

OPINION 8 TROUBLE IN NEPAL

WORLD 11 BIDEN WARNS OF TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S 'ROADBLOCKS' TO TRANSITION

AVENUES 12 WRAPPING UP 2020

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PROTEAS BEAT SL IN 1ST TEST 14 SPORT

## Strain test for all +ve returnees

Genome sequencing confirms 6 cases; Govt says vaccine effective against all strains

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Caught off guard after six people tested positive for the super-infectious UK strain of the coronavirus on Tuesday, the Government has now decided to conduct genome sequencing on all international passengers who were symptomatic and tested positive for coronavirus in the last 14 days.

The Union Health Ministry has already decided to conduct genome sequencing on 5 per cent of the total Covid positive cases detected daily to check for new variants. Experts feel that the response is too late as it will not be an easy task to trace the 33,000 flyers from the UK who had returned to India during the last one month.

“Many of them must have come into contact with their relatives and others. The contact tracing is going to be a difficult task,” they said amid reports that many UK returnees in India have either switched off their phone numbers or are not available at their residences.

However, the Government assured that the vaccines under development would also work against the mutated pathogen first reported in the UK.

“No need to worry about vaccines. Vaccines will work against the variants detected in the UK and South Africa. There is no evidence that current vaccines will fail to protect



against the new mutant strains,” said Principal Scientific Adviser K VijayRaghavan at a presser here.

At the same time, he said, there is a need to reduce transmission through physical distancing, follow all public health measures scrupulously, wear masks, follow hand-washing, Covid appropriate behaviour, infection control, amplify test, track, isolate efforts.”

The Ministry has so far carried out genome testing of 144 positive Covid samples of which six have been found to be carrying the new variant reported in the UK.

Three samples in NIMHANS of Bengaluru, 2 in CCMB, Hyderabad and 1 in NIV, Pune have been detected out of all the 144 samples tested.

The new variant of the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 that causes Covid-19 is believed to be 71 per cent more transmissible than the other variants, the Hyderabad-based Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) said on Tuesday when India confirmed six cases of the new strain.

The leading research institute has underlined the importance to launch an extensive genome surveillance of the virus to assess the extent of the spread of the new virus.

“We should also keep an eye on other variants that might emerge independently, as India houses the second largest population infected with this virus, at present,” CCMB Director Dr Rakesh Mishra said as per a news agency. The presence of the new

## UK flights suspension likely to be extended

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The temporary suspension of India-UK flights is likely to be extended beyond December 31. Union Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Tuesday said he expected a slight extension of temporary suspension of passenger flights between India and the UK where a new variant of coronavirus has been detected.

“I foresee a slight extension of temporary suspension of India-UK flights. In the next day or two, we will find out if any additional steps need to be taken, or when we can start easing the current temporary suspension,” Puri said while addressing a Press conference.

UK variant of the coronavirus has already been reported by Denmark, the Netherlands, Australia, Italy, Sweden, France, Spain, Switzerland, Germany, Canada, Japan, Lebanon and Singapore so far.

India had last week suspended passenger flights to and from the UK between December 23 and 31, after a growing list of countries like Canada, Germany, France, Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark and Italy did the same due to a more infectious coronavirus variant there. The presence of the new UK variant has already been reported by Denmark, the Netherlands, Australia, Italy, Sweden, and other countries.

India, UK have 67 weekly flights operated by four airlines — Air India, Vistara, British Airways and Virgin Atlantic. Almost 2,000-2,500 passengers fly in daily on these flights.

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done by other nations. But the Government was either apathetic or negligent towards this important measures which it has now decided,” said a doctor from a Government hospital who refused to be named.

The Government said that all the persons with the new variant have been kept in single room isolation in designated healthcare facilities by respective State Governments.

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## Farmers harden stand, set agenda for today's talks

Writes to Centre saying discussion only on modalities to repeal farm laws

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A few hours ahead of the talks between farmers and Government scheduled for Wednesday, protesting farm unions on Tuesday wrote to the Centre, saying the discussion will only be on the modalities of repealing the three legislations, giving a legal guarantee on the MSP, and on two other issues they proposed earlier this week for a resumption of the dialogue.

The Government has invited the protesting farmers for the sixth round of talks on Wednesday.

In its letter on Tuesday, the Samyukt Kisan Morcha, which represents 40 farm unions, said the modalities for repealing the three contentious laws and a legal guarantee on the minimum support price (MSP) must be part of the agenda for the talks.

The Morcha further said the agenda of the meeting should also include amendments to be made and notified in the Commission for the Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Ordinance, 2020 to exclude farmers from its penal provisions.



Farmers listen to BKU spokesperson Rakesh Tikait (unseen) during their protest against the new farm laws at Tikri border in New Delhi on Tuesday PTI

Through the letter, the Morcha also formally accepted the Government's invitation for the dialogue.

The letter also stated that withdrawal of the Electricity Amendment Bill 2020 to protect the interests of farmers should also be part of the agenda for the dialogue.

The farmers had also written to the Government on December 26 listing the agenda for talks.

In the letter, the Morcha said that in its December 26 communication to the Government, it had mentioned “changes” by mistakes instead of “withdrawal” of the Electricity Amendment Bill.

Meanwhile, also on Tuesday the unions deferred to

Thursday their proposed tractor march against the contentious agriculture laws, so that the rally does not clash with their talks with the Government.

Thousands of protesting farmers, mostly from Punjab and Haryana, have been camping at three Delhi border points — Singhu, Ghazipur and Tikri — for the past 31 days, demanding a repeal of three farm laws and legal guarantee for minimum support price.

On Monday, farmer leaders agreed to the government proposal for holding the next round of talks on the new agricultural laws on December 30, but remained firm on their agenda of scrapping the laws.

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## PM inaugurates new stretch of Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor

Allahabad: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday hit out at previous Governments for delaying the Dedicated Freight Corridor project and ignoring modernisation of railways, and said his Government engaged with stakeholders to speed up works and carried out reforms at all levels.

Inaugurating the New Bhaupur-New Khurja section of the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC) via video conferencing, he said the “vibration” and “roar” of Bharat and Aatmanirbhar Bharat were clearly heard as the first freight train ran on the Khurja-Bhaupur freight corridor. Attacking previous government, the prime minister said the project was given permission in 2006 but it was only on paper as the then government lacked the seriousness and urgency with which it had to take it up with the states.

“Till 2014 not a single km track of the project was laid and the funds sanctioned could not be spent properly. After 2014, it was restarted and officials asked to take it forward and by then the budget had

gone up by 11 times,” the prime minister said.

The 351-km section, which has been built at a cost of Rs 5,750 crore, will open new avenues for local industries in Uttar Pradesh.

The EDFC is 1,840-km long and extends from Ludhiana in Punjab to Kolkata in West Bengal.

Modi also inaugurated the EDFC's operation centre at Prayagraj and flagged off the first 1.5 km long goods trains.

The prime minister said that on coming to power, he personally monitored the project and held a dialogue with the stakeholders and got new technology as a result of which about 1100 km work will be completed in the next few months.

Political apathy not just hampered the freight corridor project but also had a bearing on the entire Railways system, he said adding that earlier the focus was on increasing number of trains for political benefit in elections but not on the tracks on which the trains were run as there was no investment on it.

There was no seriousness towards modernisation of the rail network, trains were being run on slow speed and the entire network was full of dangerous unmanned crossings, he said.

“We changed this work culture and thinking after 2014 and ending the separate Railway budget, invested in rail tracks, ended unmanned crossings, focussed on broadening and electrification of the network,” he said.

The Vande Bharat express, the semi high speed train is now being run, he said, adding that now Indian rails are more secure than before. In the past few years reforms have been carried out at all levels and can be seen, he added.

The new freight section will open new vistas of opportunity for local industries such as aluminium industry in Pukhrayan region of Kanpur Dehat, dairy sector of Auraiya, textile production and block printing of Etawah, glassware industry of Firozabad, pottery products of Khurja, asafoetida or ‘heeng’ production of

Continued on Page 11

## IMD's highest centre in Leh to come in handy for military

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) will now provide localised weather forecasts, issue warnings for adverse weather conditions for traffic movement on highways, agriculture, and defence personnel, from its meteorological centre, Leh in Ladakh, having extreme wide-ranging climate and topography.

The centre was virtually inaugurated by Minister for Earth Sciences (MoES) Dr Harsh Vardhan. After Itanagar in Arunachal Pradesh, the Leh centre is the second meteorological centre located in the Himalayas.

This will also help the defence personnel which have been guarding the frontiers of the entire Ladakh region assiduously for the last 70 years, to get better prepared to cope with adverse weather conditions amid China standoff at the Line of Control on western sector.

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## Airbag for passenger in front seat to be must soon: Draft

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Tuesday said it has proposed to make airbag mandatory for the passenger in the front seat of a vehicle. The step is aimed at improving passenger safety in case of accidents.

The Road Transport Ministry has issued a draft notification. The proposed timelines for the implementation of the move is April 1, 2021, for new models and June 1, 2021, for existing models.

“In a significant measure to boost passenger safety, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) proposes to make it mandatory that an airbag be provided for the passenger seated on the front seat of a vehicle, next to the driver,” the Ministry said in a statement.

The addition of a dual front airbags would spell an increase of roughly between ₹10,000 to ₹20,000 in the prices of entry-level versions of the car models.

The MoRTH has planned to implement this norm for all



new models of cars which are manufactured from April 1, 2021, onwards. For the existing units, the date for complying with the new rule is proposed to be June 1, 2021.

Previously, the Government had made having an airbag mandatory for the driver's seat in all cars which came into effect from July 1, 2019.

“Comments/ suggestions are solicited from all stakeholders within a month time,” the draft notification by the MoRTH said.

The draft notification further reads, “Vehicles manufactured on and after 1st Day of

April 2021, in the case of new models, and 1st day of June 2021, in the case of existing models, shall be fitted with airbag for the person occupying the front seat, other than the driver. The requirement for such airbag shall be as per AIS 145...under the Bureau of Indian Standards act, 2016.”

“As of now, only the driver's seat airbag is mandatory for all cars. However, this leaves the passenger in the front seat completely vulnerable to severe injury or even death in case of accidents as they are not protected by the airbag,” said a senior MoRTH official.

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## CAPSULE

### MERCURY DROPS BELOW 3 DEGREES C IN DELHI

New Delhi: Delhi reeled under a cold wave on Tuesday as icy winds sweeping through the city brought the minimum temperature down to 3.6 degrees Celsius, the India Meteorological Department said. The Sadarjung Observatory, which provides representative data for the city, recorded a minimum of 3.6 degrees Celsius and a maximum of 18.1 degrees Celsius, two notches below normal.

### 1,700 ROHINGYAS SENT TO ISOLATED ISLAND

Dhaka: Five Bangladesh navy ships carrying more than 1,700 Rohingya refugees left the southeastern port city of Chittagong on Tuesday for an isolated island where they will be relocated despite concerns among human rights groups about their safety.

