installation of CCTV in police stations. In its directives and with the aim of preventing custodial torture, the Supreme Court, in an admirable move, ordered the installation of CCTV cameras in the offices of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Enforcement Directorate (ED), National Investigation Agency (NIA) and other similar agencies, in addition to police stations across the country.

As good as a move this is, the

## A Bedouin's tale

Despite the Supreme Court's 14-year-old directions aimed at kickstarting the process of implementing police reforms, no State is still fully compliant



“THE SUPREME COURT HAD PASSED A SIMILAR ORDER IN THE PAST TOO AND ACTUALLY EXTENDED THE AMBIT OF AN ORDER PASSED BY IT IN 2018, WHEREIN IT DIRECTED THAT AT LEAST THE FIRST PHASE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF CRIME SCENE VIDEOGRAPHY WAS REQUIRED TO BE INTRODUCED BY JULY 15, 2018, IN AT LEAST SOME PLACES”

Supreme Court had passed a similar order in the past too and actually extended the ambit of an order passed by it in 2018, wherein it directed that at least the first phase of implementation of crime scene videography was required to be introduced by July 15, 2018, in at least some places. There was some flexibility allowed by the apex court when it said that this direction was subject to viability and priority as determined by the Central Oversight Body.

Based on my experience with the police and with the Central and State Governments, I am reasonably sure that to a large extent this flexibility granted by the Supreme Court in 2018 has been misused in so much that the directions of the highest court of the nation are not actually followed. While you may feel that such a statement is presumptuous, there is a rich body of evidence which would make this merely a logical inference. The most obvious example that forms the basis of this view is the case of police reforms and the manner in which State Governments have taken on board the Supreme Court's directions to date.

In 2006, the Supreme Court — pursuant to a public interest litigation filed in 1996 by two distinguished former Director Generals of Police, Prakash Singh and NK Singh — passed directions and laid down seven directives based on

the various recommendations made by the National Police Commissions since 1979. The directives are aimed at kickstarting the process of implementing police reforms that have been pending since the British era and include constituting a State Security Commission to ensure that the States do not exercise unwarranted influence or pressure on the police, providing a minimum tenure of two years for the DGPs, setting up a Police Establishment Board to decide transfers, postings (as opposed to the State Government) and a number of other crucial steps to actually modernise the Indian police force which is in desperate need to step out from under the thumb of its political masters and step into its rightful position as a modern police force.

However, despite these directions from the apex court, as per a report by the international non-profit Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, no Indian State is fully compliant with the 14-year-old decision. In fact, as per this report, only two Indian States — Andhra Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh — were partially compliant with the binding directives issued by the Supreme Court. This is especially tragic because India is in desperate need of police reforms. Firstly, because of the sheer minuscule size of the existing police force — as per *IndiaSpend*, India has 151

police personnel per 1,00,000 population which is much lower than the sanctioned 193 per 1,00,000 persons. Secondly, and more importantly, such reforms are the first step in modernising India's police force and sensitising its police officers. According to the reports available, one in five police personnel is of the view that killing dangerous criminals is better than a legal trial. That is a staggering number for a country that is meant to be a democracy.

However, despite the appalling state of affairs and despite a directive from the highest court of the land, we have seen little to no movement from the side of the elected representatives. The lack of intent and inclination is easy to understand; by implementing these police reforms, the Governments will automatically be forced to yield their significant control over the police, which is an important tool for abuse in the hands of politicians. Therefore, unless the Supreme Court decides to take action against the Governments and bureaucrats who refuse to adhere to its orders, any step forward — including the latest decision of the Supreme Court — will merely be a pyrrhic victory for us to celebrate while the "chicken thief" is still at large.

(The author is a former IPS officer and member of the Congress party. The views expressed are personal.)

## SOUNDBITE

The RSS headquarters is giving directions to the Centre to pass on to the Kerala Governor. He knows the situation but he is feigning ignorance.

Senior CPI(M) leader —MA Baby



Remarkably, a year that has necessarily kept people apart has, in many ways, brought us closer. Even on the darkest nights, there is hope in the new dawn.

UK's monarch —Queen Elizabeth II



Digital entertainment is actually way safer a place to prove our talent. We are outsiders and before investing money in us, naturally, producers will think twice.

Actor —Bidita Bag



Very surprised that Tim Paine survived that run out review! I had him on his bike and thought there was no part of his bat behind the line! Should have been out in my opinion.

Legendary spinner —Shane Warne



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Focus on agri uplift

Sir — This refers to the editorial 'Modi's outreach' (December 26) wherein the newspaper rightly suggests that the Union Government should give a price guarantee of sorts on all crops. Although the Modi Government has transferred funds from the Kisan Samman Nidhi to farmers' accounts, some organisations are agitating on the borders of the NCR without knowing the technical, legal and practical aspects of the new agricultural laws.

It is ultimately the loss of the nation, society and the farmers. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has stated that the Government is not in favour of withdrawing these laws. The farmer outfits should understand this and, instead of wasting their time, money and energy, pay due attention to the development of agriculture and family uplift, which will lead to their economic growth. It would be better if the farmers' representatives interact with the Government and manage to get a more agriculture-friendly deal. The farmers should now take the decision to conclude the current phase of protests.

Yugal Kishore Sharma  
Faridabad

### Time to introduce simplified Income Tax Act

Our six-decades-old Income Tax Act, 1961, which is outdated and full of amendments, needs to be replaced by an altogether new Income Tax Act which must be simple, abolishing components like cess, surcharge and exemptions with tax rates incorporated in the new Act, according to the recommendations of the Raja Chelliah Committee.

— The maximum tax rate at one time effectively used to be as high as 98 per cent, causing high levels of tax evasion with people paying up to even 52 per cent to whiten their black money. However, good sense prevailed and the maximum tax rate was slashed down to just 30 per cent in tune with most other countries. But surcharges, cess and other such additives have again raised the effective tax rate to nearly 50 per cent.

The new I-T Act should fix the tax slabs at 10, 20 and 30 per cent even though taxable amounts may not be included in the Act to keep flexibility on taxable income without any cess or surcharge. The idea should be that people find it advantageous to declare more income by inducing healthy competition for the tax paid in our status-conscious society by honouring those who pay high-



er taxes. A few sops, like jumping the queue at airports or railway stations, may be provided to those in the highest tax slab. At the same time, all tax exemptions — including on agricultural income, charity and contribution to political parties — may be abolished with the basic exemption limit raised to ₹5 lakh.

Also, the loopholes in the GST system may be plugged so that India may move towards cashless economy. The GST rates should be minimised to just two slabs of 10 and 30 per cent.

Subhash Chandra Agrawal  
Delhi

### Brexit cheer for Boris

Sir — Just a week before the Brexit transition period was scheduled to end, Britain and the European Union struck a historic free trade deal that should avert economic chaos and bring a measure of certainty for businesses after years of Brexit turmoil.

The deal contains provisions on subjects ranging from civil

nuclear cooperation and energy interconnections to fishing and aviation. It comes as a boost for British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who was one of Brexit's original champions and leader of the political movement that saw him rise to his current position.

The deal is also welcome because of the fears over the new Corona strain that has seen the

number of cases surge and led many countries to close borders with Britain. The news is important from an Indian perspective. The UK is looking for a trade deal with India which could be worth up to £100 billion and which, if it is done, would be one of the biggest post-Brexit trade deals.

Gundu K Mani  
Thane

### A dangerous sport

Sir — Jallikattu is a dangerous sport of bull-taming which is mostly performed in the villages of Tamil Nadu as part of the Pongal (harvest carnival) celebrations. Jallikattu or Manju Virattu is played generally on the second and third days of the Pongal fair.

Injuries and deaths are common because, as you can well imagine, one strong hit by a bull on the wrong part of the human body can be deadly. This is one of the oldest sports which has managed to survive in the modern era too. In Jallikattu, all that the fighters have to do is to jump on a running bull, try to grip on to its bulge and move along with the animal without falling down or getting injured.

It needs quick reflexes and a fleet-foot to tame the recalcitrant bull which will try to shake off the fighter and, at times, stamp on or gore the fallen participants. The risks involved can be gauged by the fact that even capturing the photographs is a tough task.

CK Subramaniam  
Chennai

Send your feedback to:  
letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

From the ridiculous to the sublime

This year has been grim enough so it is good to focus on some trivial yet mirthful things that happened in the world, too



GWYNNE DYER

Surely you don't want to read about the new, faster-spreading variant of the Coronavirus during the festive season, or the fourth Israeli election in two years and I certainly don't want to write about them. This year has been grim enough so it is good to focus on some trivial yet mirthful things that happened in the world, too. So here are a few matters of lesser import, culled from recent media reports. First, we have a transcript of the phone call made to one of the FSB officers involved in the plot to poison Russian Opposition leader Alexei Navalny. (The FSB is the modern successor to the KGB, the main secret police and Intelligence agency of the Soviet era.) The investigative website *Bellingcat* tracked down the mobile phone numbers of eight members of the FSB team that poisoned Navalny (Russian secret police apparently can't even afford burner phones), and gave two of them to the dissident leader, who is convalescing in Germany. Navalny called each number, pretending to be the aide to a top FSB General trying to find out what went wrong with the hit, while *Bellingcat* recorded the calls. One of the agents spotted the deception at once and hung up but the other, one Konstantin Borisovich Kudryavtsev (known to his friends as 'Blockhead'), fell for the trap and gave Navalny all the information he needed. Kudryavtsev had been sent to Omsk (the scene of the crime) to remove traces of the novichok nerve poison from Navalny's clothes before they were sent back to him in Germany. This is how part of the conversation recorded by *Bellingcat* went.

Navalny: "In your opinion, how did the Germans discover it all?"  
Kudryavtsev: "Well, they got the Bundeswehr involved. They have military chemists working there. Maybe they have some means of detection."  
Navalny: "Which piece of cloth was your focus on? Which garment had the highest risk factor?"  
Kudryavtsev: "The underpants."  
Navalny: "The underpants? Do you mean from the inner side, or from the outer?"  
Kudryavtsev: "We were processing the inner side. This is what we were doing."  
Navalny: "Well, imagine some underpants in front of you. Which part did you process?"  
Kudryavtsev: "The inner, where the groin is."  
Navalny: "The groin?"  
Kudryavtsev: "Well, the crotch, as they call it. There's some sort of seams there."  
Navalny: "Wait, this is important. Who gave you the order to process the codpiece of the underpants?"  
Kudryavtsev: "We figured this out on our own. They told us to work on the inner side of the underpants."  
Navalny: "Wait. I am writing it down. OK...Do you think this was a mistake – the method of administration?"  
Kudryavtsev: "Well, this is not my call."  
Navalny: "What is your opinion?"  
Kudryavtsev: "This is what my superiors have decided, therefore it is probably correct. The method is a good one."  
Navalny: "Well, he remains alive. Therefore, it is not that good..."  
And so on, and so forth. The result of the whole conversation was a red-faced FSB and a discredited agent.

Now we head from the ridiculous to the sublime: A study on the value of beards by two Texas-based academics, Sarah Mittal and David H Silvera. It was published last month in the *Journal of Business Research*, and the title is (of course) *'It grows on you: Perceptions of sales/service personnel with facial hair.'*  
The article proves to the authors' entire satisfaction that men with beards "are perceived as having more expertise; furthermore, increased perceptions of expertise predict higher ratings of trustworthiness and, subsequently, increase consumers' purchase likelihood."  
I could have told you that for free. I have had a beard since I was 25 and this is one of the most trusted columns on international affairs in the known universe. Quite Easily Done!

Finally, an ingenious way to slow the spread of the Coronavirus. We owe this innovation to retired translator Peter Prowse of Surrey in England, who urges that certain sounds and letters of the alphabet should be banned during the pandemic because saying them projects the COVID-19 virus much farther than others. Worst are the "plosive" consonants P, T and C, which when used at the beginning of a syllable can throw droplets containing the virus three times farther than softer consonants like F, N and L. He proposes that the Government should start by replacing the "puh" sound with "fuh."  
Once "feofle" have got used to this, the "tuh" sound will begin to be "fronounced nuh", and after a further "feriod" of "nime" the "cuh" sound at the "snart" of words will be "reflaced" by "luh." As "Flowse" (formerly Prowse) "foints" out, the whole "fofulation" will have to "flay" their role in this or there will be mass "lonfusion", so there must be "fenalties" for those who won't "lonfly." The retired translator freely admits that he got the idea from a French "lomedian", but it works just as well in English. The video "lan" be seen on "YouNube."  
(Gwynne Dyer's new book is 'Growing Pains: The Future of Democracy and Work.' The views expressed are personal.)

I REGRET THAT MORE THAN 70 LAKH FARMERS OF WEST BENGAL HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO GET THE BENEFITS OF THE PM-KISAN SCHEME.

—PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI



WE ARE IMPLEMENTING SO MANY SCHEMES WITH THE CENTRE. THE CLAIM OF NOT COOPERATING ON ONE THAT HELPS FARMERS IS ABSURD.

—WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER MAMATA BANERJEE

# Reset economic models

## What we essentially need is a community-based, businesslike approach encompassing grassroots action, policy advocacy and everything in between



MOIN QAZI

The COVID-19 pandemic is a human tragedy of Biblical proportions which has caused an explosion of infections and massive destruction of livelihoods. Tragically, the outbreak has also revealed that our societies and economies have been operating on a very thin margin. The edifice seemed so shiny; with jets stitching together gleaming cities, a world of soaring markets and industrial empires. But a couple of months into the contagion and it all began tottering. The jets were grounded, the cities went silent and one industry after another headed for bankruptcy. However successful our world may have seemed, it wasn't very sturdy. Our systems and society seem to be very fragile, exploding the myths of a robust and resilient order.

The greatest learning is that our current economic models do not benefit everyone equally. This is particularly true for rural societies. To combat this we will have to contend with the almost universal suspicion of our grand political schemes. While we do need plans and systems, we also need mutual accountability. Before we have the entire apparatus in place — the economic plumbing — we must understand more concretely what such a strategy means to the people it is meant to serve, who know best their own problems and also have relevant and sustainable solutions for them.

Tackling the problems of the disprivileged requires a fundamentally-different approach: One that starts with the people themselves and encourages initiative, creativity and drive from below. This principle must be at the core of any strategy that hopes to transform their lives; only then it can be lasting and meaningful.

Approaches to rural development that respect the inherent capabilities of the people who live in rural areas and systematically build on their experience, have a reasonable chance of improving their lives. This can include enhancing their capacities to mobilise and manage resources effectively. If people can be given the support they need to build their own democracies in their own ways, they can do the rest themselves. In doing so, they will not only move their own communities, they will also take the world with them.

This is because local leadership is critical to driving ownership of social programmes. We need to hire individuals with the entrepreneurialism and drive to create change on the ground. You can't solve the problems of the "last mile" from the headquarters. It takes local entrepreneurs, empowered to adapt easily to the nuances of local cultures to succeed. This approach has to be guided by local wisdom and must show a deep appreciation of ground realities.

We need to develop more inclusive policies to ensure that rural development is made socially, economically and environmentally sustainable. Inclusive rural transformation can be promoted through people-centered development in which beneficiaries become agents of their own development, participating in designing, decision-making and execution of the processes. Moreover, the strategies for inclusive transformation have to be context-specific, building on local solutions which best address local challenges.

Such solutions may require adaptation over time. People will not actively and emotionally participate in an intervention unless it has relevance to their lives and their strengths. When communities take charge of projects, they also contribute through their labour and commitment and engage actively with the system to ensure that projects are completed on time.

We need to invest in developing local leaders who are typically under-acknowledged and under-supported so we are able to effectively engage with popular movements, community-based organisations and grassroots activist groups that are close to

“

WE NEED TO DEVELOP MORE INCLUSIVE POLICIES TO ENSURE THAT RURAL DEVELOPMENT IS MADE SOCIALLY, ECONOMICALLY AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE. INCLUSIVE RURAL TRANSFORMATION CAN BE PROMOTED THROUGH PEOPLE-CENTRED DEVELOPMENT IN WHICH BENEFICIARIES BECOME AGENTS OF THEIR OWN DEVELOPMENT, PARTICIPATING IN DESIGNING, DECISION-MAKING AND EXECUTION OF THE PROCESSES

”



locals. We have to constantly navigate existing unjust, broken systems while at the same time reimagining them

Since local entrepreneurs know the community dynamics and power relationships, they are well-attuned to handling the actors in the local ecosystem. Their potential to drive change is tremendous, but they often lack opportunities for training and education and are unable to access networks and finance. Yet they are an essential part of society and often don't receive the credit they deserve as policy drivers and implementers in India's challenging developmental space.

There has also been a failure of agricultural strategy which needs reappraisal. Food crops have gradually been abandoned in favour of cash crops which are more profitable but are also highly water intensive. The high yielding variety (HYV) seeds which entered Indian fields during the Green Revolution were less resistant to droughts and floods and needed delicate management of water, insecticides, pesticides and chemical fertilisers.

These crops also attract more pests, forcing farmers to apply chemical pesticides to save them. So, every year the farmer had to spend more to grow such crops. Typically the commercial seeds had to be purchased year after year, and farmers could not reuse seeds from their crop, with seed manufacturing giants filing lawsuits against small farmers who did so. It became a perpetual treadmill. Families faced crippling healthcare costs, crop failures, loss of income and debt, all directly related to pesticides. The overuse of chemical fertilisers for augmenting yields in the short term led to physical and chemical degradation of the soil by altering the natural microflora and increasing soil salinity and alkalinity. Higher yields and profits in the short-term have come at a huge socio-ecological cost such as biodiversity loss, environmental pollution, land degradation, increased damage from

climate change, infusion of toxic elements into the food chain from chemical residue applied in the crop field leading to decline in human health and livelihood and the erosion of agricultural expertise.

Formerly, societies might have depend upon 200 to 300 crops for food and health security but gradually we have come to the stage of four or five important crops: wheat, corn, rice and soybean. This homogenisation increases profitability for a handful of owners, to the detriment of everyone else.

The cultivation of indigenous and heritage crops has the potential to make agriculture genetically diverse, sustainable and resilient to climate variability. Indigenous landraces have evolved in the region over thousands of years of agrarian practice and have relied on fungicides, organic fertilisers and pesticides prepared from locally available materials. The Green Revolution introduced newer methods of cultivation; brought in new strains of seeds generated through modern methods of plant breeding which gave high yields; intensified the use of fossil fuel fertilisers; increased acreage through double cropping; used pesticides and mechanical equipment extensively and massively; and drilled into groundwater reserves through deep borewells.

Native heirloom seeds adapted to local diets and conditions were replaced by expensive corporate-produced hybrids, often dumped in India after having failed elsewhere. Although the new high-performance varieties guaranteed high yields, they degraded soil quality, harmed biodiversity, polluted the environment and irreversibly damaged human health.

The pandemic will hopefully help farmers to take conscious decisions and shift gradually to sustainable practices, rather than changing things hurriedly by following the instruction given by seed or pesticide companies through extension workers, dealers, or the labels on the pack-

aging of crop inputs. They will use their own experience or knowledge acquired through experimentation rather than relying on hearsay or advertising, when buying inputs (for example seeds and fertilisers).

The pandemic has already underlined the need for them to come up with context-specific solutions for ecologically sustainable agriculture. We hope farmers will apply their own knowledge of ecology, soil fertility management, seed preservation and pest management which they used to rely on before the advent of conventional agriculture.

There are many lessons to be brought to the table from field experience. We need to understand the existing human conditions rather than hastily proposing templates that serve the interests of the owners. Experts need to combine their knowledge with grassroots action and a wider community of practice. The incredibly evolving and complicated ecosystem requires better collaboration and partnerships for understanding, analysing, designing solutions and for undertaking impact studies to contribute to the wider knowledge pool within. We have to usher a culture where farmers can apply their own knowledge and skills rather than being expected to follow what the external agencies are prescribing.

There is need for integration of an entire gamut of resources, ranging from financial and human to markets and entitlements. When we address these issues empathetically, we can move ahead with a more self-assured, robust and proactive engagement towards inclusive growth and livelihood development. What we essentially need is a community-based, businesslike approach encompassing grassroots action, policy advocacy and everything in between.

(The writer is a well-known development professional of international repute. The views expressed are personal.)

# A mandate for J&K's progress and inclusion

## The real winner in the recent DDC polls is India, its ethos, values and the Centre's decision to completely integrate the State with the nation



ASHISH SOOD

The Union Territory (UT) of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) is set to chart the course of development and social inclusion. The Valley is no longer the political fiefdom of the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) or Gupkar Alliance. Its members were expecting an absolute majority of the people to vote in their favour in the District Development Council (DDC) polls. However, a large number of the people of the Valley have put their faith in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's

leadership. Plus, Independents turned out to be key players during these elections, registering their win on 50 seats. In Kashmir, the BJP has won three seats, contrary to the expectations of the Gupkar Alliance and has polled a good number of votes in all. The party contested on 115 seats. In Jammu region, it fought on 129 seats, won 72 seats and lost 57. The BJP's overall vote percentage is 24.64 per cent as compared to 22.92 per cent polled by the PAGD. Independent candidates polled 28.36 per cent votes, while the Congress got around 14 per cent. The performance of the Independents and the BJP points to the people's disenchantment with the Gupkar Alliance, which has just registered the proverbial Pyrrhic victory. In the DDC elections the real winner is India, Indian ethos, values and the decision of the Union Government to completely integrate J&K with the nation.

This was on hold due to those who had converted the region into their political fiefdom in their nefarious pursuit to exploit the innocent people and resources meant for the citizens. Over the years, corrupt politicians looted the Valley's resources to fill their own coffers and kept dancing to the tune of divisive forces. It was the daring decision and vision of Modi, which ensured the complete integration of the Valley into India. Even though the Gupkar Alliance has won, but the fact that the BJP has emerged as the single-largest party, has made the people's intent clear. They are strongly aligned to the Constitution, democracy and India. Had the Gupkar Alliance members fought the election individually, they would have been decimated. Instead of working hard to mitigate the woes and hardships of the people of the Valley and taking the benefits of

welfare schemes to them, the corrupt politicians misled the people and kept the citizens impoverished. Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee, the founder of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, sacrificed his life spearheading a nationwide non-violent agitation demanding complete integration of J&K into the Indian Union. On May 10, 1953, he courted arrest chanting the slogan that there can't be two Constitutions, two Prime Ministers and two flags in one nation. He was taken to Srinagar jail where he died under mysterious circumstances on June 23, 1953. By revoking Article 370 on August 5, 2019, the Central Government has enabled the people of the region to access all Central Government programmes and laws including the right to reservation for the disempowered, right to education and right to information, besides other facilities. The UTs of J&K and Ladakh have

adopted an ambitious road map of peace and progress, ushering in a new era of inclusive development and transparent governance in the entire region. The Central Government has adopted an integrated approach to build state-of-the-art infrastructure and unleashed a slew of fast track social welfare and employment-generation schemes and programmes. This is especially true for Medium, Small and Micro Enterprises (MSMEs) including cottage, handicraft, handloom and horticulture enterprises as the schemes are aimed at comprehensive growth and the socio-economic emancipation of the marginalised and underprivileged sections of society in all three regions. Good quality, all-weather roads and national highways enhancing the hitherto lacking inter and intra-region connectivity have gone a long way in promoting and creating fresh employment opportunities in the post-bifur-

cation period. Tourism has always been the lifeline of Kashmir's economy and the enhanced infrastructure is proving to be a key to its success by promoting exports from the Valley as well. The Road Transport and Highways Ministry, with its arms like the National Highways Authority of India and the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation, in concert with the Border Roads Organisation and the State Public Works Department are currently engaged in completing a series of projects which will give impetus to growth and help entrepreneurs establish producer companies with focus on further development of sericulture, cold water fisheries, woodwork, cricket bats, saffron, handicraft and horticulture produce. Jammu, with a rapidly-growing rail and road connectivity, including the Jammu Ring Road, is witnessing

a huge economic boost with flourishing religious tourism and start-ups in businesses like wood grain work, mills, basmati rice trade, rice mills, carpets, electronic items and electric goods. Similarly, Ladakh is witnessing an unprecedented boost to infrastructure development with all-weather roads and highway networks coming up in a big way in difficult terrains and at strategic locations. Domestic and international tourism promotion has been given a big push in Ladakh. The sky seems to be the limit, with central financial packages to Ladakh resulting in a phenomenal growth in its economy through enhanced agriculture and livestock activities. The Centre and the State administration must join hands and ensure all round development of the region. (The writer is deputy in-charge of BJP for J&K. The views expressed are personal.)



# Stocks attract over \$22bn India emerges among best performing EMs

**FIANS ■ MUMBAI**

The Covid-19 virus not only triggered a worldwide pandemic, but also opened the floodgates for investments in the countrys equity market.

All in all, not only did the overall capitalisation of India's domestic market increased, the country's key indices emerged among the best performing emerging markets (EMs).

Initially, the lockdown induced crash led to attractive valuations along with a global flood of liquidity and near zero interest rates in foreign markets. As a result, return on investment from several asset classes except equities vaporised.

Investors jumped from one assets class to the other, till the time even the US dollar became unviable due to the massive stimulus package. Accordingly, the funnelling of such funds into the emerging markets led to a net investment of over \$22 billion into India's market till

now in CY2020.