### TIBETAN GOVT-IN-EXILE LAUDS TRUMP'S POLICY

Dharamshala: The Tibetan Parliament in exile expressed gratitude to United States President Donald Trump for signing a new Tibet policy.

## Didi storms Bolpur 10 days after Shah rally

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ BOLPUR

Poet Laureate Rabindranath Tagore's Shantiniketan (abode of peace) once again turned into a political theatre less than 10 days after the Union Home Minister Amit Shah held a massive parade at Bolpur in Birbhum district.

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday led an equally impressive roadshow attacking Shah and the BJP for importing “fake politics and hate politics” in the State.

Calling upon the people to “oust the Bargis (Maratha invaders of 18th century were called thus in Bengal) who have come here to generate fake politics, spread hatred and spark riots,” Mamata said, adding, “they have not only smeared the Viswa Bharati campus which was scarcely politicised in the past but they have also not spared even a Nobel laureate and a son of the soil like

Amartya Sen.” A time has come when the people of Bengal were tasked with a duty to “oust the Bargis who are soiling our culture and spoiling our lives by splurging money in order to buy not only the people's representatives but also the voters,” Mamata said.

She asked the people to accept the cash offered but not vote for their symbol (lotus) as they are masters of fake and hate politics whose duty is only to spread hatred and ignite riots.

Referring to Shah's rally Mamata said, “There are some parties that organise roadshows where you will find more banners and flags than the people.” “Hours after the Chief Minister's roadshow TMC strongman and district party president Anubrata Mondal said at least three lakh people had gathered at the Bolpur rally.”

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## India get even with Oz



Indian players celebrate after winning the second cricket test in Melbourne on Tuesday BCCI

## Legendary French designer Pierre Cardin dies at 98

AP ■ PARIS

Pierre Cardin, the French designer whose famous name embossed everything from wristwatches to bedsheets after his iconic Space Age styles shot him into the fashion stratosphere in the 1960s, has died, the French Academy of Fine Arts said on Tuesday. He was 98.

A licensing maverick, Cardin's name went on thousands of products and in the brands heyday in the 1970s and 80s, while goods bearing his fancy cursive signature were sold at some 100,000 outlets worldwide.

That number dwindled dramatically in later years, as his products were increasingly regarded as cheaply made and his clothing — which, decades later, remained virtually unchanged from its 60s-era styles — felt laughably dated.

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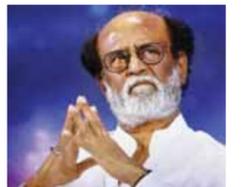
## Wary of health, Rajini says no to pol plunge

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Actor Rajinikanth, who had declared early this month that he would announce the details of his political party on the New Year eve, made a quick volte-face on Tuesday by announcing through social media that he was not launching any political outfit.

This means that Tamil Nadu may have to wait for long to see an effective and viable third front to take on the DMK and the AIADMK, the traditional rivals of the State politics for the last 35 years. The State's thirst to see the emergence of a charismatic leader too remains unquenched.

“With a heavy heart, I announce this: Due to health reasons I am not able to enter politics by launching a political party. Only I know the pain with which I make this announcement,” Rajinikanth



said in the statement. “I will continue to serve people without coming to electoral politics. I will never hesitate to speak the truth. I appeal to all my fans and people of Tamil Nadu to accept my decision. Rajini Makkal Mandram will continue to function,” the actor said.

He stated that it would not be fair to campaign through social media. If I develop health complications during my campaign, it would severely affect those who accompany me in politics, he said.

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# Yogi: EDFC a boon for a landlocked state like UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh, on Tuesday, received a gift from Prime Minister Narendra Modi who dedicated to the nation the New Bhaupur-New Khurja section of the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC) through video conference in the presence of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

Built by Tata Projects Ltd, the New Bhaupur-New Khurja section of the EDFC will be a boon for landlocked states like Uttar Pradesh that are not connected by maritime boundaries.

"We have planned to start two dedicated freight corridors. The first one will connect Punjab's Ludhiana to Dankuni in West Bengal. The second one will connect JNPT (Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust) in Maharashtra to Dadri in Uttar Pradesh, which will be close to Jewar Airport," PM Modi said.

Praising PM Modi's leadership, Yogi said that it was only because of the prime minister that the Indian Railways were running on the track of development. "The prime minister has dedicated the New Bhaupur-New Khurja section of the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor to the nation today, which is a matter of happiness for the people of the state," he said.

Pointing out that the work on about 6,000 new lines, gauge conversion and doubling projects was in progress in Uttar Pradesh, the CM said that with the formation of this freight corridor, there would be ease in



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath flagging off the New Bhaupur-New Khurja section of the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC) through video conferencing on Tuesday

## ...transfers Rs 87 cr to 21,562 beneficiaries of CM rural housing scheme

**Lucknow (PNS):** Directing officials to launch a campaign under ownership scheme, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that the land on which a poor person had made his/her name should be transferred in his/her name if the land was undisputed and not in any reserved category and, if required, houses could be built in clusters in some districts.

Speaking at a virtual programme held at his official residence here on Tuesday CM Yogi also said that a campaign should be launched to saturate all the beneficiaries of the Prime Minister Awas Yojana and Chief Minister Housing Scheme with the benefits of

the government schemes like toilet, kitchen, electricity, Ayushman Bharat, and Jivan Jyoti schemes.

The CM issued these directions while transferring Rs 87 crore as the first instalment in the accounts of the 21,562 beneficiaries of the Chief Minister Housing Scheme (Rural).

"These beneficiaries should also be associated with self-employment programmes (goat, poultry, dairy, etc.) as per the requirement. They should also be given the necessary training and also be facilitated in getting bank loans and also be motivated for self-employment," he said.

Those present in the programme

included Rural Development Minister Moti Singh and other senior officials.

The CM also said that the local administration should ensure that the beneficiaries used the money in building houses and the poor got the bricks, cement etc. at reasonable prices.

He said nodal officers should also be appointed for weekly review of the construction of houses.

"The section of the people who are the beneficiaries of houses are also the most vulnerable to encephalitis, tuberculosis, kala azar and malnutrition-borne diseases. They should also be given a healthy cow from the cow shelters and Rs 900 per month for the

maintenance of cows. The cow shed can also be constructed under the MGN-REGA," he said.

Yogi interacted with some of the beneficiaries and told them to construct a toilet along with the house. He also enquired from them about the government schemes from which they were getting benefits and instructed the district administration to hold a campaign and extend the benefits of the schemes to those who were eligible.

The CM interacted with Prema (Ayodhya), Soni (Azamgarh), Sangeeta (Kushinagar), Asha (Jaunpur), Akshay Bar (Gorakhpur), Anshu (Rae Bareilly), Meera (Sonbhadra) and others.

(Atmanirbhar).

It may be mentioned here that this section will not only decongest the existing Kanpur-Delhi mainline but also enable the Indian Railways to run faster trains.

## AIMIM names candidate for assembly poll

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Striking ahead of time, All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) has declared its first candidate — Dr Abdul Mannan — for the Uttar Pradesh assembly elections in 2022.

Mannan, an eye surgeon, will be fielded by the AIMIM for Utauuli Vidhan Sabha constituency in Balrampur district.

Mannan had joined the AIMIM after leaving the Peace Party.

AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi was in Lucknow on December 16 and he had met Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party chief Om Prakash Rajbhar to stitch an alliance for the 2022 UP polls.

A day later, Pragatisheel Samajwadi Party (Lohia) chief Shivepal Singh Yadav had met Rajbhar in a bid to ally

with him. Shivepal Yadav, who was eyeing to ally with estranged nephew and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, said that he received no "positive reaction" from Akhilesh Yadav.

The AIMIM has managed to win five of the 20 seats it contested in the 2020 Bihar assembly polls. Moreover, it also managed to retain 44 seats in the high-octane Hyderabad civic polls, which saw the BJP throw its entire poll machinery into making inroads in the elusive south. While several opposition parties have accused Owaisi of being a "vote-cutter" and "BJP's B-team," the Hyderabad MP has denied it saying, "It is the fundamental right of my party to contest elections to provide a better alternative to BJP".

Moreover, AIMIM has also announced it will contest for the 2021 Assembly polls in West Bengal.

## Three cops suspended for inaction in illegal cutting of trees

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Acting on a complaint received on Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's portal, IG, Lucknow Range, Lakshmi Singh, conducted a raid in Lakhimpur Kheri and suspended three cops, including a police outpost incharge, after finding trees were cut illegally under their jurisdiction.

She also got a case registered in the matter against the local police and forest officials and sent a report for further action after fixing the responsibility of the officials concerned. Surprisingly, the local superintendent of police as well as district forest officers were aware of the illegal cutting of trees after which the Chief Minister's Office was informed about it and subsequently direc-

tions were passed to Singh for stern action.

Sources said that Lakshmi Singh was camping in Kheri as nodal officer to manage the ongoing farmers' protest when she was tipped-off about a complaint received on the CM's portal.

A social activist, Ritu Verma, claimed that some miscreants were illegally cutting green trees in Bajpai hamlet in Kheri without taking any permission and that she had informed the local authorities, including SP Kheri and DFO Kheri, about it at least half-a-dozen times but no one took pain to respond to her complaint.

Sources further said that Verma's complaint was forwarded to Lakshmi Singh for necessary action.

Singh, after completing discussion with the officials in Kheri on how to handle the ongoing farmers' agitation, suddenly left the venue on Monday night and raided the place at Bajpai hamlet to confirm the allegations. She was surprised that the trees were cut freely in the area and no action had been taken by the local authorities.

She immediately summoned force and got all the felled trees seized and later got a case registered against half-a-dozen officials, including former gram pradhan who was allegedly involved in cutting of trees.

She also suspended incharge of the LRP police outpost and two beat constables and ordered a departmental probe to bring the culprits to book.

**CLASSIFIEDS**

### NOTICE

I, Army NO-JC 733891A Nayab subedar B.K. Tripathi R/o Vill-Babhangawan, Post-Jhauara, Dist-sultanpur, hereby declare that my daughter SHREYA'S DOB-01.11.2010 is registered in my service record which is wrong. Her corrected DOB-is 01.11.2009. This should be read and written in future.

### सूचना

मैं कन्हैया लाल खेतान सुपुत्र स्वर्गीय निधारी लाल खेतान निवासी 21 गोदावरी एनक्लेव केशव नगर सीतापुर रोड लखनऊ यह शपथ पूर्वक बयान करता हूँ कि मेरा बेटा नामा की चैन डीड की मूल प्रति खो गई है जिसकी की एक आई आर दिनांक 25.12.2020 को मड़ियाव थाने में दर्ज कराई है जिसका FIR NO/ LAR NO. 593658/2020 उक्त जमीन स्थित ग्राम आलामपुर परगना मनावा तहसील सिधौली जिला सीतापुर गाटा नंबर 23 रकबा 0.476 हेक्टेयर विक्रेता कालिका पुत्र कुजलाल क्रेता पवन कुमार सिंह पुत्र स्वर्गीय सूबेदार सिंह

### REQUIRED

**VISHESHVAR DAYAL MAHAVIDYALYA**  
Konsar Chauraha, Biswan Sitapur-261201  
**REQUIRED FOR B.ED DEPT.**  
(1)-Principal/HOD-01, (2)-Perspective in Education-04, (3)-Pedagogy Subjects-08 (Maths, Science, Social Science, Language), (4)-Health And Physical Education-01, (5)-Fine Arts-01, (6)-Performing Arts-01 (Music/Dance/Theater) **Qualification & Pay Scale-**As per NCTE/State Govt./Lucknow University, Lucknow Norms, Interested Candidates Can Send Their Biodata, Educational Certificates & 4 Recent Photograph at College Address within 15 Days.  
**Manager M: 7897952018**

## CS reviews progress of Centrally-sponsored projects

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government issued directions for completion of all Centrally-sponsored projects as per schedule. The projects are listed on PRAGATI (Pro-active governance and timely implementation) portal of the PMO.

The progress of the projects was reviewed by Chief Secretary RK Tiwari here on Tuesday. The projects include the third rail line between Mathura and Jhansi, health insurance scheme Ayushman Bharat, Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojna, Jal Jeevan Mission, Har Ghar Jal Yojna and disposal of the complaints in the consumer affairs department.

The chief secretary asked the departments concerned to adhere to the timeline for the completion of the projects.

The chief secretary was informed that Railways intended to purchase 20,200 hectares of land for the rail project and of this registry of 15,640 hectares of land had been done in favour of the Railways.

The Railways is taking follow-up action for the acquisition of the rest of the 4,559 hectares of land. The total length of the Mathura-Jhansi rail line is 274 km and of this 98 km falls in Uttar Pradesh, 141 in Madhya Pradesh and 35 km in Rajasthan. The total cost of the project is estimated to be Rs 3, 678 crore and the project is targeted to be completed in September 2022. Till date 30 per cent of the physical work has been completed.

For the Ayushman Bharat scheme, as many as 1.01 crore golden cards of 40.37 lakh families have been delivered and the rest of the families will be cov-

ered by the end of December.

Under the health insurance scheme, 841 community health centres and 158 district hospitals have already been empanelled and by the end of December 15, as many as 5.38 lakh cards were used to the beneficiaries. Presently 2,646 hospitals have been empanelled in the state, including 1,102 public hospitals and 1,544 private hospitals.

Under the Jal Jeevan Mission project, out of 462 areas with poor water quality 315 have been covered under the scheme and work is in progress in the rest of the 138 locations. As many as 15 lakh households have been given piped water supply and out of 3,089 villages affected by the Japanese encephalitis, 544 villages have been covered by piped water supply.

## Will withdraw cases against anti-CAA protesters: Akhilesh



**Lucknow (PNS):** Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav said when his party would come to power in UP, the government would withdraw all cases registered against those associated with anti-CAA protests.

He said in the 2022 Assembly elections in UP, there would be a historic change and the SP would emerge as the powerhouse of the state. "People will come in support of the Samajwadi Party just to save democracy," he said.

Akhilesh Yadav said his party would make alliance with smaller parties and the doors for the smaller parties were always open. "We can promise that when we come to power in UP all the cases related to CAA/NRC and other fake cases registered against the people for opposing the government would be withdrawn," he said.

## Cyclist among 4 killed in Agra road mishap

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a tragic incident due to dense fog in Agra, a truck crushed a cyclist and then hit a car early Tuesday morning, killing four people.

According to reports from Agra, the incident occurred on Agra-Fatehabad highway, near a petrol pump in Dauki police station area.

The local police claimed that the truck coming from Agra crashed with the car coming out of the petrol pump after hitting a cyclist.

The cyclist and three persons in the car were killed on the spot.

The deceased were yet to be identified. Dense fog was said to be the reason for the accident.

After the accident, the local people blocked the highway and staged a protest after keeping the bodies on the road.

Later, on assurance of local officers of initiating stern action against the truck driver, the protest was called off and the bodies were sent for post-mortem.

## Congress accuses govt of corruption

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Congress accused the state government of indulging in corruption in the name of launching 'Swadeshi' mobile and demanded a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) besides immediate removal of the minister concerned.

The UPCC alleged that earlier also Prime Minister Narendra Modi facilitated the launching of 4G service of a private mobile operator as its owner was his corporate friend and now both Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's photo were used to promote a private mobile in the name of 'Swadeshi'.

The UPCC reaction came soon after the brother of UP Minister Kapil Dev Agarwal was booked in a case of fraud and forgery.

The FIR was registered at the Hazratganj police station in Lucknow against Lalit Agarwal, brother of state minister Kapil Dev Agarwal.

Lalit Agarwal and his accomplices had put up hoardings for the launch of a 'Swadeshi' brand mobile phone across the state by putting pictures of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. The photo and the phone on the hoardings were shown in such a way that it seemed that the government was planning to launch the 'Swadeshi' mobile phones.

It may be noted that Kapil Dev Agarwal and other ministers were also involved in launching the phone. Attacking both Modi and Yogi for facilitating their corporate friends, UP Congress president Ajay Kumar Lallu said on Tuesday that the launch of a private mobile giving it a tag of 'swadeshi' was yet another act of corruption in which both the Central as well as state governments were involved.

The Congress alleged that the company which developed the so-called 'Swadeshi' phone asked Lalit Agarwal to advertise and promote it in exchange of a huge sum of money.

**LOSS OF SHARE CERTIFICATE**  
I, MURLI DHAR KANODIA, HAVE LOST THE ORIGINAL SHARE CERTIFICATE NO. 25578 & 42209 HAVING DISTINCTIVE NO.S 3139001- 3139100 & 4171121- 4171220, RESPECTIVELY, ISSUED BY/M/S. GANESHA ECOSPHERE LTD. IN FAVOUR OF RAMJILAL KANODIA (deceased) JOINTLY WITH PARWATI DEVI KANODIA (deceased). FINDER MAY PLEASE CONTACT ME AT 9415044951.

**यू पी 0 प्रोजेक्ट्स कारपोरेशन लिमिटेड**  
(उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार का उपक्रम)  
कार्यालय: महाप्रबन्धक जेन-7, यू.पी. प्रोजेक्ट्स कारपोरेशन लिमिटेड, लखनऊ  
बॉय वद, गोमती रोड, गोमती नगर, लखनऊ  
E-Mail: gm\_7@upprojects.org

दिनांक: 29.12.2020

**अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा सूचना**  
जनपद बलरामपुर में राप्ती नदी के बाँयें तट पर स्थित नौबस्ता-रजवापुर की बाढ़ से सुरक्षा हेतु ड्रेजिंग एवं बेनेलाइजेशन कार्य हेतु इस कार्यालय की अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा सूचना-11/UPPCL/GM-7/E-TENDER/2020-21 दिनांक 29.12.2020 द्वारा ई-निविदा आमंत्रित की गयी है। यह निविदा वेबसाइट <http://www.etender.up.nic.in> के पोर्टल पर दिनांक 07.01.2021 से दिनांक 15.01.2021 तक डाउनलोड/अपलोड की जा सकती है, जिसे दिनांक 15.01.2021 को अपरान्ह 1.00 बजे तक समिति/जमा किया जा सकता है। टेन्डरिंग बिड उखी दिना अपरान्ह 3.30 बजे ऑफिसटाइमरी के उपरोक्त कार्यालय में खोली जानी प्रस्तावित है। निविदा से सम्बन्धित अन्य विवरण एवं शर्तें इत्यादि कारपोरेशन की वेबसाइट [www.upprojects.org](http://www.upprojects.org) पर देखी जा सकती है।  
महाप्रबन्धक जेन-7  
यू पी 0 पी 0 सी एल 0, लखनऊ

**LIC भारतीय जीवन बीमा निगम**  
मण्डल कार्यालय, 'जीवन प्रकाश' 30, इन्द्रप्रस्थ, लखनऊ - 226001  
संपर्क : 0522-2624855  
ई-मेल : sales.lucknow@licindia.com

**प्रतियोगिता पुरस्कार, मेमेण्टो व गिफ्ट आइटम की खरीद के लिए वेण्डर/फर्म/डीलर से इम्यूनलमेंट हेतु आवेदन की सूचना**

भारतीय जीवन बीमा निगम लखनऊ मण्डल अपने अधिकार क्षेत्र के अन्तर्गत आने वाली 19 शाखाओं हेतु प्रतियोगिता पुरस्कार, मेमेण्टो व गिफ्ट आइटम की खरीद के लिए वेण्डर/ फर्म / डीलर से इम्यूनलमेंट हेतु आवेदन आमंत्रित करता है। इम्यूनलमेंट आवेदन प्रक्रिया का विवरण निम्न प्रकार होगा-

1. इम्यूनलमेंट आवेदन फीस	₹ 100+18%GST कुल 118
2. आवेदन निगमित तिथि	दिनांक : 29.12.2020
3. आवेदन प्राप्ति की अन्तिम तिथि	दिनांक : 18.01.2021

समय : अपरान्ह 3:00 बजे तक

आवेदन प्रपत्र एवं विस्तृत विवरण, मण्डल कार्यालय के विक्रय विभाग से किसी भी कार्य दिवस में 29.12.2020 से 18.01.2021 तक ₹ 118/- देकर प्राप्त किये जा सकते हैं अथवा निगम की वेब साइट [www.licindia.in](http://www.licindia.in) के **Tenders Section** से प्राप्त की जा सकती है, जिसके साथ रु 118/- का ड्राफ्ट संलग्न होना चाहिए। आवेदन सील बन्द लिफाफे में "क़य समिति", विक्रय विभाग, भारतीय जीवन बीमा निगम, मण्डल कार्यालय, जीवन प्रकाश, इन्द्रप्रस्थ, लखनऊ-226001 को सम्बोधित करते हुए अन्तिम तिथि एवं समय तक पहुँच जानी चाहिए। भारतीय जीवन बीमा निगम, मण्डल कार्यालय लखनऊ के पास किसी भी आवेदन को बिना कारण बताये निरस्त करने का अधिकार सुरक्षित रहेगा।  
वरिष्ठ मण्डल प्रबन्धक

**Government of Uttar Pradesh Scheduled Caste & Scheduled Tribe Research & Training Institute (SCSTRTI) Uttar Pradesh, Bhagidari Bhawan, Gontinagar, Lucknow**

No. 639/1-19/Sho.Pra.San./2018-19 Date 22.12.2020

**Invitation of Research / Evaluation Study Proposal**

Scheduled Caste & Scheduled Tribes Research & Training Institute (SCSTRTI), Uttar Pradesh invites Research / Evaluation study Proposal from interested Govt. Organizations / Govt. Undertaking Organizations / Non-Govt. organizations (which have experience in academic research) / Universities / Department of Universities / Autonomous Bodies for the year 2020-21 on the following topics :

Sl. No.	Topics of Research and Evaluation studies	Sanctioned amount (in Lakh)
1	Gaps identification on Education of ST girls and	10.00
2	Gaps identification on Health of tribal population	10.00
3	Evaluation study of State TSP funds and Central Ministries TSP project for period 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18 in randomly selected villages in few tribal majority districts.	5.00

The Scheduled Tribe (ST) population of Uttar Pradesh is 11,34,273 as per 2011 census predominantly residing in rural areas. Interested persons/organisations are hereby requested to submit their proposal on format given in annexure-I on or before 05-01-2021 by 6.00 P.M. through e-mail: [scstrtiiko@gmail.com](mailto:scstrtiiko@gmail.com) and one copy of proposal should be sent by speed-post to be addressed to the "Director, Scheduled Caste & Scheduled Tribe Research & Training Institute, U.P., Bhagidari Bhawan, Vipul Khand near Ambedkar Smarak, Lucknow-226010.