Besides foreign funds, the domestic lockdown, the biggest in the world, flooded the stock markets with over 60 lakh new retail investors.

Additionally, a considerable number enrolled through various schemes via the MF segment. Market watchers contend that these newbie investors saw the value in stocks beyond the pandemic induced slowdown and became the real beneficiaries of the up move. Till now in 2020, Indian markets witnessed FPI inflows of \$22,281 million, which is 55 per cent higher than the flows in the entire 2019 in USD terms.

However, the domestic MF houses pulled out over Rs 33,000 crore till November 2020.

"Valuations are at 2SD (standard deviation) over the 10 year average, hence there is some caution on this front. However as long as interest rates continue to be zero or

near zero across the globe, P/E ratios could keep expanding to levels not seen in the past," said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research at HDFC Securities.

In terms of purchase, FPIs initially preferred large cap stocks till October. Later on, they enlarged their purchases to include the mid and small cap segments.

Sectorally, IT, pharma, banks, FMCG, metals, realty and oil & gas stocks were bought the most by FPIs in this year. Apart from very high FPI inflows in 2020, large number of new investor registrations due to the Covid-19 pandemic has also contributed to the upturn in the market.

"The huge stimulus rolled out by central banks across the developed world to tackle the pandemic in 2020 has certainly led to abundant liquidity. While it was expected that EMs would see strong FPI flows in 2020, the fact remains that only few emerging economies have seen such

flows and India is one such country, especially given the slew of reforms undertaken in 2020," said LKP Securities' Head of Research, S. Ranganathan.

"Having said that, it cannot be denied that lakhs of young first time equity investors have opened DEMAT accounts during 2020 and have invested into direct equities which is also a reflection of financialisation of savings," Ranganathan added.

According to Gaurav Garg, Head of Research at CapitalVia Global Research: "Moving forward, FPIs may continue to concentrate in the Indian market for another 1-2 quarters.

"The factors like low Covid-19 case count, expected vaccine in the first half of 2021, fear of valuations may go even higher and economic return to the growth trajectory are expected to potentially fuel more development in the emerging markets such as India."

## Govt’s push for GST compliance is boon for tax consultants: Startup

**PTI ■ KOLKATA**

With the government gradually Bringing small businesses under Goods and Services Tax chain, it has become a boon for service providers, a tax startup has claimed.

The startup, GST Dost, estimates the total value of GST and related services to be over Rs 12,000 crore.

"The introduction of e-invoicing for companies of Rs 100 crore and above will open new business opportunity for us. There are approximately 13,500 businesses having turnover of over Rs 100 crore

in India," GST DOST president Vikas Dhanania told PTI.

E-invoicing is currently mandated for businesses with an annual turnover over Rs 500 crore. The government has notified the mandatory requirement of e-invoicing for B2B transactions for businesses with a turnover of over Rs 100 crore with effect from January 1, 2021. For the government it will lead to reduction in fraud cases in tax evasion, he said.

"With the government expanding the GST ambit to small businesses, we are aiming at a multi-fold rise in our revenue over the next 2-3 years," he said.



## CII seeks clarity in taxation laws, simplification, lesser litigation

**FIANS ■ NEW DELHI**

CII has suggested the government to bring about clarity in the taxation laws, simplification of procedures and reduction of litigation in the upcoming Union Budget.

It noted that the taxation laws should facilitate business transitions and make doing business easier for the industry.

In a statement, the industry body noted that Section 80JJAA provides for deduction of 30 per cent on emoluments paid to new employees, which can be claimed for three years. This is available up to an emolument of Rs 25,000 per month.

Stressing on the need to give a boost to employment at higher levels, CII has suggested raising the cap to Rs 50,000 per month to encourage employment in higher skilled jobs as well.

It further said over the last few years, in order to enhance the financial strength of banks, and for the stability of the financial sector, RBI has mandated that banks should augment their NPA provisioning.

CII has suggested that the limit prescribed under section 36(1)(vii)(a) for provision for bad and doubtful debts for the Indian banks should be increased from the existing limit of 8.5 per cent to 15 per cent.

It told the Finance Ministry that banks operating in India facilitate foreign investment by Foreign Portfolio Investments (FPI) by acting as custodians (cash and securities) for the FPIs investing in India. "Specific clarification should be provided so that banking and broking service providers are not held as representative assessee of their clients," it said.

Over the years, RBI has lowered the limit for recognizing an account as NPA from six months to 90 days. According to CII's budget recommendations, Rule 6EA should be amended to provide that in case of banks, the interest on NPA which has become overdue for more than 90 days should be excluded from the total income and be taxed only on receipt basis.

CII has suggested the laying down of general principles to guide the import tariff structure along with a roadmap to encourage and calibrate domestic manufacturing in alignment with global trade trends. It said that such a move would strengthen India's manufacturing capacities and boost its export competitiveness as per shifting global value chains in the next three to five years.

It has also suggested a graded roadmap towards competitive import tariffs over the next three years, with lowest or 0-2.5 per cent for inputs or raw materials, highest slab of 5-7.5 per cent for final products and 2.5 to 5 per cent for intermediates. This will help Indian industry integrate into the global value chain while becoming competitive with its goods and services in the world markets.

As per the industry body these initiatives would go a long way in bringing growth back to the economy and moving one step ahead towards a taxpayer friendly regime.

## Payment of 1% GST in cash only for entities having an annual turnover of ₹6cr

**New Delhi:**The Government's decision on mandatory payment of at least 1 per cent of GST tax liability in cash will only apply to establishments having an annual turnover of Rs 6 crore and the new rule will not apply to micro and small businesses, and composition dealers, finance ministry sources said on Sunday.

Based on the recommendations of the GST Law Committee, the government has notified new indirect tax rules that makes cash payment of 1 per cent of GST tax liability mandatory for businesses whose taxable supply value exceeds Rs 50 lakh in a month. This change will come into effect from January 1, 2021. The new rules stoked fears that the mandatory cash payment will adversely affect small businesses and will increase their working capital requirement.

"Contrary to what is being fed, the new rule will only help to curb the menace of of fake ITC availment and impact only risky and suspicious dealers or fly-by-night operators. It will in no way disturb honest taxpay-

ers," said one of the sources quoted above.

Apart from turnover based exemption, the cash payment rule will also not apply in the cases the registered person deposited more than Rs 1 lakh as Income Tax in each of the last two years and where such person has received a refund of more than Rs 1 lakh in the preceding financial year on account of export or inverted tax structure. Also, the cash rule is not applicable to government department, PSU and local authority.

Explaining the reason for introducing this rule, a highly placed Finance Ministry source said that a legitimate business runs for profit and a minimum value addition is expected from them. It is only where a lot of fake credit is used that no tax payment in cash is made. Further, dummy companies which generate fake ITC or are used to be a layer in multi-layer fake credit flow pays no tax in cash.

"This provision is a very smart rule against fraudster and would not affect any genuine business entities or Ease of

Doing Business in any manner," said Finance Ministry sources. With regard to turnover based exemption, the finance ministry has clarified only those businesses which have turnover more than Rs 6 Crore and pay more than 99 per cent of its tax through ITC (input tax credit) and yet pay less than Rs 1 lakh income tax in a year - will fall in the risky category under this rule. The new rule is expected to control fake invoices fraudsters who avail and pass on ITC by dummy, fake and dormant entities which show high turnovers, but have no financial credibility and flee after issuing fake invoices and misusing ITC.

The seriousness of this menace to GST ecosystem may even be understood by the fact that in the recent nationwide drive against GST fake invoice frauds that was launched in the second week of November and still going on, has resulted in the arrest of more than 175 fraudsters and more than 1,800 cases are booked against 8,000 fake entities in just 40/45 days. **FIANS**

## 442 infra projects report cost overrun of ₹4.34 lakh cr

**FIANS ■ NEW DELHI**

As many as 442 infrastructure projects have reported a cost overrun of more than Rs 4.34 lakh crore as of December 1, according to the data from the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

A report by the Ministry showed that 536 Central sector projects are delayed from their original schedules.

"Total original cost of implementation of the 1,671 projects was 21,21,383.82 crore and their anticipated completion cost is likely to be 25,55,957.52 crore, which reflects overall cost overruns of 4,34,573.70 crore (20.49 per cent of original cost)," said the report.

The expenditure incurred

on these projects till November 2020 is nearly Rs 11.94 lakh crore, which is 46.71 per cent of the anticipated cost of the projects. It said that of the overall 1,671 Central sector infrastructure projects costing Rs 150 crore and above, nine projects are ahead of the schedule, 184 are on schedule, 536 are delayed, 442 projects reported cost overrun and 212 projects reported both time and cost overrun with respect to their original project implementation schedules. However, it said the number of delayed projects decreases to 412 if delay is calculated on the basis of latest schedule of completion. Further, for 942 projects neither the year of commissioning nor the tentative gestation period has been reported.

## Fuel prices unchanged across metros on Sunday

**FIANS ■ NEW DELHI**

Oil marketing companies (OMC) continued to hold the pause button on petrol and diesel prices across the four metros on Sunday. In the national capital, petrol was sold for ₹83.71 per litre. Similarly, in the other key cities of Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata, the fuel was priced at unchanged levels of ₹90.34, ₹86.51 and ₹85.19 respectively. The prices have been the same since they were last revised on Dec 7. The OMCs have gone on a pause mode at a time when expectations of vaccines to counter the pandemic and that of a major pick-up in the demand have kept crude oil on the boil with the prices breaching \$50 a barrel mark.

## Employees seek extension of benefits in case of Air India privatisation

**FIANS ■ NEW DELHI**

Air India Employees Union has asked for a meeting with Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Puri seeking extension of the medical scheme, leave encashment and provident fund benefits in the event of privatisation of Air India.

In a letter to Puri, the AIEU said that the existing medical scheme in Air India should be continued as it is for the serving and retired employees.

On provident fund, the union said that there are two separate Provident Fund trusts in erstwhile Air India and erstwhile Indian Airlines which are governed by the 1925 PF Trust Act.

"We would like these trusts to be continued as it is in the case of privatisation/disinvest-



ment of Air India," the union said.

On leave encashment, AIEU said there is a practice of availing the benefit of leave encashment at the time of retirement.

"Several employees depend on this benefit to lead a decent retired life. We fear this benefit may be discontinued in case of privatisation of Air India and employees will suffer huge financial losses. Therefore, AIEU would like to propose that the employees should be paid leave encashment allowance till March 31, 2021," the letter said.

## Over 4.2 cr ITRs filed so far for AY 2020-21

**New Delhi:**The Income Tax Department has said that over 4.2 crore income tax returns (ITR) have been filed so far for the assessment year (AY) 2020-21. A tweet by the IT Department said that as of December 26, more than 4.15 crore ITRs were filed, compared to over 4.14 crore as of August 26, 2019 for the assessment year 2019-20. Another tweet by the department said: "5,64,541 ITRs have been filed upto 1800 hrs today & 67,965 ITRs filed in the last 1hr." The number of return filings has been high in the current year despite the pandemic as the government has extended the deadline for return filing till December 31. **FIANS**

## AIRIA seeks tax reforms for rubber industry

**FIANS ■ NEW DELHI**

The All India Rubber Industries Association (AIRIA) has called for rationalisation of tax structure and said that the inverted duty structure impacts the local industry.

It also said that the government should consider providing adequate support and handholding to the producers and should device 'Phased Manufacturing Programme' for enhancing the localisation in the rubber sector of India.

The industry body noted that import of raw materials such as natural rubber and latex

attract import duties of as high as 70 per cent, while that on finished goods is much lower, which impacts the local rubber goods producing industry, and stands as an obstacle towards the vision of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'.

"Some of the products which used to come from China are being routed through Thailand and Vietnam at either zero per cent duty or 5 per cent duty.

India should correct the customs duty for the sector. The Indian rubber industry uses more than 70 raw materials and some of them also attract anti-dumping duty as well," AIRIA said.

## 41% small businesses find it impossible to file ITR by Dec 31: Survey

**FIANS ■ NEW DELHI**

As the deadline for filing of Income Tax Returns (ITR) nears, around 41 per cent small businesses think that it is impossible to file their returns by December 31 and want an extension to the deadline, according to a survey by LocalCircles. The survey showed that 30 per cent of the respondents already filed their returns while around 18 per cent have not filed yet and will comfortably do before the deadline, while 11 per cent believed that it will take significant effort doing it before the month end.

Among the individual taxpayers surveyed, 34 per cent of the respondents have not filed their returns yet, and 13 per cent said that they want an extension of the deadline as it would be impossible for them to file ITR by the end of December.