The applicants are also required to submit Declaration on the format given in annexure-II along with proposal. Terms of reference and other details may be obtained from the office of Scheduled Caste & Scheduled Tribe Research & Training Institute, U.P., Lucknow and same can also be downloaded from the website <http://upscstrti.in/>. Scheduled Caste & Scheduled Tribes Research & Training Institute (SCSTRTI) reserves all the rights to accept or reject all or any of the proposal at any stage without assigning any reasons thereof. SCSTRTI also reserves the right to engage/empanel one or more organization depending on requirements.

U.P.: 158211, Date : 28.12.2020  
विज्ञापन वेबसाइट [www.up.gov.nic.in](http://www.up.gov.nic.in) पर उपलब्ध है।

(Dr.Devendra Singh)  
Research Officer /  
Nodal Officer T.R.I., U.P.

# Number of recoveries nearing 75,000-mark

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The total number of people who have recovered from Covid in the state capital reached 74,123 on Tuesday. The Covid recovery rate of the district has been good at 95.6 percent. Lucknow has maintained a good recovery rate because a large number of people showed less severe symptoms, as has been the trend across the globe.

A senior health official said the positivity rate is still hovering around 2.9 percent this month. "However, as the cases are coming down across the district, the positivity rate in areas like Gomtinagar, Indiranagar, Chinhat, Alambagh and Aliganj is slightly above average," he said. He pointed out that the number of patients who are severe at the moment is a little less than 700.

On whether they are facing

challenges regarding availability of beds for severe patients, he said there was a slight problem with ICU beds.

On Tuesday, 194 persons tested positive for coronavirus in Lucknow while the death toll rose to 1,111. The fresh cases included 23 from Gomtinagar, 22 from Indiranagar, 14 from Mahanagar, 12 from Jankipuram, 11 from Alambagh, and 10 each from Ashiyana, Hazratganj & Gudamba.

Across the state, 1,044 persons tested positive, including 41 in Kanpur, 59 in Ghaziabad, 24 in Gautam Buddha Nagar, 45 in Varanasi and 43 in Meerut. There were 18 deaths in the state, including two each in Prayagraj & Varanasi, and one each in Lucknow, Kanpur, Ghaziabad, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Meerut, Gorakhpur, Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar, Rampur, Pratapgarh, Rae Bareilly, Chandauli, Farrukhabad & Banda, taking the UP toll to 8,340.

Head of KGMU's Pulmonary department Dr Surya Kant Tripathi said there may be several reasons for the good recovery rate. "It has already been evident that Indians have a good immunity because of the rough and tough lifestyle. Our kids play outside in the soil which helps in building of immunity. Besides, the BCG immunisation programme has also helped a lot. It is the first vaccine given to any child after birth. Above all, the measures taken by the state government, including the isolation policy, have helped. UP is the only state where Ivermectin was prescribed as it is the cheapest drug besides being effective and prophylactic. No other state has used this as a prophylactic and the GO was issued on August 6," he explained.

He claimed the situation has been very much under control in UP, with the recovery rate being very good and mortality rate being low. "Timely and strict measures have been taken for breaking the chain of transmission. However, people are not following Covid protocols. They must understand that the battle is not over as yet," he added.

Meanwhile, a joint high-level meeting was held to discuss measures to check the spread of coronavirus. The meeting was presided over by Additional Chief Secretary Manoj Kumar Singh. He said that with the new year eve approaching, the administration must remain alert. He said people are not observing the safety protocols, including social distancing, even as the next 15 days are likely to be crucial. He said enforcement has to be increased.

Singh said a crackdown has to be launched at malls, markets, malls and restaurants where people are not following the Covid protocols.

District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash said joint enforcement teams have been made for the purpose. "These teams will move around to enforce social distancing and ensure that people mask up. They will also issue challans to those not following Covid guidelines," he said.

The DM also directed all the Covid testing labs to follow safety protocols as stern action would be taken against those flouting the guidelines.

The DM said that all the RR teams and surveillance teams had been made active. He said directions have been given to all the CHCs to carry out contact tracing on a war-footing, with special focus on areas having maximum number of cases.

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# Former MLA's gunner shoots self

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Gunner of a former MLA shot himself inside a hotel room in Vipul Khand under Gomtinagar police station on Monday night. He was identified as Rajesh of Jhansi. He had checked into room number 105 of the hotel. Police said Rajesh used his licenced rifle to shoot himself. "He put the rifle nozzle under his chin and pulled the trigger. The bullet ripped his head apart," the police said.

In another case, a man ended his life after being bullied allegedly by his former business partner in Madaion. Police registered a case of abetment to suicide after the deceased's wife named the accused in the FIR. The deceased was identified as Marshal of Aziznagar in Madaion. His wife Huma Parveen of Basmandi in Wazirganj lodged an FIR against Shanu of Aziznagar in Madaion. Both Marshal and Shanu were living in the same house on rent.

According to Huma, Marshal and Shanu began a

start-up for supply of sanitizers and glucose. In due course of time, both fell apart and Shanu demanded Rs 2.08 lakh as his profit share. On December 24, Marshal gave Rs 25,000 to Shanu as also a cheque which was to be encashed in January.

However, Shanu allegedly started playing bullying tactics and threatened Marshal, demanding cash. "Marshal ended his life in the rented house when I was in Wazirganj on Monday. I tried calling him but the calls went unanswered. After a while, an unidentified man picked up the phone and informed me that Marshal had committed suicide," Huma alleged. She alleged that Marshal ended his life after being bullied by Shanu.

Meanwhile, a 40-year-old man was found dead at his house in Gosainganj on Tuesday. Reports said Ram Khelawan was living in the house in Amethi Kasba under the Gosainganj police station all alone. Said to be an alcoholic, he fell into a drain outside his house on Monday night and was found dead on Tuesday.

# WOMAN IMMOLATES SELF

A woman set herself afire near Deen Dayal Park in PGI police station area and died on Tuesday. Police said they were ascertaining the identity of the deceased. As per reports, the woman reached the park on a scooter and started sprinkling petrol on her.

Before passersby could respond, she set herself afire. She was rushed to a hospital where she was declared brought dead. A police spokesman said the scooter was registered in the name of Seema Rani of Sitapur. "The police have to ascertain if it was Seema herself or some of her kin," he said.

**BF Utilities Limited**  
Regd. & Head Office: MUNDHWA PUNE CANTONMENT PUNE-411036

**NOTICE**

Notice is hereby given that the Share Certificate No. 24284 for 261 Fully paid up Equity Shares of Rs.5/- each of this company bearing Distinctive No. 3154833 to 3155093

Respectively standing in the name/s of LATE SUDHA SRIVASTAVA has/have been reported to be lost or mislaid. Any claim relating to this/these share certificate/s should be notified within fifteen days from the date of publication of this NOTICE to the Registered Office of the Company. Otherwise duplicate share Certificate/s in respect of lost share certificate/s will be issued to the above mentioned Owner/s and no claim will be entertained thereafter.

Place Lucknow  
Date:- 28-12-2020

For BF Utilities Limited  
MR. BHALCHANDRA MITKARI  
(Company Secretary)

# CM for proactive measures to break transmission chain

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Directing officials to maintain complete vigil in view of the new strain of the novel coronavirus, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath stressed on making proactive measures to break the chain of COVID-19 transmission.

The CM, who was presiding over an unlock review meeting at his official residence here on Tuesday, also said that for the new strain of coronavirus, all testing arrangements should be ensured by upgrading the laboratories of the state.

Directing officials to ensure effective contact tracing and surveillance systems, the CM said that contact tracing should be increased in Lucknow district to control coronavirus infection. Instructing officials to maintain an effective system of prevention and treatment of COVID-19 cases, the CM said



that all arrangements at Covid hospitals should be maintained effectively. He said adequate availability of medicines, medical equipment and oxygen backup should be ensured in Covid hospitals and senior faculties should take regular rounds in medical colleges and hospitals and attend to the patients. "It is necessary to be careful at every level and a little bit of carelessness can prove to be costly," he said.

Directing officials to spread awareness about COVID-19, the CM said that people should be motivated and encouraged to follow social distancing and use masks. He said public address systems along with other publicity mediums should be widely used to spread awareness about COVID-19.

Those present in the meeting included Medical Education Minister Suresh Khanna, State Health Minister Atul Garg, Chief Secretary RK Tiwari, Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Awanish Kumar Awasthi, Director General of Police HC Awasthi, Additional Chief Secretary (Finance) Sanjiv Mittal, Additional Chief Secretary to CM, SP Goyal, Additional Chief Secretary (Medical Education) Dr Rajneesh Dube, Principal Secretary to CM and Information Sanjay Prasad and other senior officials.

# IISR director seeks to allay apprehensions regarding farm laws

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Lucknow (PNS): Clarifying the apprehensions in new farm laws director of IISR Dr AD Pathak said there are reasons for initiating reforms in the agriculture sector. "The rising disparity between farm income and non-farm income is one of the most significant reasons for new reforms in the farm sector. People working outside agriculture are progressing much faster than those who work in this sector. A cultivator earns about Rs 80,000 per year whereas a non-agriculture worker earns three times more. Other reasons demanding immediate intervention in terms of new laws are fragmented and insufficient markets with high market fees and charges, inadequate infrastructure and credit facilities, information asymmetry, restriction in

licensing, pressing need for improving export competitiveness, low investment in storage and warehouses and dominance of local traders in the market and lack of food processing facilities in agri sector," he explained.

Citing the benefits of new farm reforms for farmers principal scientist Dr AK Sah explained that there will be availability of single unified market, freedom for farmers to sell their produce to whoever they want and wherever they want, end of APMC cartel monopoly, legal framework protecting farmer rights, reduction in market fees, taxes etc, and better price discovery, development of infrastructure close to farm gate, price assurance and boosting linkages with food processing sector with contract farming.

# Police close to working out Sujeet murder case

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Police said on Tuesday they were close to working out the murder case of former gram pradhan Sujeet Pandey. Though officers spearheading the probe remained tightlipped about details, sources said the police got a lead about some of the conspirators.

"A team visited the jail and collected details of the miscreants. A lead about the miscreants and conspirators emerged as a result," the sources said.

They said the police were looking for one of the shooters who came on their radar during investigation.

Recently, the police had released sketches of the two accused and started a manhunt for them. The police have also announced a cash reward of Rs 50,000 to anyone who shares details about the suspects whose sketches were made public.

Sujeet was gunned down on December 20 evening when he was on the way to his brick

kiln in Gaura village of the area. Sujeet tried his best to defend himself and even returned fire, but he suffered bullet wounds in the stomach and died later. He was the leader of traders' association in Mohanlalganj and was popular among his peers and general public. His wife is the sitting gram pradhan. Top leaders, including Deputy CM Dinesh Sharma, had visited his house and directed the police to expedite the probe into the case and arrest the killers.

Meanwhile, two youths were killed while their companion suffered injuries in a road mishap in Chinhat early morning on Tuesday. The deceased were identified as Sandeep and Jitendra Kumar while the injured as Kuldeep. Reports said the trio (of Barabanki) were on a motorcycle when hit by some unidentified vehicle in Tiwariganj. They were rushed to RMLMS where Jitendra and Sandeep were declared dead while Kuldeep was under treatment.

# Dr Surya Kant elected nat'l VC of IMA-AMS

Lucknow (PNS): Head of KGMU's Respiratory Medicine department Dr Surya Kant was elected national vice-chairman of Indian Medical Association-Academy of Medical Specialities, the premier institution of modern medicine in India with over 4 lakh physicians as its members.

The IMA concluded the elections for its executive body on December 28 and Dr. Surya Kant was elected the national vice-chairman till 2022. He has been the chairman of IMA-Lucknow in 2018, and is currently an honorary professor in the IMA as well. Dr Surya Kant said that in the next two years, he would facilitate the training of physicians in the latest treatment modalities of major diseases, and promote health awareness in general population.

# Largest khadi mask to make people aware of protocols



PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The largest mask (100 square metre) will be launched shortly in the state capital for promotion of Covid protocols and as a tribute to all the women weavers across the state who worked in these difficult times to prepare the masks. This mask is the brainchild of fashion designer Manish Tripathi, who belongs to Lucknow and who approached the state government for this initiative. Earlier, a 72 square metre mask was made in Jeddah to promote

Covid protocol and it holds a place in the Guinness Book of World Records.

"I was given a lot of support by the government, especially by Additional Chief Secretary Navneet Sehgal. The mask has been made in joint collaboration with UP Khadi and Village Industries Board. Sehgal said the mask will be launched in the middle of January. "It will help in promoting the idea that a mask is important in these times. It will also highlight that khadi can be used to make masks and give livelihood opportuni-

ties to others," he said.

The mask has been made from the cloth made by women weavers from all 75 districts of the state and ten other states of the country so that it represents the textile richness of the country. "We have folk arts of Madhubani, Phulkari, Sambalpuri and Chikankari also woven into the mask and the work is still on," he said. Tripathi said he travelled across ten states so that he could highlight the fact that the country was rich in textiles.

"We are always looking for a global market but there is a huge scope in India. It is also important to give credit to these women weavers and come out of the mindset of looking for foreign affiliations. These women weavers are always looked upon as 'bechari', which should not be the case because these crafts and textiles are unique," he said.

The mask will be put on a hot air balloon and released to spread the message. Tripathi pointed out that they began stitching the mask on March 27.

**मिशन रोज़गार** | **शक्ति**

**सशक्त युवा, सशक्त समाज**

**युवा कल्याण एवं प्रांतीय रक्षक दल विभाग, उत्तर प्रदेश द्वारा युवक एवं महिला मंगल दलों को प्रोत्साहन स्वरूप खेल सामग्री वितरण समारोह**

**मुख्य अतिथि**  
**योगी आदित्यनाथ**  
मुख्यमंत्री, उत्तर प्रदेश

**परिचालनी उपस्थिति**  
**उपेन्द्र तिवारी**  
राज्यमंत्री, युवा कल्याण एवं खेल (स्वतंत्र प्रभार)  
पंचायती राज (एम.ओ.एस.), उत्तर प्रदेश

**डॉ. विभ्रात चन्द कौशिक**  
उपाध्यक्ष, राज्य युवा कल्याण परिषद  
उत्तर प्रदेश

**युवा कल्याण एवं प्रांतीय रक्षक दल विभाग की उपलब्धियां**

- अब तक 45,000 युवक/महिला मंगल दलों को प्रोत्साहन स्वरूप खेल सामग्री का वितरण
- विकास खण्ड, जनपद एवं राज्य स्तर पर संस्थागत श्रेणी में मंगल दलों एवं राज्य स्तर पर व्यक्तिगत श्रेणी में स्वामी विवेकानंद युद्ध अवादी प्रारंभ
- मंगल दलों द्वारा नमामि गंगे एवं फिट इण्डिया प्रमोशन में उत्कृष्ट सहभागिता
- राष्ट्रीय युवा उत्सव-2020 का आयोजन
- 37 ग्रामीण स्टेडियम का निर्माण प्रगति पर
- मण्डल एवं राज्य स्तर पर ग्रामीण खेल प्रतियोगिता का आयोजन पुनः प्रारंभ
- पी.आर.डी. जवानों का इवैटी भत्ता बजट रु. 23 करोड़ से बढ़ाकर रु. 150 करोड़ किया गया
- पी.आर.डी. जवानों की मासिक रिफ्रेशर परेड प्रारंभ

**दिनांक : 30 दिसम्बर, 2020 | समय : मध्याह्न 12:00 बजे | स्थान : लोक भवन, लखनऊ**

**रहें फिट, करें मंगल, वें सुरक्षा-हमारे युवा** | युवा एवं जनसम्पर्क विभाग, उत्तर प्रदेश | **युवा सोच, युवा जोश**

**पंजाब नैशनल बैंक Punjab National Bank**

Circle Office Lucknow (West): General Administration Department, 4-A, Habibullah Estate, Hazratganj Lucknow-226001

**PREMISES REQUIRES**

The Bank requires a commercial premises of about 1000 to 1200 Sq. ft. area (preferably at ground floor) at Nilamtha, Lucknow for the shifting of its branch of 11GRRC, Lucknow. Interested building owners under the present branch can provide us with their proposal till 07.01.2021, at 15.00Hrs. Detailed information is available on our www.pnbindia

Circle Head

# LU to conduct exams in MCQs format

Lucknow (PNS): Lucknow University will hold the examinations of graduate students in multiple-choice questions (MCQs) format. This decision was taken at the examination committee meeting held on Tuesday under Vice-Chancellor Prof AK Rai. It

was also decided that for PG students, the examinations would be held at departmental level in MCQ format. LU spokesperson Durgesh Srivastava said the examinations for BE, Med, BPED, MPED, BAMS, BUMS, LLM, MVA and

other professional diploma courses would be held in regular manner in the last week of January. He said LU would felicitate teachers under various research projects, including ACCLAIM, PROTSAHAN and UDDEPAN.



# CMO launches IHCI in Varanasi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

India Hypertension Control Initiative (IHCI) under the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS) was launched by Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr VB Singh at Community Health Centre (CHC), Cholapur here on Monday. Speaking on the occasion, Dr Singh said that keeping in view the increasing deaths due to high blood pressure and COVID-19, it has been seen that most of the people who died had problems like high blood pressure and diabetes so the importance of this programme increases every more.

ACMO Dr PP Gupta said that at present, the number of patients whose blood pressure is not under control is less than 10 per cent and in view



CMO Dr VB Singh launching IHCI at CHC, Cholapur in Varanasi on Monday

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to keep the improvement in it by 2025, IHCI has been launched with an aim to reduce the mortality rate by 25 per cent due to high blood pressure. Epidemiologist Dr DP Singh said that to improve the condition of high blood pressure, the blood pressure of every patient above 30 years visiting the hospitals

should be checked and those patients who do not have blood pressure under control given proper treatment advice apart from starting their treating immediately.

Medical Superintendent of CHC Cholapur Dr RB Yadav gave the details of drug protocol advised by the state government to all the staff

under IHCI campaign. CVHO of WHO Dr Lalitha Chauhan and Dr Abhinav informed that a Simple App has been created for reporting of this programme, in which complete information of all the patients of hypertension will be compiled and through this, the patients would be informed about the dates when they have to be examined by the doctors automatically.

ICMR Project Technical Assistant of Ranjit Singh said that NCD clinics and NCD areas/ corners should be made at CHCs / PHCs so that all the adults above 30 years can get the blood pressure and sugar checked.

On this occasion, all adults above 30 years were tested for blood pressure and sugar at CHC Cholapur and patients with high blood pressure were registered in Simple App under this programme.

# Dy CM reviews Magh Mela work

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya reviewed Magh Mela work progress and inaugurated/ laid foundation of 44 projects involving ₹ 38.94 crore in Phulpur area on Tuesday. The above development projects are under the work area of the PWD.

Maurya first visited the Sangam area to review mela work and instructed officials to complete work within time frame.

He laid stress on Covid protocols and said that safety of the devotees is on top of the priority of the government.

The Deputy Chief Minister instructed the officials to complete bathing ghat construction at the earliest for the convenience of the bathers.

He also ensured that shallow waters will be made available for bathing, and there will be barricading to stop devotees from entering the danger zone of deep waters.



Deputy CM Keshav Prasad Maurya offering Ganga Puja at Sangam in Prayagraj

Pioneer

Maurya inspected the progress of pontoon bridge construction, power supply, water supply, road construction

with chequered plates and other facilities to be made available to the mela visitors. He offered prayers at the

Sangam nose, Bade Hanuman temple and Akshayvat before leaving for Jamunipur Durvasa Ashram, Kakara.

# Farming a source of livelihood for majority of farmers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

For the majority of the farmers, farming is not entrepreneurship; it is a source of livelihood. And 70 per cent of its rural households still depend primarily on agriculture for their livelihood, with 82 per cent of farmers being small and marginal. Hence, the recent three Farm Acts, viz., (i) The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020 (ii) The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020, and (iii) The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020 passed by the government in the Parliament must be seen and studied in the context of farmers' problems and size of land holding.