Around 48 per cent of

individual taxpayers said that they have done it already earlier this year, and 18 per cent said they have done it in the last couple of months, while 8 per cent believed that it would take significant effort doing it before the deadline. A LocalCircles statement noted that small businesses have had a highly challenging 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdowns. It was only after September when signs of pick up in business activity emerged and for many small businesses it has been about recovering some of the accumulated losses from March-August this year. It also said that for many small businesses, there is dependency on GST returns and business returns are typically more complicated than individual returns and many of them require several sittings and information exchange with their accounting professionals which have become difficult due to the pandemic.

## Mission Rojgar: Govt moves towards providing 50 L jobs to youth in Uttar Pradesh

**FIANS ■ LUCKNOW**

The Uttar Pradesh Government's special campaign "Mission Rojgar" launched on December 5, that aims at providing jobs to 50 lakh youth by March 2021, has so far employed 21,75,443 youth in the state.

The campaign ranges from regular appointments to outsourcing, contracting, skill training, self-employment and creation of man-days.

Various state government departments, development and industrial development authorities, commissions, corporations, councils and boards, private firms and institutions providing skills training and helping in self-employment will provide these opportunities.

So far, the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector, Panchayati Raj, sports, fisheries, vocational education and skills, labour, basic education and public works department have made remarkable progress in creating employment and man-days.

In order to provide employment and self-employment to more and more youths,

the government will campaign and organise beneficiary-oriented programmes along with awareness programmes in the presence of public representatives at the district level.

The information department will ensure wide publicity for the programme so that youth benefit from this campaign. At the local level, the MSME sector, which employs the most with low capital, minimum risk and infrastructure, will play an important role.

As more and more units are opened in this sector, old units are increasing their production capacity through technological upgradation and enhancing the quality of their products as per the market demand. Additional Chief Secretary (MSME) Navneet Sehgal said that in the current financial year, the target is to give Rs 75,000 crore loan to 20 lakh new and old units. "So far, loans worth nearly Rs 30,000 crore have been disbursed to more than 11 lakh units. If an average of 4 to 5 people get employment in a unit, then 80 lakh to one crore people will get employment in this sector alone in this financial year."

## FM Logistic to double warehousing capacity to 1.2 cr sq ft in 3-4 years

**PTI ■ MUMBAI**

Third party logistics company FM Logistic plans to double its warehousing space to 1.2 crore sq ft in three to four years from 60 lakh sq ft at present as it expects demand for such facilities to increase in the aftermath of the pandemic, its MD and CEO Alexandre Amine Soufiani said.

Soufiani expects sales to return to pre-COVID levels by March 2021 as 90 per cent of the business has already recovered by December.

With its plans to set up A grade facilities in all metro cities and "dynamic economic areas", especially multi-customer units, and focus on urban logistics, FM Logistic looks to attain leadership position in the sector, Soufiani said. Grade A warehouses are categorised on the basis of construction quality, available space, location, amenities and clients, among others

In March 2019, FM Logistic had outlined its plans to invest USD 150 million over the next five years to set up new warehouses in India, with focus on multi-client warehouses.

"When we acquired Spear Logistics in 2016, there was only 20 lakh sq ft space and four warehousing units. Today we have 60 lakh sq ft in four years and we want to double this to take it to 1.20 crore sq ft under our operations in the next 3-4 years," Soufiani told PTI in an interaction.

The company has already announced its plans to add 40 lakh sq ft warehousing space in

the next three years that will take its total space to 1 crore sq ft, he said, adding that it could add another 20 lakh sq ft.

He said the company has added a total of 10 lakh sq ft space in the last six months, all for multi-customers facilities, including omni channel, pharma, e-groceries, FMCG, food, industrial, among others.

FM Logistic plans to have multi-customer facilities in Bengaluru, Delhi, Kolkata, Hyderabad and Chennai in the next 2-3 years.

According to Soufiani, the company is expected to soon commence operations at its Bhiwandi facility in Maharashtra, which is spread in 4 lakh sq ft space with a part of it dedicated for pharmaceuticals. The upcoming state-of-the-art warehousing facility at Jhajjar in Haryana will also be operational in the second quarter of 2021, he said.

Earlier this month, FM Logistic had signed a strategic partnership with Welspun Logistic Park to develop 9 lakh sq feet space in Bhiwandi in the next 3 years. "We could realise a quarter of our 40 (lakh sq ft). There is another 10 lakh sq feet of space that we have also signed for which 4 lakh (sq ft) we are going to get this month, another 4 lakh sq ft we will be getting in April/May next year," he said. The omni-channel strategy has now become a central strategy for most of the companies which are into retail, FMCG, groceries and pharma, among others, and has given a big opportunity to third party logistics providers.

## India's crude steel output grows 3.5% to over 9 MT in Nov

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

India registered a growth of 3.5 per cent in crude steel production at 9.245 million tonne (MT) in November, according to World Steel Association.

The country had produced 8,933 MT crude steel during the same month last year, the global industry body said in its latest report. "Crude steel production for the 64 countries reporting to the World Steel Association (worldsteel) was 158.261 MT in November 2020, a 6.6 per cent increase compared to 148.417 MT in November 2019. "Due to the ongoing difficulties presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, many of this

month's figures are estimates that may be revised with next month's production update," worldsteel said. According to the worldsteel data, China registered 8 per cent year-on-year growth in steel output at 87,660 MT during November 2020, compared to 81.191 MT in the same period last year.

The US production stood at 6,120 MT, down 13.7 per cent from 7,088 MT. Japan's output slipped 5.9 per cent to 7,264 MT from 7,716 MT a year ago.

South Korea's steel production fell 2.4 per cent to 5,760 MT in the month under review, as compared to 5,904 MT in the year-ago period. Germany's crude steel output rose 14.8 per cent to 3,376 MT



as against 2,941 MT. Italy's crude steel production was 2,049 MT in November 2020, up 3.2 per cent from 1,986 MT a year ago. France produced 1,149 MT of crude steel last month, 3.7 per cent lower from the year-ago period, while Spain's steel production stood at 1,113 MT, a

rise of 11.2 per cent year-on-year.

With members in every major steel-producing country, Brussels-based worldsteel represents steel producers, national and regional steel industry associations, and steel research institutes. Its members represent around 85 per cent of global steel production.



# EU nations eagerly kick off mass vaccinations

**Rome:** European Union nations kicked off a coordinated effort on Sunday to give Covid-19 vaccinations to the most vulnerable among the bloc's nearly 450 million people, marking a moment of hope in the continent's battle against the worst public health crisis in a century.

Health care workers, the elderly and leading politicians got some of the first shots across the 27-nation bloc to reassure the public that the vaccinations are safe and represent the best chance to emerge from the pandemic.

"It didn't hurt at all," said Mihaela Anghel, a nurse at the Matei Bals Institute in Bucharest who was the first person to get the vaccine in Romania. "Open your eyes and take the vaccine."

In Rome, five doctors and nurses wearing white scrubs sat in a semi-circle at the Spallanzani infectious diseases hospital to receive their doses.

"The message is one of hope, trust and an invitation to share this choice," said one of the recipients, Dr Maria Rosaria Capobianchi, who heads the virology laboratory at



A resident of a nursing home reacts as she gets an injection of the Covid-19 vaccine in Cologne, Germany on Sunday

Spallanzani and was part of the team that isolated the virus in early February. "There is no reason to be concerned."

Italian virus czar Domenico Arcuri said it was significant that Italy's first vaccine doses were administered at Spallanzani, where a Chinese couple visiting from Wuhan tested positive in January and became Italy's first confirmed cases.

Only later would northern Lombardy become the epicentre of the outbreak in Europe. Italy now has the continent's worst confirmed virus death toll at nearly 72,000.

# High-level Chinese delegation arrives in Nepal to take stock of political situation

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

A high-level Chinese delegation led by a vice minister of the Chinese Communist Party arrived in Kathmandu on Sunday to "take stock" of Nepal's political situation after the dissolution of Parliament and subsequent split in the ruling Nepal Communist Party, according to a media report.

Although no specific details about the agenda of the visit are available, the four-member delegation, led by Vice Minister of the International Department of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Guo Yezhou, will hold high-level talks during its stay in Kathmandu, My Republica newspaper reported, citing senior NCP leaders.

Quoting a diplomatic source, it said the visit is aimed at "taking stock of Nepal's evolving political situation after the dissolution of the House of Representatives and subsequent split in the ruling Nepal Communist Party amid already-deepened intra-party rift".

Nepal plunged into a political crisis last Sunday after

embattled Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli, known for his pro-Beijing leanings, in a surprise move, recommended dissolving the 275-member House, amidst a tussle for power with former prime minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda'.

Acting on the prime minister's recommendation, President Bidya Devi Bhandari dissolved the House the same day and announced fresh elections on April 30 and May 10, sparking protests from a large section of the NCP led by Prachanda, also a co-chair of the ruling party.

Meanwhile, the Chinese embassy in Kathmandu and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are tight-lipped about Guo's visit, the report said.

Earlier this week, Chinese Ambassador to Nepal, Hou Yanqi, had communicated about the visit of Guo to Kathmandu during her meetings with senior NCP leaders of both the Prachanda- and Oli-led factions.

Vice Minister Guo is scheduled to hold meetings with the leaders of both the factions.

# Unemployment benefits expire for millions as Trump rages

**West Palm Beach:** Unemployment benefits for millions of Americans struggling to make ends meet lapsed overnight as President Donald Trump refused to signed an end-of-year Covid relief and spending bill that had been considered a done deal before his sudden objections.

The fate of the bipartisan package remained in limbo Sunday as Trump continued to demand larger Covid relief checks and complained about "pork" spending. Without the widespread funding provided by the massive measure, a government shutdown would occur when money runs out at 12:01 a.m. Tuesday.

"It's a chess game and we are pawns," said Lanetris Haines, a self-employed single mother of three in South Bend, Indiana, who stood to lose her \$129 weekly jobless benefit unless Trump signed the package into law or succeeded in his improbable quest for changes.

Washington has been reeling since Trump turned on the deal after it had won sweeping approval in both houses of Congress and after the White House had assured Republican leaders that Trump would support it. Instead, he assailed the



bill's plan to provide \$600 Covid relief checks to most Americans — insisting it should be \$2,000. House Republicans swiftly rejected that idea during a rare Christmas Eve session. But Trump has not been swayed in spite of the nation being in the grip of a pandemic.

"I simply want to get our great people \$2000, rather than the measly \$600 that is now in the bill," Trump tweeted Saturday from Palm Beach, Florida, where he is spending the holiday. "Also, stop the billions of dollars in 'pork.'" President-elect Joe Biden called on Trump to sign the bill immediately as the midnight Saturday deadline neared for

two federal programs providing unemployment aid.

"It is the day after Christmas, and millions of families don't know if they'll be able to make ends meet because of President Donald Trump's refusal to sign an economic relief bill approved by Congress with an overwhelming and bipartisan majority," Biden said in a statement. He accused Trump of an "abdication of responsibility" that has "devastating consequences." "I've been talking to people who are scared they're going to be kicked out from their homes, during the Christmas holidays, and still might be if we don't sign this bill," said Rep. Debbie Dingell, a Michigan Democrat. **AP**

# Sindh Govt not to release 4 accused in Pearl's murder case

**Islamabad:** Pakistan's Sindh province Government has decided not to release British-born al-Qaeda leader Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh and his three aides, accused of kidnapping and murdering US journalist Daniel Pearl, in view of a Supreme Court order, according to a media report.

In a surprise move, a two-judge bench of the Sindh High Court on Thursday 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".

The court, however, had clarified that the accused should not be released if there is a Supreme Court restraining order regarding their detention.

Citing its sources, the Express Tribune newspaper said that the provincial gov-

ernment will not release these men in view of the Supreme Court's September 28 order.

The Pakistan People's Party-led Sindh government believes that the apex court's September 28 order in the case is still in the field, the sources told the daily.

A three-judge apex court bench headed by Justice Mushir Alam on September 28 noted that till the next date of hearing, the accused shall not be released.

A senior government official said the apex court order has not been specifically recalled.

"The SHC in its December 24 order also clarified that accused should not be released if there is a Supreme Court restraining order regarding their detention," he added. The sources said the Sindh government will also challenge the SHC's December 24 order in the apex court on Monday.

# Militants attack Pakistan checkpoint in Balochistan, killing 7 soldiers

**Islamabad:** At least seven Pakistani soldiers were killed in a terrorist attack in the country's restive Balochistan province, the Army said on Sunday.

The militants fire-raided a Frontier Corps (FC) outpost in Harnai region of the province late last night, it said.

During the intense

exchange of fire, seven soldiers were killed, it said.

The area was cordoned off and escape routes blocked to apprehend the fleeing militants, while a large-scale search and clearance operation was underway.

"Such cowardly acts by inimical elements backed by anti-state forces will not be

allowed to sabotage hard earned peace and prosperity in Balochistan," the Army said.