Through these Acts, the government is trying to double the income of farmers and making them self-reliant and

thereby achieving the objective of self-reliant India. The positive side of The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020 is that it allows barrier free trade to farmers and traders of farm produce which means that farmers and traders can now trade farm produce outside the physical premises of mandi or Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) yard. Earlier agricultural products were sold only in the APMC Yard like warehouses, cold storage or mandis, the Economist and Head, Department of Economics, Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapeeth (MGKV) Prof Rajesh Pal while talking to the 'The Pioneer'.

'We must remind here that the situation of most of the farmers in Bihar deteriorated after abolition of APMC Act in Bihar in 2006 as they had no option to store their produce. And perhaps this is the reason

why farmers in Punjab and Haryana are protesting this Act. When farm produce will be sold outside the premises of APMC, there would be no APMC in the future, and consequently lost of MSP. Large farmers may get the benefit of freedom of selling farm produce inter-state and intrastate but under the new Act government cannot intervene to protect farmers when they would lose crops due to bad weather, war, famine, and natural calamity of grave nature. Their fear is genuine as most of the farmers are poor and not able to bear the loss', he adds.

The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020 introduces a farming agreement between farmer and sponsor, wherein farmers are given guaranteed price of their produce and no sponsor can take over the ownership of land. And so, farmers

have doubt that their ownership may be snatched and may not get price of their produce at the time of the delivery, he views adding, though the government is trying to promote strong local linkages for domestic industries or to participate in the Global Value Chains (GVCs) wherein linkages are globally dispersed through The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020.

'Hence, it is in our interest to promote local and global linkages for the agriculture sector and allied activities through which farmers may be turned into processors and may be able to take the benefits of globalisation. The government must address the worries of farmers and answer why the government is not intervening in the market through minimum support price on which the Act seems to be silent', he views further.

# 48 new Covid cases in Prayagraj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

About 7,080 people were screened for Covid test on Monday to detect corona infection of them, the report of 48 people came positive in 24 hours. 94 people beat corona. One infected died during treatment.

According to CMO Dr Prabhakar Rai, 12 people were discharged from Covid hospitals on Monday out of 94 people who became infection-free. At the same time 82 people recovered in home isolation. So far 20,474 people have become infection-free in home isolation in the district.

He said that out of total 28,275 infected in the districts, 6,825 patients admitted to hospitals have been discharged. So far 372 people have died due to corona infection. The number of active patients in the district has reached 604, the same figures which stood five months ago. This is a relief, CMO Rai added.

According to the Nodal Officer for Corona Dr Rishi Sahai, those infected on Monday included a doctor from the SRN Hospital Surgery Department, an MMU sampling, a ward boy.

At the same time, the Covid report of three Junior Engineers of Public Works Department, three advocates, Assistant Manager of Yes Bank Civil Lines has come positive. At the same time, IFFCO's data entry operator, two teachers, the owner of a private educational institution have also been infected with the deadly virus, added Dr Sahai.

**PREPARATIONS COMPLETE FOR COVID VACCINATION:** Preparations are



New sanitisation truck arrives in Nagar Nigam in Prayagraj

Pioneer

complete in the district for Covid vaccination. Administrative and Health Department officials gave this information to Principal Secretary Sudhir Garg, the nodal officer for Corona on Monday. It was reported that 30 doses are expected for the first stage vaccination. In order to keep the vaccine safe, arrangements have been made to place 32 inter liner refrigerators (ILRs) in the newly constructed cold chain centre to maintain the cold chain. Currently three ILRs have been installed and tested.

Nodal Officer for Corona and Principal Secretary Sudhir Garg held a meeting on Monday with District Magistrate, CMO, Nodal Officer, nodal vaccination and other officials regarding preparation of corona vaccination. He obtained point-wise information regarding cold

chains, vaccine carriers, task forces, vaccinators and surveillance for vaccination.

District Magistrate Bhanuchandra Goswami said that according to the guideline of the government, preparations are complete. CMO Dr Prabhakar Rai gave information about the training of employees. Nodal Officer for Covid Vaccination Dr Rahul Singh gave information on preparation of vaccination and monitoring of health of beneficiaries by maintenance of vaccine dose.

The district's Nodal Officer for Corona Dr Rishi Sahai, described progress in corona testing and treatment of patients.

Two more centres have now been set up in the district for corona vaccination. The 45 centres were listed two days ago. Nodal Officer for Covid Vaccination Dr Rahul Singh

said that counters will be increased on the basis of patients registered on the portal in private hospitals, not just the government.

Principal Secretary Sudhir Garg directed the officers that during the Covid vaccination, the beneficiary would be kept in the waiting room for half an hour and kept under the supervision of doctors. Under vaccination protocol, a team should be constituted to monitor the health of the beneficiary after vaccination.

These teams will provide phone numbers to the beneficiaries. In case of any problem, the team reached the spot, its arrangement should also be ensured.

No apprenticeship will be excusable during the Covid vaccination. He also directed to increase the scope of testing to prevent the spread of Corona.

# 28 more test positive in Varanasi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

As many as 28 new COVID-19 patients have been detected in the district on Tuesday, increasing the total number to 21,097. The day also saw two more deaths, increasing the toll to 357. During the day, the follow-up negative reports included 46 and all of them have been recovered from home isolation, increasing the number to 17,388. As none of the patient has been discharged from any hospital, the number remained at 2,919. The total number of patients who have been recovered so far is 20,307,

leaving 433 active cases. The recovery rate is 96.25 per cent, while the mortality rate is 1.69 per cent.

Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr VB Singh has informed that in the first report of the day, 18 positive patients were found out of 2,640 reports received. Till then, the total test reports received were 5,12,270 and the results of 2,535 are awaited. Out of them, 4,90,183 were negative, while 21,087 positive. The total number of samples collected was 5,37,301. Earlier, a male aged 65 from Chaubeypur succumbed to

COVID-19 at Sir Sundarlal Hospital, Banaras Hindu University (SSH BHU), while a male aged 66 from Madhopur died at Apex Hospital. With the addition of two new red zones, the total number of hotspots has increased to 2,639 including 199 red zones. Two green zones have been converted into the red zones again. There are 2,440 green zones with three new ones.

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

(DM) Kaushal Raj Sharma. All the 174 tests were found negative at SSPG Hospital Kabirchaura apart from 151st District Women's Hospital, 32 at CHC Shivpur, 46 at Vivekanand Hospital Bhelepur, 137 at LBS Hospital Ramnagar ans 145 at SSH BHU. Apart from this, all the 56 tests at Varanasi Junction (Cantt) railway station and 38 at Manduadih were found negative. Along with this, samples of 110 from SSH BHU, 125 from Women's Hospital, four from Vivekanand and 116 from LBS have been sent for RTPCR investigation.

# Cong Sandesh padyatra taken out

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

To mark the party's Foundation Day, the workers of the Congress Party took out Congress Sandesh padyatra in Cantt assembly constituency on the second consecutive day on Tuesday and pledged to continue their fight to protect democratic values.

The Congressmen gathered at the statue of Bharat Ratna Pt Madan Mohan Malviya at Lanka here and took out Congress Sandesh padyatra which culminated at the statue of Swami Vivekanand by covering the areas of Lanka, Assi, Bhadaini, Shivala and Vijya trijunction. During the padyatra, they apprised the people of the party policies and ideologies and also honoured the veteran party leaders.

The aim behind to take out the padyatra on the occasion of Foundation Day of party is to get the party ideology and policies reach to common men and apprise the people about the anti-people and anti-democracy policies of the government at Centre, the president of City Congress Committee (CCC) Raghendra Chaubey informed saying, the party has played an important role right from getting the



Congress taking out procession from BHU Gate in Varanasi on Tuesday

Pioneer

nation independence and building a modern India. The Congressmen will continue their fight to protect the democratic values and against the present anti-farmer and anti-youth government, he said adding, when the British Rulers were making excess on poor, labourers and farmers, the Congress Party under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajendra Prasad, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and others fought an unforgettable battle against the Britishers and got freedom.

**ACS INSPECTS PADDY PURCHASING CENTRES:** Additional Chief Secretary

(Agriculture) and District Nodal Officer Dr Devesh Chaturvedi inspected the paddy purchasing centres in the district here on Monday. While inspecting the paddy purchasing centre at PCF Mirza Murad, he held talks with the farmers selling paddy through mobile. He made calls to the farmers Mansharam (Lachhapur) and Tribhuvan Singh (Pratappur) and inquired about the problems faced in paddy sales and payment. The ACS was informed by the centre incharge that so far 5,220 quintal paddy has been procured from about 135 farmers and 50 per cent of the farmers

have been paid. In reply, expressing displeasure, Chaturvedi directed the officials concerned that the payment process should be completed immediately and there should not be any kind of laxity in it.

During inspection of ACS at food marketing centre at Araziline, he was informed by the incharge that 10,910 quintals have been sold by 258 farmers so far and payment has also been made to 198 farmers while the payment procedures of rest of farmers is under process. ACS directed the officers to update tokens and ensure purchasing in a transparent manner. He also inquired regarding dispatch of purchased paddy to the rice mills. During the inspection, ADM (Supply), Deputy RMO, AR (Cooperative) and other officers of the concerned departments were also present.

Later, at a meeting with officers at Circuit House, the ACS reviewed the progress of development works. The meeting was also attended by District Magistrate (DM) Kaushal Raj Sharma, Chief Development Officer (CDO) Madhusudan Hulgi and other officers of various departments were present in the meeting.

# Integrated Facilitation Cell inaugurated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Another step has been taken under the efficient leadership of Yash Pal Singh, General Manager of the Central Organisation for Railway Electrification (CORE). In this context, the Integrated Facilitation Cell was inaugurated by General Manager for HRMS, UMID, and e-Suvidha pass / PTO following the Covid protocol for assistance to the officers / employees working in Central Organisation for Railway Electrification, Prayagraj.

With this, the work related to Personnel department will get unprecedented contribution in smooth, easy and fast running. Due to all the facilities being operated electronically, the requirement of paper will be less and we will have to cut less trees for paper. Thus, it will also protect the environment. This was said by the General Manager.

Prominent among those present on the occasion included Arun Kumar, Chief Administrative Officer, Suresh Kumar, Principal Chief Signal and Telecom Engineer, Ashutosh, Principal Chief Engineer, Pramila Singh, Principal Chief Personnel Officer, Akmal Vadud Chief Store Manager and other officers were present.

**KILLED:** In a sensational incident, a 17-year-old teenaged was strangled to death

by some unidentified miscreants in the Pure Khargarai village of Fatanpur area in Pratapgarh district of UP. The families of the missing teenager got puzzled to see the body lying in the bush.

On receipt of information, police reached the spot and started the investigation and took the body into its custody and sent it to the mortuary for the postmortem examination. According to police the teenager left home for defecation on Monday night and did not return since then. The family members launched a hunt for him till late night but failed to trace him.

Vinod Kumar, son of Brijlal Yadav, resident of the Pure Khargarai village of Fatanpur area of the district, came out of the house on Monday night saying the family that he was going to relieve himself. When he did not return till late night, the family members were upset. The relatives started looking for him.

During the search, Vinod was found lying unconscious in the bush of the Primary School, about 200 metres away from the house. Seeing this, the kin burst into tears. Crowds of people gathered in the village after hearing the noise.

Vinod had bruises in his throat. In a hurry, the kinsmen ran to the hospital with him. In CHC Gaura, after the doctors told Vinod to be dead, a pall of gloom prevailed over the fam-

ily members. The weeping housemates came home with Vinod's body. The case has been reported to police.

The police took the body into its custody and sent it for postmortem. Police took information about the murder from Vinod Kumar's family members and villagers. Police said that an investigation is being done after registering a case on the basis of a written complaint being given by the family member of the deceased.

**ARRESTED:** A man, who was enticing a minor student of class ninth living in Jhunsi, was arrested late on Monday night. On finding them loitering along in the midnight at Civil Lines area, the police intercepted the two and questioned them. On getting the information, the Jhunsi police reached the spot and then took both of them to the police station. Where the minor was handed over to her family and the accused was arrested and sent to jail. The 14-year-old daughter of an electric goods dealer living in Jhunsi is a ninth class student in a school located in the area. On the evening of December 26, she went missing under the mysterious circumstances. The family searched a lot, but failed to find her out. Around 11 o'clock in the night, they lodged a missing report at the Jhunsi police station. The police were looking for her.

On the other hand, around 2.30 am, S-I Ajit Kumar stopped the young man walking in a suspicious condition with a minor girl in the Civil Lines and he was shocked. When questioned, the young man told her to be his sister and said that he was going home with her, but both came under suspicion after investigation and inquiries came to know about different communities. Policemen were stunned to hear what came out after he was strictly questioned. He told the police his name Yusuf Khan aka Aditya Raj son of Abdul Karim. He also told the cops that he is originally from Kasganj who currently works in a glass factory in Lucknow. When asked where he was going with the teenager on such a night, he could not give a satisfactory answer. After which information was given about the case, S-I Manoj Kumar Yadav, who was looking for a minor, also came and then both were taken to Jhunsi police station. During interrogation of the teenager, it was found that she had befriended the accused young man several months ago on Facebook. After this, she started talking often to him. On the evening of December 26, he came from Lucknow to meet her. Both met in Jhunsi after which he started taking her with him. Police said that the youth has been arrested and sent to jail on the charge of kidnapping the minor.

# Cold rooms for vaccine to be ready by Jan 1: CMO

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Chief Medical Officer Dr AK Mishra said the cold rooms set up for the National Vaccination Programme in all urban and rural areas would be ready for storage of vaccine from January 1, 2021.

He said more than three dozen private hospitals in the urban areas and all the primary

and community health centres totalling 100 were ready for the storage of vaccine for the vaccination programme.

The CMO said the UP government had chalked out a comprehensive plan to ensure that each and every person was covered under the vaccination programme.

He said in the first phase, 20,000 health workers would be

vaccinated while in the second phase, over 50,000 front line workers would be vaccinated on priority. He added that the government had taken support from Army, Railways and ESI as well to accomplish the task.

Dr Mishra said it was quite encouraging that the COVID-19 pandemic was on decline yet every precaution had to be taken as it could re-emerge at

any time. He said the whole world was taking special precautions to prevent another wave of pandemic.

The CMO advised people to maintain social distancing, wear face masks and use sanitisers. He said the country could effectively reduce the impact of the pandemic by strictly sticking to the formula of social distancing.

# Garg takes stock of Kanha Gaushala

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Principal Secretary (Irrigation and Water Resources) Anil Garg, while carrying out a surprise inspection of Kanha Gaushala at Jana Gaon on Tuesday directed the officials there to set up a plant to manufacture phenyl made from cow urine and wood from cow dung.

The nodal officer for Kanpur Nagar said as part of the Smart City Project, a CNG plant would also be set up.

He said the state government was concerned about the cow shelters and the facilities provided to the milch cattle.

He said to ensure there was enough fodder for the milch cattle, green fodder had been grown on this 25-acre land for the cow shelter.

Garg said the centre was being provided with 25 quintal of fodder daily and special arrangements had also been made for enough water supply for the cattle.

He said in order to give shelter to more cows, more sheds were being set up and fodder plants had been grown on 25-acre land.

The principal secretary



Principal Secretary, Irrigation and Water Resource Department, Anil Garg, carrying out inspection of Kanha Gaushala, Jaana Gaon on Tuesday.

took a feedback on the number of cows in the shelter homes and said as per the official records, there were 2,844 cows there.

He said all the shelter homes should ensure that the products produced by them

were marketed properly and popularised.

He said the products of these cow shelters were indigenous and thus it was the moral duty of the people to purchase them from the shelter homes.

Garg directed the officials to ensure proper care was taken of the cows and said surprise visits would be carried out frequently to ensure that the sheds and upkeep of the animals was proper.

# LIC sales training centre at Bareilly inaugurated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Life Insurance Corporation of India's north central region sales training centre at Bareilly was inaugurated virtually by Managing Director TC Sushil Kumar.

He expressed the hope that this training centre will churn out best sales officials to promote business of the LIC not only in the NCR (national capital region) but at the national level as well.

Addressing the gathering, Regional Manager AK Sharma, said that the sales representatives were an integral and most important part of an organisation and they performed the most important role. He said it was first the agent who came in contact with the customer and his/her ability to convince and express in lucid manner was what motivated the customer to go in for purchase of new schemes of the organisation. He said the agent had thorough knowledge of the



products and his/her attitude and ability to convince customers was the most important part of the growth of an organisation. He said it was the agent who roped in customers and made the organisation grow. He said understanding

the importance of sale representatives, the LIC had decided to launch a full-fledged and modern training centre to train the field staff before they were given tasks for the LIC.

Sharma said LIC had 30 crore customers and this was in

fact due to the hard work of the agents and thus the LIC had decided to impart quality training to the field staff so that LIC was pushed to the topmost rungs of the success ladder. Others present included Gulshan Kumar.

# CM to unveil KDA's ambitious projects

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will soon unveil the six ambitious projects of Kanpur Development Authority (KDA) worth Rs.524 crore.

The state administration has asked the KDA to send details of these projects for fixing the date for their inauguration by the chief minister.

The projects also include the inauguration of the Water Harvesting Theme Park at Indira Nagar, that is the first-of-its-kind in the state.

After completion of these projects, finishing touches are being given by the KDA. The robot and speaking tree installed at the Water Harvesting Theme Park have become functional while the Jajmau Entry Gate is being given finishing touches.

The setting up of rainwater harvesting theme park involved an expenditure of Rs.7.51 crore. It is equipped with talking tree, holographic



Rainwater Harvesting Theme Park developed by KDA in Indira Nagar.

projection, solar system, sewerage treatment plant and robot. It aims at spreading awareness about water harvesting.

With an expenditure of Rs.12.46 crore, the beautification of Jajmau Entry Gate was carried out. It involved the beautification of Ganga ghat, developing green belt, footpath and landscaping. The construction of Phoolbagh multi-level parking involved expenditure of Rs.70.66 crore for the parking of 1,026 two-wheelers and four-wheelers. It will help in overcoming the problem of traffic jams in nearby localities, including Phoolbagh, Mall Road, etc.

The KDA's Signature Greens City project was completed at a cost of Rs.433 crore. It has 552 2BHK and 576 3BHK flats. Rs.45 lakh were spent on construction of road divider between Jajmau police outpost and Siddhnath Temple while the project for providing street light from Singhpur Tiraha to Rani Laxmibai Chowk, Bithoor octroi post, involved an expenditure of Rs.53 lakh.

# 43 more test positive in Kanpur

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Chief Medical Officer Dr Anil K Mishra said 43 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 32,233 on Tuesday evening.

The CMO said 38 COVID-19 patients were discharged. He said no COVID-19 death reported in the city during the past 24 hours.

Dr Mishra said 563 active cases were undergoing treatment in the city at present. He said 4216 samples were taken in the city on Tuesday for testing.

# STF trailing six drug smugglers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

After the recovery of 30 kg Acharas in Kanpur Dehat on Monday and scanning the call details of the arrested smugglers, the STF has come to know about the presence of six more drug smugglers who have entered Uttar Pradesh. They are operating in the state as agents of a Nepalese drug mafia and collecting their consignments from Aas Narain and Aslam of East Champaran in Bihar.

It may be recalled that the STF had raided a dhaba in Sikandra of Kanpur Dehat on Monday and arrested drug smugglers Khurshid Siddiqui of Motihari (Bihar) and Salim Ansari of East Champaran (Bihar). Besides, two women, Soni Khatun and Gudiya Khatun of Motihari (Bihar), Suresh Chandra of Shivrajpur (Kanpur Nagar), Jitendra of Mangalpur (Kanpur Dehat) and Sushila, wife of drug supplier Shailendra of Chaubepur (Kanpur Nagar) were also arrested. The police had recovered Rs.1.50 crore in the international market from them.

During interrogation, Khurshid and Salim disclosed that six more drug smugglers had proceeded from Nepal for Uttar Pradesh with huge cache of charas. Deputy Superintendent of Police (STF) Tej Bahadur Singh said he had received information about supply of huge quantity of drugs to Kanpur, Agra and other adjoining districts on the occasion of New Year.

# Kanpur Metro Rail piling work almost complete

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Uttar Pradesh Metro Rail Corporation Ltd (UPMRC) has accomplished most of the piling work of the Kanpur Metro Rail project's priority corridor from IIT-Kanpur to Motijheel.

The priority corridor will have 2,204 piles out of which 2,174 piles have been constructed and a few cross-over piles remain to be made. UPMRC Managing Director Kumar Keshav said to cross over all challenges, they had finished the piling work of the priority corridor. He said now the remaining construction work will be accelerated.

He said the finishing work of Metro station was also going on and added the UPMRC had set small targets for various works that were being completed with full dedication day and night and the task would be accomplished before the deadline. It is to be mentioned that on the November 15, 2019, the construction work of the 9-km-long priority corridor between IIT-K and Motijheel was inaugurated by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

In a short span of over 13 months, the dedicated and skilled team of UPMRC engineers and contractors have accomplished numerous achievements associated with the civil construction of the priority corridor.

# Ganja recovered; two held

CORRESPONDENT ■ CHANDAULI

Balua police on Monday recovered a huge quantity of illegal ganja during checking and arrested two persons on charge of smuggling. The police said that the value of about four quintals of ganja was around ₹1 crore which was being taken from Chhattisgarh to Bihar. The police has arrested the two accused and sent them to jail. On being



tipped off by an informer the Balua police was checking vehicles near Papoura Bazar when a truck was stopped on the basis of suspicion following which two people were caught. During investigation the police seized huge consignment of ganja kept in sacks from the truck. The two accused were later identified as Sanjay Kumar and Ajay Shankar Singh, residents of Bhojpur, Bihar.