Commenting on the attack, Prime Minister Imran Khan said that he was "saddened" over the loss of lives.

"My heartfelt condolences & prayers go to their families," he said.



A woman casts her vote after polls opened for presidential and legislative elections, at the Lycee Boganda polling station in the capital Bangui, Central African Republic on Sunday

# Syrian refugee camp burnt to ground in northern Lebanon

**Beirut:** More than 300 Syrian refugees were forced to flee an informal camp in northern Lebanon as a blaze raged through and burnt tents to the ground, UN and Lebanese officials said on Sunday.

The fire late Saturday raged for four hours as firefighters tried to put it out, the Lebanese civil defense said.

The fire ensued following a fight between a Lebanese family in al-Miniyeh in the country's north and Syrians living in the camp, according to Lebanese media reports.

A Lebanese official said the army is investigating the cause of the fire and conducting raids to round up those responsible for the altercation. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because an official statement has not yet been released.

Khaled Kabbara, a UN Refugee Agency spokesman in northern Lebanon, said some 375 people lived in the infor-



mal settlement that was located on a plot of rented land. He said the entire camp was burnt to the ground.

Kabbara said four people were injured in the fire and hospitalized with minor injuries. He said some residents of the camp returned Sunday to see if anything could be salvaged from the fire.

Most of the refugees have sought refuge in other nearby informal settlements. Some from the local community have also offered shelter, Kabbara said.

Kabbara said altercations between residents and Syrian refugees often "catastrophically impact the community as a whole". **AP**

# Bus crash in western Cameroon kills 37, injures 18

AP ■ YAOUNDE

More than 37 people are dead and 18 others seriously injured after a bus crash in Cameroon's western village of Nemale, officials said.

A 70-seater bus was on its way to the capital, Yaounde, from the western town of Foumban when it crashed into a truck while trying to avoid a crowd of people on the road around 2 a.m. Sunday, said Absalom Monono Woloo, a senior government official in the area.

"Most of the travelers were either going to spend New Year's Day with their families, returning from Christmas Day festivities or were business people supplying gifts for New Year's feasts," he said.

Village residents ran to the road to help the more than 60 commuters who were on the bus, he said.

The death toll will likely rise as rescue workers dig through the wreckage, he said.

## FROM PAGE 1

## BONE-CHILLING COLD TO RING IN NEW YEAR

A cold wave occurs in plains when the minimum temperature is 10 degrees Celsius or below, and is 4.5 notches less than the season's normal for two consecutive days. In the winter season, the cold wave conditions prevail mainly along the Indo-Gangetic Plains.

"A western disturbance has approached North India this weekend and is likely to continue causing widespread rain and snowfall across Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, and isolated parts of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab and Haryana till Monday. As the system moves on, cold and dry northwesterly winds are likely to strengthen at lower levels across the plains of northwest India from Tuesday onwards," the IMD said.

The IMD has also forecasted that 'Ground Frost' conditions are likely in isolated pockets over Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Rajasthan and West Madhya Pradesh during December 29-31 where-as cold day conditions are likely over Punjab during next 24 hours. "Dense to very dense fog are likely to occur over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi in morning hours and dense fog also likely over Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh in morning hours during on December 29-31.

Biting cold conditions persisted in Haryana and Punjab with Gurdaspur reeling at a minimum temperature of 2 degrees Celsius. Gurdaspur was the coldest place in Punjab, while Narnaul, at a low of 3.3 degrees Celsius, was Haryana's coldest place. In Punjab, Pathankot, Halwara and Faridkot recorded a low of 3.7 degrees Celsius, 5.7 degrees Celsius and 4.6 degrees Celsius. Himachal Pradesh's Keylong, Kalpa, Manali, Mandi, Solan, Sundernagar and Bhuntar shivered at sub-zero temperatures.

The cold wave intensified in Kashmir with the minimum temperature dropping across the Valley to stay several notches below the freezing point on Sunday. The weather has remained dry and cold across Kashmir since the snowfall on December 12, with the night temperature staying sev-

eral degrees below the freezing point. The MeT office has forecast light rain or snow in the Kashmir Valley over the next three days. The officials said Srinagar - the summer capital of Jammu & Kashmir - recorded a low of minus 5.2 degrees Celsius - down from the previous night's minus 3.7 degrees Celsius. Gulmarg in north Kashmir recorded a low of minus 7.2 degrees Celsius - down from minus 6.5 degrees Celsius the previous night. It was the coldest recorded place in the Valley.

Churk in Sonbhadra district in UP, was the coldest place with a minimum temperature of 2.6 degrees Celsius. Northern parts of Saurashtra and Kutch is also likely to experience cold wave conditions on December 28-29. Mount Abu, the only hill station of Rajasthan, was recorded the coldest place in the State at 2 degrees Celsius even as several places saw an increase of two-three notches in night temperatures.

## UP GOVT BANS DISPLAY OF 'CASTE' STICKERS ON VEHICLES

caste identity depends on the party in power. With the Yogi Adityanath government in power, it is now common for people to flaunt 'Kshatriya', 'Thakur' or 'Rajput' as stickers on their vehicles. The Transport department order was issued after instructions from the PMO.

Official said on Sunday that the PMO took cognisance of the matter after getting a letter from Harshal Prabhu, who is a teacher in Maharashtra.

Prabhu wrote the letter on IGSR, an integrated system designed for redressal of grievances. Prabhu said the display of such stickers was a threat to the social fabric of the society. The PMO took note of the letter and forwarded it to the Uttar Pradesh government, after which a drive was launched.

According to a survey by the enforcement team of the Transport department, every 20th vehicle is found carrying caste sticker. The practice of people displaying their caste identities on vehicles initially began during the Samajwadi Party regime when writing 'Yadav' on the vehicles was

considered a status symbol.

Vehicles with 'Jatav' stickers became more visible during the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) rule even as such vehicles can be spotted even today in some districts, especially in western Uttar Pradesh.

## CONG READIES TO ELECT NEXT PARTY CHIEF IN VIRTUAL POLLS

A CEA member quoted explained the panel is expected to wind up the organisational polls by February-end as per the deadline to inform the Election Commission of the completion of the process. He said that in view of the Covid-19 pandemic, the CEA has decided to restrict the electoral college to AICC members only. "We will not include the co-opted members this time. So, the electoral college will have around 800 members only," he added.

The CEA member said that the digital IDs of the AICC members are almost ready to enable the panel to hold a virtual session in case it is difficult to have the physical presence for such a convention due to Covid-19.

Moreover, according to sources, hectic parleys have begun for a possible takeover of the UPA by NCP supremo Sharad Pawar as chairperson in place of Sonia Gandhi. Shiv Sena which is part of Congress NCP alliance Government in Maharashtra too has backed Sharad Pawar's candidacy for UPA chairperson.

## SARADHA TAINTED FIRM'S SALARIES PAID FROM CM RELIEF FUND: CBI TO SC

The CBI cited the High Court order which ordered that the "salary of the employees should be paid from the available funds" and it nowhere states that employees of a private TV channel can be paid out of State funds collected in the name of Chief Minister's relief work."The Court order expressly states that the employees are to be paid out of the funds of the company.

The payments from CM Relief Fund,

ex-facie point towards a larger conspiracy and nexus," said the application.

Pointing the needle of suspicion at Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in the scam, the CBI said: "Communication between the CBI and State Authorities will show that there has been a concerted effort to evade, avoid and to escape the process of law and a conscious effort on part of the authorities to scuttle the investigation."The CBI pointed at the examination of former Rajya Sabha MP Kunal Kumar Ghosh, one of the accused in the case, by Enforcement Directorate during October 2013 revealed that the Chief Minister and promoter of Saradha Group - Sudipta Sen, had very good relationship."It is submitted that the same establishes that the Chief Minister used to talk to Sudipta Sen using phone of Kunal Kumar Ghosh," said the application.

The investigating agency said the call detail record of two numbers of Sen spanning for one year reveals that he and Ghosh had contacted 298 times on one number and 9 times on another number. Seeking custodial interrogation of former Kolkata Police Commissioner Rajiv Kumar, the CBI said investigation has also revealed that evidence, which connected the ruling dispensation of West Bengal, financially and otherwise with Saradha group of companies was concealed by the Bidhannagar police under stewardship of Kumar, in order to shield and save everyone concerned.

Ghosh's examination as witness by the Enforcement Directorate, during October 2013, revealed that respondent Kumar was in active contact with officers of ED during the course of examination of arrested accused persons, Sudipta Sen, Debjani Mukherjee or of witnesses Ghosh and others carried out by the Enforcement Directorate during September to November 2013.

"It was ensured by the officials that grave facts narrated by these accused persons or witnesses must not be taken on record as part of investigation with a purpose to shield the influential persons," said the CBI. The CBI said more evidence has emerged substantiating further the active connivance of Kumar, the then Commissioner of Police, Bidhannagar, in

shielding and protecting the influential co-accused persons who had promoted the illegal business activities of the group of Ponzi companies and benefited from the illegally collected funds. The CBI also cited examination of Safiqur Rehman, an employee of Saradha group of companies. "It is submitted that as per the said statement (by Rehman), when the Chief Minister, West Bengal contested for MLA seat, Sudipta Sen was forced to sponsor all the Pujas of Bhawanipur, Kolkata. Rehman further stated that 'jangalmahal' project was flagged off by Chief Minister, West Bengal in a ceremony held at Writers Building, Kolkata," said the application. In 2013, during Kumar's tenure as the Bidhannagar police commissioner, the scam was unearthed. Kumar was part of the SIT set up by state government to probe the scam, before the top court handed over the investigation to CBI in 2014. The top court, in November last year, had sought the response of the IPS officer on the CBI's appeal against the anticipatory bail granted to Kumar in the case by the Calcutta High Court.

## CENTRE EXTENDS VALIDITY OF DL, RC TILL MAR 31

A bench of Justices Siddharth Mridul and Talwant Singh said the Delhi government should not create panic among the citizens which would make some people take advantage of the situation.

The court also said that advertising the requirement for stickers and HSRP by the Delhi government in August this year "was not the ideal time

## WE SAW SPIRIT OF AATMANIRBHAR BHARAT IN 2020, CLAIMS MODI

India has seen a 60 per cent rise in the leopard population between 2014-2018. In 2014, the leopard population in India was around 7,900. This rose to 12,852 in 2019. Their population has increased in most parts of the country, especially in Central India," Modi said.

## RCP Singh becomes new JD(U) president

**Patna:** Bureaucrat-turned politician Ram Chandra Prasad Singh, better known by his initials RCP, owes his rise to become the president of the Janata Dal (United) to Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

Singh, a close confidant of Kumar, was on Sunday chosen as the new president of the JD(U).

At the party's national executive meeting, Kumar proposed the name of Singh for the top post and it was then approved by other members.

The chief minister, who was re-elected as the JD(U) president in 2019 for three years, gave up the post in favour of Singh, its leader in the Rajya Sabha.

The man who prefers to keep a low profile was so far the general secretary (organisation) of the regional party.

The 1984 batch IAS officer of Uttar Pradesh cadre has been with Kumar since his stint as the Railway minister in the government led by late Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

When Kumar returned to the Bihar politics becoming chief minister in November 2005, Singh too came to his native state and became Principal Secretary to the CM.

Months before retirement from service, he quit the job and joined politics in 2010. Kumar soon made him a member of the Rajya Sabha and he continues to be part of the Upper House of Parliament.

A man of a few words, Singh loves to stay in the shadow of his master (Kumar) with whom he shares not only the Kurmi caste affiliation but also close personal bondage.

With the JD(U) passing through hard times losing its "elder brother" status to the BJP in the NDA in Bihar after not faring well in the recently concluded assembly election, the task is cut out for the 62-year-old Singh to strengthen the organisation as well as deal astutely with the saffron party.

The JD(U) could win only 43 seats in the Bihar polls, down from 71 in the last elections held in 2015. The BJP, on the other hand, bagged 74 seats to help the NDA retain power in the state. **PTI**



## Trend Slazer

### Vijay urges to keep masks on

Actor **VIJAY VARMA** reiterated the importance of wearing masks in a new video he has posted for fans on Instagram.

In the video, Vijay wears several masks and then removes them one by one. Using subtitles on the clip, he says, "I know, I know but there is still no excuse."

"Uncomfortable, itchy or hot... Mask is always on! #wearitright," he wrote as caption for the video.

The actor is currently basking on the success of season 2 of *Mirzapur*, where he was seen playing a double role as twins.

Vijay currently has a following of over 674k followers on Instagram and on Twitter he enjoys a following of 36.9k.



**'While we were shooting for a song in Lucknow for Khuda Haafiz in the middle of the street, (co-**

**star) Shivaleeka (Oberoi) and I were supposed to be on a bike and the camera was chasing us. There were hundreds of bikes all around us wanting to just say hello, it was difficult to shoot, but that's the vibe of India and that is what I really enjoyed.'**

**—Vidyut Jammwal**

Actor **JANHVI**

**KAPOOR** who played the title role in the biopic *Gunjan Saxena: The Kargil Girl* earlier this year, says the film helped her understand herself better as an actress.



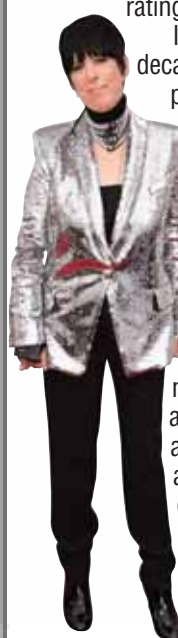
"Through this film, I've understood myself better as an actor. It's given me a different sense of confidence and, maybe it's because of the impact Gunjan madam's story and resilience has had on me. I have learned to enjoy the process of growth. I have always wanted to do memorable work and touch people's lives because I know how much cinema has touched my life," she said.

### 'I love working with new artistes'

Singers like Celine Dion, Cher, Beyonce, Lady Gaga, Demi Lovato and Justin Bieber have breathed life into her words. Veteran American songwriter **DIANE WARREN** says she is working with some of the best artistes in the world, and that she loves collaborating with new talent.

In her nearly four-decade career, she has penned songs for some of the greatest singers.

Asked how different it is to team with young artistes, Warren said, "I just think that I am working with another singer. It's no different. A great artiste is a great artiste whether they are 20 or 40 years old. I love working with new and forthcoming artistes — keeps it fun and fresh."



# LESSONS OF 2020

With a tough year coming to a close, a few fashion designers share their biggest takeaways both personally and professionally.

By **TEAM VIVA**

The year has overturned our lives in the most unforeseen manner. There were numerous difficulties to survive and tough lessons to be learned; we can at least find a bit of solace in the knowledge that these challenging times have led to personal growth. Below, a few fashion designers share their biggest takeaways from this unusual year.

Designer Asha Gautam says, "This year will always be remembered in history for various reasons. We can't ever take the pain, suffering and losses that people across the globe suffered due to COVID-19 and at the same time it also taught us a lot of things. We started valuing life more, we spent more time with family, we valued environment more, we all became tech literate and valued the importance of being a responsible consumer."

"I can only say about myself and I did learn the entire above very well and also changed a few things of how I look at my work now. Being an ardent lover of craft, especially Indian handmade textiles, I was worried on what will happen to it as the weddings and occasions were getting confined and due to social distancing the demand was surely going to take a hit. We did speak to a few clients, especially whose weddings were due in 2020 and took feedbacks. The response was mix and lot of weddings that were scheduled for April happened in July with restrictions. The next dates were in November and everyone was clueless as to how many weddings will happen and of what nature," adds she.

Once the lockdown got over and clients started coming, Asha realised that at least some weddings will happen. One takeaway came from the shopping pattern where many families preferred heritage pieces than FAD's and it was a delight to see the value heirloom pieces still have on Indian consumers. "Though we always believed in it but the response was reassuring. This is not only a takeaway but a lesson for life that no matter what, our roots will always play an



important role in our life. Similarly our Indian textiles (handmade) will also make an important role in wedding wear irrespective of what happens in the global fashion scene," says she.

Asha says that though the demand was picking up but it was nowhere near and there was still a lot of sluggishness.

"Then we started to introspect as to what all can be done. No inter-state travel was happening, no NRI clients coming, plus limited gathering was making a huge impact. This made us go back to the drawing board and think as to how to connect with more clients. We always had a reservation of luxury selling on e-

commerce but slowly we realised that the clients want to connect virtually. They were doing video calls, asking for images and sending queries on Instagram, which made us do something we never thought i.e. starting an e-store. We started working on it in June and by July end, we completed it with all the old



images. Yes, the use of technology does help and now we are able to bridge a gap between us and the consumer, irrespective of the location," shares she. Now, they are able to get in touch with their old clients who stopped coming due to location issues.

This step also made the designers learn marketing better. They were able to identify that there is a pattern, price and product segmentation, which happens when one is doing e-commerce. "Student for life" is something I always live by and is happening now in a big way. We realised how there is a demarcation of product and price with different age groups, how a millennial engages on social media and how a mother of the bride still prefers to wear the saree before buying. The phrase 'quarantine wedding' has changed the pattern of ornamentation and use of textiles as well. The magic of a NRI bride doing a video call, seeing the entire collection, taking suggestion and also approving designs is really amazing. The digital integration also helped us in expanding our design portfolio as we introduced our prêt collection of kurtas which was overdue," Asha says.

"The response has been phenomenal and now we are adding more affordable segments keeping intact our love for crafts. Our vision is to make Indian crafts a significant part of global fashion and with the e-store, we can see that happening sooner or later. We also want to market our textiles digitally and make it reach to a larger audience. The time we got was after five years of no holiday and this made us also realise the potential, the collaborations and the relationships we have made which we can leverage out. The emergence of the new possible market has also made us develop designs which are not geographical bound and the creative team is rejoicing more," adds the designer.

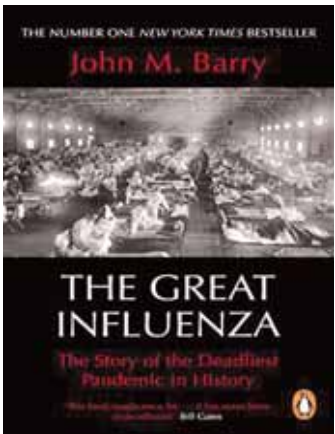
"Past four months a lot has changed in terms of mindset, design development techniques, positioning and undoubtedly, these have been a big takeaway," says Asha.

For designer Leena Singh, pandemic came as a teacher. "We have begun to appreciate the smallest blessings. I feel like the biggest lesson I have got is to live in the present and not worry about the future. Today, everything is so terribly in the air and no one knows when will we find normalcy again. This year, I also came up with my new collection *Ummi Rabab*, which is a tribute to *karigars* who were struggling and trying to cope with the changes this pandemic has brought to all our lives. Our brand Ashima Leena tried to support them in every possible way and stands in solidarity and in gratitude towards them. As we face challenges, we are also given an opportunity to re-invent, re-imagine new and improved ways of working. I feel whenever there will be a challenge or obstacle, we will find ways again and again to face them and work around them. It is imperative to support one another in difficult times like these," shares Leena.

Well, certainly, this year established itself as a teacher to the entire world.

# For all tastes and moods

For avid readers, confined to homes and deprived of opportunities of external sources of leisure, it was a dream opportunity to work through pending piles and acquire fresh material. Here's an insight into reading habits of 2020

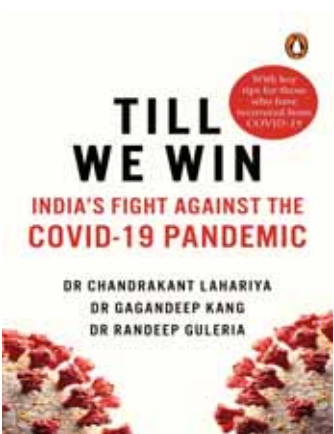


Lahariya, Dr Gagandeep Kang, and AIIMS Director Dr Randeep Guleria.

But with the virus mutating into new variations and universal vaccination still a long way off, the last word on coronavirus is still to be said. But some signposts can be found in Fareed Zakaria's *10 Lessons for the Post-Pandemic World* and the prolific Kiran Manral's *Raising Kids with Hope and Wonder in Times of a Pandemic and Climate Change*.

The coveted Nobel Prize for Literature was won by American poet Louise Glück, who draws on classical mythology, family life and nature in her precise and spare rendition of certain traumatic facets of the human conditions such as pain and loss — both personal and public — but also longing and self-realisation, while the Booker went to debutant Scottish-American writer Douglas Stuart's *Shuggie Bain*, a semi-autobiographical story of a young boy maintaining a fraught relationship with his alcoholic mother.

The world of literature was also left poorer with a galaxy of veterans bidding adieu including controversial English philosopher and writer Roger Scruton, 75, British academician Christopher Tolkien, 95, the son of the great fantasy novelist JRR Tolkien and the one who drew the maps for *The Lord of the Rings*,



American *Queen of Suspense* Mary Higgins Clark, 92, Clive Cussler, 88, known for the *Dirk Pitt* series of marine adventures, Urdu poet Rahat Indori, 70, Hindi poet Manglesh Dabral, 72, Soviet/Russian writer and satirist Mikhail Zhvanetsky, 86, British spy novelist John le Carré, 89, and Urdu author and literary critic Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, 85, known for his penetrating analysis of the poetry of Mir Taqi Mir.

Some of the year's notable offerings included former US President Barack Obama's *A Promised Land*, an account of his eventful first term, J.K. Rowling's non-Harry Potter world *The Ickabog*, a cautionary fairy tale about inept leadership and demonisation of the 'enemy', Hari Kunzru's *The Red Pill* and the irrepressible Moni Mohsin's *The Impeccable Integrity of Ruby R*, but there was much more.

While it is virtually impossible to make a list of books that could even approach a representative section let satisfy each palate, some suggestions/recommendations in various genres can be attempted.

In non-fiction, there is astrophysicist Janna Levin's *Black Hole Survival Guide*, which not only seeks to demystify one of most perplexing celestial objects, but also shows the unflattering role of humans in the cosmos, Tim Harford's *How to Make the World*

*Add Up: Ten Rules for Thinking Differently About Numbers*, an engaging guide to avoid getting bamboozled by statistics, and Michiko Kakutani's *Ex Libris*, a personalised introduction to 100 key books, old and new, for those without inclination/opportunity to read the originals in full.

On the humanities side, Richard Eaton's *India in the Persianate Age: 1000-1765* seeks to show how the country's pre-colonial history was not a binary construct as long politically propagated, Anne Appelbaum's self-explanatory but disturbing *Twilight of Democracy: The Failure of Politics and the Parting of Friends*, and the very vital *Bad News: Why We Fall for Fake News* by Rob Brotherton, who's earlier *Suspicious Minds* explained why conspiracy theories have a receptive audience.

In fiction, consider Curtis Sittenfeld's *Rodham: What if Hillary hadn't married Bill?* exploring this tantalising premise, Mieko Kawakami's *Breasts and Eggs*, an account of the female life experience (and commodification thereof), and former ISI chief Lt Gen Asad Durrani's *Honour Among Spies*, about the dangers of asking inconvenient questions about issues the establishment would prefer to be forgotten.

For aficionados of whodunits, two authors take them to places which were long ripe for the genre - Mark McCrum in *The Festival Murders* (literary festivals) and Kiran Manral in *The Kitty Party Murder*. For a rarely-invoked locale, there is Sujata C. Sabnis' *Blood on the Sands*, set in Kutch.

If Rick Riordan, whose finale to *Trials of Apollo* series came out or even Roshani Chokshi's *Aru Shah* series (third out now) are not to your taste, Anuja Chandramouli, who has a penchant for a lyrical but contemporary refashioning of Indian mythology, had *Mohini: The Enchantress*.

We can only hope that 2021 is as abundant.

## WEBBED



**TANDAV**

*Tandav* is the coming together of different worlds under the gamut of politics. It is a dramatic take of the powerplay between people at the highest level where they get overthrown by others to secure their positions. Young and forthcoming student politicians are also featured and we get to see where their future is headed in this dark abyss of politics. It releases on January 15 on Amazon Prime.



**ONE NIGHT IN MIAMI**

*One Night in Miami* is a fictional account of one incredible night where icons Muhammad Ali, Malcolm X, Sam Cooke and Jim Brown gathered discussing their roles in the civil rights movement and cultural upheaval of the 60s. It releases on January 15 on Amazon Prime.



**PIECES OF A WOMAN**

A heartbreaking home birth leaves a woman grappling with the profound emotional fallout, isolated from her partner and family by a chasm of grief. It releases on January 7 on Netflix.



# INHALE POSITIVITY

As kids spend more time indoors, help them start yoga at an early age as it ensures overall well-being and builds a healthy environment to grow physically, mentally and spiritually

Just like tiny saplings require proper sunlight, good soil and a healthy environment in order to grow into big, strong trees, similarly, children need proper nutrition and nourishment for both, the body and mind to grow to become a wholesome individual. Yoga with its ancient and traditional knowledge is a powerful tool to mould the child from a primitive stage. With the help of yoga, you can impact a young mind positively. It is a holistic tool through its various practises of yoga *asanas*, *pranayama*, chanting, meditation etc. It enhances physical health; improves mental well-being and guides the child onto an upward path of goodness.

## IMPROVED PHYSICAL HEALTH

The dynamic process of yoga gives you innumerable physical benefits. *Asanas* or postures are practised with awareness on breath. This boosts immunity, builds concentration, while making the body strong and flexible. Postures stimulate the central nervous system, endocrine system, circulatory system, respiratory, cardiovascular and digestive system etc. Therefore, yoga plays a very strong role for the overall physical development of the child. Some of the flows that can be practised for good physical health include *Surya Namaskar*, *Chandra Namaskar*, *Vayu Namaskar*, *Jal Namaskar* and *Prithvi Namaskar* etc.

## KEEPS AWAY STRESS AND ANXIETY

Meditation and *pranayama* techniques have a calming effect on the child's brain. When yoga is performed regularly it can eliminate stress. This in turn improves learning, and also increases the ability to retain knowledge. *Pranayama* channels energies towards positivity which increases a child's academic and behavioural performance. *Bhastrika pranayama*, *Anulom Vilom*, *Kapal Bhati*, *Brahmari pranayama* are some of the breathing techniques that can be done.

### Steps to do *Brahmari Pranayama*:

- ❑ Sit in any comfortable pose (such as *Sukhasana*, *Ardhapadmasana* or *Padmasana*).
- ❑ Straighten your back and close your eyes.
- ❑ Place your palms on your knees facing up (in *Prapthi Mudra*).
- ❑ Place your thumbs on the 'Tragus', the external flap outside on your ear.
- ❑ Place your index finger on your forehead; your middle finger on the Medial Canthus and ring finger on the corner of your nostril.
- ❑ Then inhale and fill your lungs with air.
- ❑ As you exhale, slowly make a buzz sound like that of a bee.
- ❑ Keep your mouth closed the entire time and feel the vibration of the sound disseminate throughout your body.



## BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

Yoga leads to better class participation and social skills. This is why it is used to manage and treat disabilities such as ADHD/ADD, developmental and cognitive delays, down syndrome and specific learning disabilities such as dyslexia. It synchronises brain waves between the different parts of the brain which induces relaxation. This affects a child's intelligence and creativity as it stimulates thinking capacity and mental energy.

## IMPROVED CONCENTRATION AND MEMORY

Mediation and even certain *asanas* can help children build their focus. For example, *Tratak* meditation done on a flame, sun, and moon or on a black dot can be beneficial. It is recommended that children practise specific *asanas* such as *Bakasana*, *Chakrasana*, *Shirshasana*, *Dhanurasana* etc.

Here are a few yoga postures that are recommended to improve his/her concentration.

### *BAKASANA*

#### Formation of the posture

- ❑ Begin with *samasthithi*.
- ❑ Lean forward and place your palms flat

in front of your feet but slightly away from them.

- ❑ Your fingers should point forward, spread apart.
- ❑ Bend your elbows slightly and place your knees just below your armpits.
- ❑ Lean forward in such a way that all your body weight shifts to your arms.
- ❑ Find your balance and slowly lift both your feet off the ground. Bring your feet together.
- ❑ Straighten your arms as much as possible.
- ❑ Focus at a point and hold this *asana* for a while.

## FUN WITH *ASANAS*

*Yoga asanas* are influenced by nature making them easy to remember. Postures have names such as dog, cat, cow, crocodile, crane, crow, eagle, lion etc. There are also *asanas* to represent trees, lotus, warrior, soldier and many other interesting concepts.

Follow these simple and fun *asanas* and practise them at least thrice a week for minimum 20-30 minutes each.

### *SANTOLANASANA*

#### Formation of the posture

- ❑ Lie on your stomach with your palms under your shoulders.
- ❑ Inhale and lift up your body and keep your knees straight.
- ❑ Bring your knees, pelvis and spine into one straight line.
- ❑ Place your wrists below your shoulders

without bending your arms.

### *VRIKSHASANA*

#### Formation of the posture

- ❑ Begin in *samasthithi*.
- ❑ Lift and place your right foot on your left inner thigh as close to your groin as possible.
- ❑ Balance here.
- ❑ Join your palms in *Pranam Mudra* at your heart *chakra* and slowly lift it up.
- ❑ Repeat with the other leg.

### *PADAHASTHASANA*

#### Formation of the posture

- ❑ Begin in *samasthithi*.
- ❑ Exhale and gently drop your upper body bending forward from the hips.
- ❑ Keep your head, shoulders and neck relaxed.
- ❑ Try to place the palms on either side of your feet.
- ❑ You can bend your knees initially to make this possible.
- ❑ With practise, slowly straighten your knees.

Yoga can play an important role in a child's overall development as it builds a healthy and positive dynamic for the child. It lays a strong foundation for children to grow physically, mentally and spiritually. Help your child start *asanas*, *pranayama* and meditation from an early age as this ensures overall well-being.

(The writer Grand Master Akshar is a yoga master, philanthropist, spiritual guru and lifestyle coach.)



## GOOD VIBES ONLY

This New Year, let us all take a determined step to change our negative attitude and share only positive energy, says

RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

Majority of people across the globe celebrate new year with much fanfare hoping for a better world. With such high hopes and dreams they exchange greetings, party hard and make resolutions to bring about a positive change in their life. Interestingly, new year resolutions also include things like treating people better, making new friends, and paying off debts. It's been so throughout history. The Babylonians would return borrowed objects. Jews seek and offer forgiveness. The Scots go 'first footing', visiting neighbours to wish them well. How does all this social "resolving" connect to survival? Well, we all are social animals. We have evolved to depend on others, literally, for our health and safety. Hence, treating people well is a good way to be treated well.

Over the years New Year celebrations have become more extravagant, unruly and louder. People spend a lot of money to participate in singing, dancing, wining and dining on New Year's Eve and often end up drunk on the very first day of new year. Often these parties make the youth indulge in misbehaviour, dangerous driving and even criminal activities. There's a lot of hype and glamour around this time. There is a frenzy of selling and buying of cards, gifts and entertainment tickets. The news channels churn out yearly reviews and flashbacks, the fortune-tellers have a good time doling out predictions for the anticipatory minds that believe in stars.

Basically, New Year means a lot of memories, dreams and business for different people in the world. If we think about it deeply, does the New Year bring any newness in our lives? We all are very much aware that the world we live in has become old, dilapidated and vicious as we have various problems that seem to have no lasting solution despite all efforts to improve our lives. With so much violence going on in the world do we really have any good reason to celebrate the onset of another year? Practically speaking, only when we give up our old habits, attitudes and behaviour and wear a new attitude of compassion, co-operation, harmony and respect, can we expect a new era to begin. Before that really happens, how can anything be celebrated as new in this old world? It doesn't really make sense. It is like selling old wine in a new bottle because nothing can be truly new as all human souls and elements of nature have become old, impure, weak and destructive. On the contrary, everything in the forthcoming New World will be brand new, wherein not only the traits of human souls will be renewed but also the entire nature and its elements will be rejuvenated to its original pristine quality. There will be nothing of this old world in golden age. Even the human bodies will be pure and pristine — free from any defect or disease.

Remember! the world becomes new only when human souls become completely pure in the present by eliminating the vices and sin within themselves. So, in the coming New Year, let us all take a determined step forward to change our negative attitudes and share only positive energy of peace, joy and love. Let each one of us make a promise to reflect our best in thoughts, words and actions because when we change the world will change.



## Agent of change

In view of the current farmers' protest, child activist NEIL BINOY suggests some policy ideas to make farming a more attractive and rewarding occupation

A few days back, the visuals of teenage girls pulling the ploughs, were all over the internet and media. Being a teenager myself, the visuals still reverberate and haunt me.

The state of the children in a country portrays the state of the society they live in. It is important to address how national or international issues affect the lives of children and youth of a country.

The new farm laws have stirred up hotbeds of controversy, bringing up various issues across the country. Laws meant to 'improve' farmers' lives have ended up causing them to protest. Across the country, we see farmers marching to major cities to protest.

What has forced them to resort to such extreme measures? Well, here are some reasons:

- ❖ Many farmers fear that the removal of the APMCs will force them to sell their crops to corporates for prices far below.
- ❖ Agitations of farmers over the past few years, like rejected insurance claims, droughts, undervaluation of crops, and corruption, have piled up.
- ❖ The nerfing of the Minimum Support Price, so that the full MSP will not be paid was the final straw. It is important for us to look at a farmer with the same dignity with which we see other professions such as law, teaching, etc. To bring this about, we need to educate our newer generations as well



as the existing farmers.

I would like to propose three policy ideas for the government to make farming a more attractive, rewarding occupation.

❖ Farming and agricultural studies should be added to the school curriculum.

❖ Farming should be a compulsory subject at a primitive level. The younger generations must learn about agriculture properly since they are better equipped with technology. The combination of novel technology with older, more traditional methods could be

effective.

❖ Awards should be instituted from the national level to school level.

❖ Like the mandatory solar panel system, a terrace garden should be made mandatory. If 10 square feet of ground is enough to produce a

meal for one family, one terrace can be used to produce meals for a family throughout the year. This would inculcate a farming culture and will also enhance food quality. In metropolitan cities like Delhi, Mumbai and beyond, this could help reduce pollution and the effect of soaring heat.

As Booker T. Washington said, "No race can prosper until it learns there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem."

Finally, the book for the fortnight: It would be Barack Obama's *A Promised Land*. Altogether, an excellently woven autobiography, detailing his life and trials in his journey as the President of America. It has a very friendly feel, as though he's there, talking to us in person, and inspiring the reader that anyone could dream to become a global leader.

(The writer is a teenage activist and founder of Voice of Kids. He is also a winner of international prizes in creative writing and English Olympiad.)

If life were predictable it would cease to be life, and be without flavour.

—Eleanor Roosevelt

## AI-DRIVEN SENSOR CAN MONITOR SEROTONIN

Scientists have devised an artificial intelligence (AI)-designed sensor that can help monitor serotonin transmission in the brain under more natural conditions, thus helping address sleep disorders and mental health in the future.

Serotonin is a neurochemical that plays a critical role in the way the brain controls our thoughts and feelings.

In an article in *Cell*, the US National Institutes of Health (NIH)-funded researchers described how they used advanced genetic engineering techniques to transform a bacterial protein into a new research tool that may help monitor serotonin transmission with greater fidelity than current methods.

The researchers used machine learning (ML) algorithms to help a computer "think up" 250,000 new designs. Initial experiments suggested that the new sensor reliably detected serotonin at different levels in the brain while having little or no reaction to other neurotransmitters or similarly shaped drugs.



## CASUAL SMOKERS MAY HAVE NICOTINE ADDICTION

Even if you consider yourself a light or "casual" smoker, it does not necessarily mean that you have completely escaped nicotine addiction, warns new research.

Many light smokers — those who smoke one to four cigarettes per day or fewer — meet the criteria for nicotine addiction and should therefore be considered for treatment, said the study published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

"In the past, some considered that only patients who smoke around 10 cigarettes per day or more were addicted, and I still hear that sometimes," said Jonathan Foulds, Professor at Pennsylvania State University in the US.

He added, "But this study demonstrates that many lighter smokers, even those who do not smoke every day, can be addicted to cigarettes. It also suggests that we need to be more precise when we ask about cigarette smoking frequency."



## WOMEN SUFFER MORE DUE TO COVID ISOLATION

Women are suffering more than men with poorer sleep and more anxiety, depression and trauma, while also feeling more empathetic than men during months of isolation due to COVID-19, says a new study.

The findings, published in *Frontiers in Global Women's Health*, suggest sex and gender differences may play a role in psychological and behavioural reactions to the pandemic.

These differences need to be considered in planning targeted psychological interventions, the researchers said.

For the study, the researchers examined data from 573 participants, 112 men and 459 women with a mean age of 25.9 years, in Canada.

At the time of the online survey, schools and many businesses were closed, and people stayed home as much as possible as part of a general lock down to prevent transmission of the virus.



## HIGHER MEAT INTAKE LINKED TO ASTHMA

Dietary habits established earlier in life may be linked to potentially the future development of asthma as a new research has found that substances present in cooked meats are associated with increased wheezing in children.

Their study, published in the journal *Thorax*, highlights pro-inflammatory compounds called advanced glycation end-products (AGEs) as an example of early dietary risk factors that may have broad clinical and public health implications for the prevention of inflammatory airway disease.

"Research identifying dietary factors that influence respiratory symptoms in children is important, as these risks are potentially modifiable and can help guide health recommendations," said senior study author Sonali Bose, Assistant Professor at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City.



## FULL BLOOD COUNT CAN PREDICT CORONA

A full blood count of COVID-19 patients predicts fairly accurately whether the infection will have a complicated course or not, says a new study.

Such predictions can make it easier for healthcare providers to estimate the expected clinical picture.

This study, conducted in eleven hospitals, was published in the journal *eLife*.

"By using certain techniques, the character of certain blood cells can be better determined and by using these new techniques, we have been able to develop a reliable prognostic score," said principal investigator Andre van der Ven of Radboud University Medical Center in the Netherlands.

"This score gives a good insight into whether a serious course of events can be expected and can help healthcare professionals to make treatment decisions."





# THE WAIT IS OVER

Despite a brief interruption due to Corona-enforced beak, football did manage to conjure some moments of lasting relevance in 2020. From Liverpool ending their 30 years Premier League title wait to Lionel Messi expressing his desire to leave Barca. PIONEER SPORT takes a look at some of the biggest moments from football

## CHAMPIONS OF ENGLAND

The 30-year wait is over. Liverpool is champion of England again.

Liverpool clinched its first league title since 1990 on June 25, ending an agonizing title drought without the players even having to take the field.

Instead, the Premier League crown was secured when Chelsea beat second-place Manchester City 2-1, a result that meant City could no longer catch Liverpool with seven games remaining.

Overall Jurgen Klopp led Liverpool win 32 matches from 38 fixtures, in a strange 352-day long Premier League season.

For the city of Liverpool, this has been a party three decades in the making, and even the restrictions caused by the coronavirus failed to prevent fans from gathering to celebrate outside Anfield.

After a dominant campaign that was interrupted by the coronavirus pandemic, Liverpool became England's earliest-ever champion — and the latest. No team since the inception of the country's league system in 1888 has clinched the title with seven games remaining. And no team has been crowned Premier League champion in June.

The title itself had hardly been in doubt since December, with Klopp's team quickly building a massive lead with a rampant attacking style of play.

For a while, though, it seemed the coronavirus could still prevent Liverpool from ending its drought.

The club was 25 points clear when the



Liverpool captain Jordan Henderson lifts Premier League trophy as players celebrate after the Merseyside club was crowned 2019-20 champions of English top-flight league

league was abruptly halted in March as the country was forced into lockdown to contain the spread of Covid-19.

## LEEDS BACK IN BIG TIME



Leeds United were promoted to the Premier League after winning the 2019-20 Championship title and ended their 16-year exile from the top-flight. Premier League football returns to Elland Road in 2020-21 season as Marcelo Bielsa's side renew old rivalries with Manchester United and Chelsea.

## BAYERN 5 TROPHIES

Bayern Munich participated in five competitions in 2020-21 season — Bundesliga, DFB Pokal, UEFA Champions



League, UEFA Super League and DFL-Supercup and won all five. Polish striker Robert Lewandowski was the star for The Bavarians during the entire duration and won individual honours which includes UEFA and FIFA men's player of the year.

## CRISIS IN BARCELONA



For the first time since 2007-08 season, Barcelona failed to win any silverware in the entire season. After losing La Liga title to Real Madrid, Catalan club suffer embarrassing 2-8 defeat against Bayern Munich in one-legged Champions League quarter-final. They also sacked two coaches — Ernesto Valverde and Quique Setien.

## MESSI SURPASSES PELE' FEAT

Lionel Messi beat Pele's record of goals for a single club when he scored his 644th for Barcelona in a 3-0 win over Valladolid in La Liga clash on December 22.

## END OF MESSI AT BARCA?

Lionel Messi who is at Barcelona from his youth career days, openly wanted to leave Camp Nou in the summer and was only stopped in the end by the threat of prolonged legal battle.

He has since then been linked to potential moves to Manchester City and Paris Saint-Germain after end of his current deal in 2021 summer.

## 5 SUBSTITUTES

Football teams were allowed to use five substitutes when play resumed after the coronavirus pandemic. The International Football Association Board agreed to a proposal by FIFA for a temporary change to the rules "to protect player welfare".

## KOLKATA DERBY IN ISL

India's two most decorated football



clubs Mohun Bagan and East Bengal move to Indian Super League making India's top

tier league 11 team competition. While Mohun Bagan merged with three-time champions ATK, East Bengal found new identity with SC East Bengal.

## NO BALLON D'OR

For the first time since its creation in 1956, Ballon d'Or was cancelled in 2020 because of the coronavirus pandemic's impact. The award, presented by France Football, is given to the best player each year, counting club and international play.



## EURO 2020 IN 2021 NOW

The European championship, due to be played in June and July in 2020, was postponed until 2021 because of the pandemic. UEFA said the new proposed dates for the tournament were June 11 to July 11 next year, but despite being postponed it will continue to be called Euro 2020.

## PRODIGAL SON RETURNS

In the summer transfer window of 2020-21 season, Real Madrid's Welsh winger Gareth Bale makes surprise loan move to his former Premier League side Tottenham Hotspur, seven years after leaving them to play for Spanish giants.

Other prominent summer moves include Timo Werner and Kavi Havertz leaving Bundesliga to shift base at Stamford Bridge. David Silva's decade old stay at Etihad comes to an end as he makes a move back to Spain to play for Real Sociedad.

2014 World Cup Golden boot winner James Rodriguez makes permanent move to Everton, Bruno Fernandes & Edinson Cavani joined Manchester United, Luis Suarez, Arturo Vidal and Ivan Rakitic exit Barca for Atletico Madrid, Inter Milan and Sevilla respectively.

Former Bayern Munich winger Arjen Robben makes return from retirement to play for FC Groningen.

# Stand & Deliver

## Rahane leads way with century to put India in driver's seat

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Ajinkya Rahane played a captain's knock, a workmanlike century that steered India into a dominant position and took the sting out of Australia's potent bowling attack in the second Test here on Sunday.

Trailing 0-1 in the four-match series, India ended the second day at 277 for five for a handy 82-run lead after bowling out Australia for 195 at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

At stumps, which was brought early owing to rain, Rahane was going strong on 104 and giving him company was Ravindra Jadeja on 40, the two having added what might prove to be a game-changing 104-run partnership for the sixth wicket.

This was Rahane's 12th Test hundred and his second at the iconic venue, after a fine 147 during the 2014 tour.

A day after earning rich praise for his tactical acumen while marshalling the bowlers, Rahane shone bright with the bat and was spot on with his reading of match situations during his stay in the middle.

He got a life when Steve Smith dropped him on 73 at second slip in Australia's first over with the second new ball, the unlucky bowler being Mitchell Starc, who was taken off the attack after just two overs with the shining red cherry.

That particular phase was crucial from both the team's point of view and by not losing a wicket to the second new ball, India ensured they finished the day ahead of Australia, in terms of runs as well as psychologically.

Rahane got another reprieve when substitute fielder Travis Head put one down after diving forward from gully, but that was after he had got to the three-figure mark.

To start with, Rahane was more watchful that he had ever



India's captain Ajinkya Rahane celebrates after scoring his 12th Test century as teammate Ravindra Jadeja congratulates him on second day of 2nd Test against Australia at Melbourne Cricket Ground on Sunday

been but as the day progressed, he went on to play some sumptuous shots and one of his day's best was the classic off-drive against Pat Cummins.

Australian speedster Mitchell Starc rued the chances his team squandered.

"It (the knock by Rahane) was pretty good. He absorbed some pressure there and sort of steadied the ship for them, at (a time) when they were still behind our score," the Australian pacer said.

"He (Rahane) has batted really well there, he took his chances and we probably could have got him out three or four or maybe five times before he got a hundred, but he's run his luck there and scored a good hundred. Well done to him."

Earlier, Rishabh Pant (29) and Hanuma Vihari (21) frittered away promising starts after doing all the hard work, but Jadeja was determined not to do anything of that sort. Vihari fell to off-spinner

Nathan Lyon while trying to sweep him from outside off-stump after he had added 52 runs for the fourth wicket with his captain.

In came Pant and despite the constant scrutiny around him, the wicketkeeper-batsman showed no nerves and confidently went about playing his strokes.

If Rahane managed to blunt the opposition bowlers with his defensive approach before opening up, Pant's aggression forced Australia to change their attacking tactic.

But just when Pant was beginning to pose a treat to the hosts, Starc forced an edge to bring the match back on even keel. It was Paine's 150th dismissal and wicket number 250 for Starc.

The second session saw India score 99 runs after they managed just 54 in the first, during which they also lost two wickets in as many overs to the relentless Cummins.

Resuming on 36 for one, India started cautiously before losing both their overnight batsmen — debutant Shubman Gill and the seasoned Cheteshwar Pujara — in the space of 11 balls to reach 90 for three at lunch.

The 21-year-old Gill impressed on his debut with a fluent 45 and played some fine shots during his 65-ball knock at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. While Pujara made 17, having faced 70 deliveries.

The first to go was Gill, who perished when he edged Cummins for Paine to take a regulation catch behind the stumps.

Australia were soon celebrating again as Cummins picked up the big wicket of Pujara after straightening him up with a brilliant delivery that angled in and moved just enough to induce an edge.

Paine complemented his top fast bowler by completing a fine diving catch.

# Dhoni captains ICC white-ball teams of decade

## Kohli voted skipper of Test side, only player to feature in all 3 teams

PTI ■ DUBAI

The legendary Mahendra Singh Dhoni was on Sunday named captain of ICC's ODI and T20I teams of the decade while Virat Kohli stamped his pre-eminence in world cricket after being voted the skipper of the Test team.

Indians dominated the limited-over teams by having three and four players in the ODI and T20I respectively while England have maximum number of players — four — in the Test side.

The 39-year-old Dhoni, who retired from international cricket earlier this year, was one of the three Indians in the ODI team of the decade, the others being Rohit Sharma and skipper Virat Kohli.

Dhoni has three other compatriots in the T20I team — Rohit, Kohli and Jasprit Bumrah.



Bumrah. Besides being named captain of Test team, Kohli is the only player in the world to have been voted in the teams of the decade in all formats.

The teams of the decades were announced by the ICC ahead of the Awards of the Decade ceremony, to be held in virtual mode on Monday.

The top awards, including ICC male cricketer as well as female cricketer of the decade, men's Test, ODI and T20I cricketers of the decade, women's ODI and T20I cricketers of the decade, will also be announced on Monday.

Kohli is also in the running for four awards in the men's section.

Among women, Harmanpreet Kaur and Poonam Yadav made it to the T20I team of the decade while Mithali Raj and Jhulan Goswami were picked for the ODI team.

The nominees for each of the categories have been determined by the Awards Nominations Committee according to on-field performances and overall achievements for at least five years during the period

## NZ nose ahead with early strike

**MOUNT MAUNGANUI:** Kane Williamson's tireless quest for runs continued on Sunday as he batted New Zealand into a commanding position on the second day of the second Test against Pakistan. Williamson made 129, his 23rd test hundred, and shared century partnerships with Ross Taylor and Henry Nicholls as New Zealand made 431 batting first after losing the toss. At stumps Pakistan was 30-1 after 20 overs with Abid Ali 19 not out and nightwatchman Mohammad Abbas 0. Shan Masood was out for 10 just before stumps, caught down the leg side by wicketkeeper BJ Watling from the bowling of Kyle Jamieson. In his last 10 tests in New Zealand Williamson has made two double centuries, Sunday's century and three fifties. His solidity has been central to New Zealand's recent rise to join Australia on 116 points atop the official world test rankings. Williamson's toughness, his concentration and technical excellence were evident again in his performance on the first two days of the current match in perhaps the toughest conditions New Zealand has faced so far this summer.

## LOCAL EVENTS

### YASH EMERGES WINNER



Yash Verma defeated Anand Gupta 8-5 to win the men's singles title in the Prizemoney Tennis Tournament at Unnad Tennis Academy on Sunday. Gargi Das beat Meenu Pandey to annex the women's title. RTO Akhilesh Dwivedi, Harsha Tripathi and Aditya Tripathi gave away the prizes.

### CHESS

All the seeded players won their first round game with utmost ease in the 4th Shail Bala Memorial Open Chess tournament organised by Precision Chess Academy on Sunday. Top seed Pawan Batham defeated Sanyam Srivastav in Pirc defence while Prithvi Singh won against Manas Tulsani in Bishop's opening, Tanishk Gupta grabbed full point against Akshat Bhatnagar in London system while Aman Agarwal defeated Yash Sailani in Queen's gambit declined. Shivam Pandey, Shani Kumar Soni, Arjun Singh, David Yung, Sanvi Agrawal and Abhigyan Patel also

bagged full points. Earlier, Atul Kumar inaugurated the tournament.

### ELECTRONIC MEDIA WIN

Electronic Media defeated Print Media by six wickets in a friendly match played at KD Singh 'Babu' Stadium on Monday. Batting first, Print Media XI scored 107 runs for the loss of six wickets in the allotted 20 overs. In reply, Electronic Media achieved the target in 18.2 overs for the loss of four wickets.

**BRIEF SCORES:**  
**PM:** 107 (Abhinav 33, Sharadeep 24, Anish 23; Tarun 11/2, Deepak 21/2).  
**EM:** 108 (Kumar Abhishek 34, Satish 16; Anshul 19/2).