# Minister's appeal to people

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

UP Minister of State for Energy Rama Shankar Singh Patel said that khadi and gramodyog was a boon for not only rural economy but for national economy too. While speaking at the inaugural function of the 10-day-long Khadi Gramodyog exhibition at the ground of BLJ Inter College, Mahauria, on Monday as the chief guest he said the government had paved the way for promotion of cottage industries based on rural products and now it was the duty of people to adopt items which were being produced by such industries. He said rural industries were helpful in earning more without leaving home. He appealed to people to avail the facilities provided by the government and be involved with rural industries to increase per capita income. MLA Ratnakar Mishra also expressed his views on the occasion. MLA Shuchmita Maurya said khadi was not merely a cloth but an ideology. The



programme concluded with the distribution of tool kits to the artisans of ODO (one district one product) and started with the lighting of ceremonial lamp by guests. Among those who present were DM Sushil Kumar Patel, commissioner Khadi Gramodyog, Vinod Chaudhary, besides Prem Singh Garg, Dhanendra Pandey, Rama Pandey and Udaybhan Tiwari.

WARNED: NPP Chairman Manoj Jaiswal at a meeting held at its office warned the agency associated with AMRUT scheme. He said during the laying of pipeline, roads were being damaged and no proper filling of soil after laying them was causing great inconvenience to people. He directed the working agency to connect water tapes with new pipeline simultaneously to avoid further inconvenience to the residents. He said fund should be provided to NPP according to the damage. The members and engineers of Nagar Palika and Jal Nigam were present on the occasion.

# Darbhanga-Amritsar puja special extended

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The railway administration has extended the following special trains already being run for the convenience of the passengers. However, their stoppages and timing of these trains will remain as before. All coaches will be of reserved category and passengers travelling in them will have to follow the Covid-19 guidelines, CPRO PK Singh said. The 08181 Tata-Chhapra puja special will be run every Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday till March 29, 2021. The 08182 Chhapra-Tata Puja special will be run every Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday till March 31, 2021. The 09601 Udaipur-New Jalpaiguri weekly puja special has been extended till January 30. The 09602 New Jalpaiguri-Udaipur weekly puja special has been extended till February 1 and its rake composition has been

changed. According to the changed rake structure, a total of 20 coaches, including two coaches of SLR, four of general second class, seven of sleeper, five of AC third and two of AC second class will be attached. The 02521 Barauni-Ernakulam weekly puja special has been extended till January 27. The 02522 Ernakulam-Barauni weekly puja special will be extended from Ernakulam every Sunday till January 31. The 02629 Muzaffarpur-Ahmedabad weekly puja special has been extended till January 28. The 05270 Ahmedabad-Muzaffarpur weekly puja special has been extended till January 30 and its rake composition has been changed. According to the changed structure, a total of 22 coaches, including two of generator-cum-luggage van and 20 coaches of general second class will be attached in this train. The 05251 Darbhanga-Jalandhar City weekly puja special has been extended

till January 30. The 05252 Jalandhar City-Darbhanga weekly puja special has been extended till January 31. The 05531 Saharsa-Amritsar weekly puja special has been extended till January 31. The 05532 Amritsar-Saharsa weekly puja special has been extended till February 1. The 05211 Darbhanga-Amritsar puja special has been extended till January 29. The 05212 Amritsar-Darbhanga weekly puja special has been extended till January 31. The stoppage of this train at Haighat station has been withdrawn. As a result the 05211 Darbhanga-Amritsar puja special train from January 1 and 05212 Amritsar-Darbhanga weekly puja special from January 3 will not stop at Haighat station. The 05529 Saharsa-Anand Vihar Terminus weekly puja special has been extended till January 27. The 05530 Anand Vihar Terminus-Saharsa weekly puja special has been extended till January 28.

# Gkp-Kolkata puja spl timing changed from Jan 1

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

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

**05048 GKP-KOLKATA PUJA SPL:** The 05048 Gorakhpur-Kolkata puja special train will be run till March 30 and changes have been in its timing and stoppages. As per the changed timing from January 1, 2021, the puja special train will every Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Friday leave Gorakhpur at 11.30 hrs, Deoria Sadar at 12.22 hrs, Siwan at 13.25 hrs, Chhapra at 14.50 hrs, Hajipur at 15.57 hrs, Muzaffarpur at 16.55 hrs, Samastipur at 17.55 hrs, Barauni at 19.30 hrs, Jhajha at 21.50 hrs, Jasidih at 22.27 hrs, Madhupur at 22.52 hrs, Chittaranjan at 23.33 hrs, Asansol at 00.16 hrs on second day, Durgapur at 00.47 hrs, Bardhaman at 01.53 hrs, Bunder at 02.55 hrs, Naihati at 03.20 hrs and reach Kolkata at 04.40 hrs. The 05049 Kolkata-Gorakhpur puja special (via Desari, Ballia, Mau) will be run till March 31, 2021, and changes have been made in its timing and stoppage. From January 1 as per changed timing the train will leave Kolkata every Wednesday and Sunday at 14.30 hrs, Naihati at 15.18 hrs, Bandel at 15.45 hrs, Bardhaman at 16.48 hrs, Durgapur at 17.40 hrs, Asansol at 18.22 hrs, Chittaranjan at 18.45 hrs, Madhupur at 19.26 hrs, Jasidih at 19.58 hrs, Jhajha at 21.10 hrs, Barauni at 23.35 hrs, Mohiuddinnagar on second day at 00.10 hrs, Shahpur Patori at 00.24 hrs, Desari at 00.50 hrs, Hajipur at 01.20 hrs, Chhapra at 02.55 hrs, Ballia at 03.55 hrs, Rasra at 04.30 hrs, Indara at 05.00 hrs, Mau from 05.40 hrs, Belthra Road at 06.10 hrs, Salempur at 06.40 hrs, Bhatni at 07.15 hrs, Deoria Sadar at 07.45 hrs and Gorakhpur at 09.10 hrs.

**05052 GKP-KOLKATA PUJA SPL:** The 05052 Gorakhpur-Kolkata puja special train (via Narkatiaganj) will be run till March 25 and changes have been made in its timing and stoppages. As per the changed timing from January 1 the train will every Thursday leave Gorakhpur at 10.10 hrs, Piplaich at 10.35 hrs, Kaptanganj at 11.02 hrs, Siswa Bazar at 11.38 hrs, Bagaha at 12.49 hrs, Narkatiaganj at 13.33 hrs, Bettiah at 14.02 hrs, Sugauli at 14.41 hrs, Bapudham Motihari at 14.41 hrs, Muzaffarpur at 17.30 hrs, Samastipur at 18.20 hrs, Barauni at 19.30 hrs, Jhajha at 21.50 hrs,

timing and stoppages. The train will leave Gorakhpur every Wednesday and Saturday at 08.45 hrs, Deoria Sadar at 09.38 hrs, Bhatni at 10.10 hrs, Salempur at 10.30 hrs, Belthra Road at 10.52 hrs, Indara at 12.02 hrs, Rasra at 12.33 hrs, Ballia at 13.13 hrs, Suraimanpur at 13.48 hrs, Chhapra at 15.05 hrs, Hajipur at 16.35 hrs, Desari at 16.57 hrs, Shahpur Patori at 17.38 hrs, Mohiuddinnagar at 17.54 hrs, Barauni at 19.40 hrs, Jhajha at 21.50 hrs, Jasidih at 22.27 hrs, Madhupur at 22.55 hrs, Chittaranjan at 23.33 hrs, Asansol on second day at 00.16 hrs, Durgapur at 00.47 hrs, Bardhaman at 01.53 hrs, Bunder at 02.55 hrs, Naihati at 03.20 hrs and reach Kolkata at 04.40 hrs. The 05049 Kolkata-Gorakhpur puja special (via Desari, Ballia, Mau) will be run till March 31, 2021, and changes have been made in its timing and stoppage. From January 1 as per changed timing the train will leave Kolkata every Wednesday and Sunday at 14.30 hrs, Naihati at 15.18 hrs, Bandel at 15.45 hrs, Bardhaman at 16.48 hrs, Durgapur at 17.40 hrs, Asansol at 18.22 hrs, Chittaranjan at 18.45 hrs, Madhupur at 19.26 hrs, Jasidih at 19.58 hrs, Jhajha at 21.10 hrs, Barauni at 23.35 hrs, Mohiuddinnagar on second day at 00.10 hrs, Shahpur Patori at 00.24 hrs, Desari at 00.50 hrs, Hajipur at 01.20 hrs, Chhapra at 02.55 hrs, Ballia at 03.55 hrs, Rasra at 04.30 hrs, Indara at 05.00 hrs, Mau from 05.40 hrs, Belthra Road at 06.10 hrs, Salempur at 06.40 hrs, Bhatni at 07.15 hrs, Deoria Sadar at 07.45 hrs and Gorakhpur at 09.10 hrs.

**GKP-HATIA PUJA SPL:** The 05028 Gorakhpur-Hatia puja special will be run till March 31 and changes have been made in its timing and stoppages. As per the changed timing from January 1 it will leave Gorakhpur at 07.25 hrs daily, Gauri Chaura at 07.57 hrs, Gauri Bazaar at 08.12 hrs, Deoria Sadar at 08.35 hrs, Bhatni Jn at 08.56 hrs, Bhatpar Rani at 09:13 hrs and after stopping at Mairwa, Siwan Jn, Duraundha Jn Ekma, Chhapra Jn, Dighwara, Sonpur, Hajipur, Bhawanpur Goraul, Muzaffarpur, Dholi, Khudi Ram Bose Pusa, Samastipur, Dalsingarai, Bachhwara, Barauni, Hathidah Upper, Luckeesarai, Kiul, Jamui, Jhajha, Jasidih, Madhupur, Vidyasagar, Chittaranjan on the second day at 00.11 hrs, Kumardubi at 01.05 hrs, Dhanbad at 02.20 hrs, Katrasgarh at 02.46 hrs., Chandrapura at 03.24 hrs, Bokaro Steel City at 04.30 hrs, Kotshila at 05.03 hrs, Muri at 05.40 hrs, Ranchi at 07.05 hrs and reach Hatia-Gorakhpur puja special will be run till April 1 and changes have been made in its timing and stoppages.



# Desi Covid vaccine effective against new variants: Govt



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Soon after the detection of six cases of new strain of Covid-19 in the country, the Government on Tuesday assured that the vaccines under development would also work against the mutated pathogen first reported in the UK.

"No need to worry about vaccines. Vaccines will work against the variants detected in the UK and South Africa. There is no evidence that current vaccines will fail to protect against the new mutant strains," said Principal Scientific Adviser K VijayRaghavan at a presser here.

However, he said that even as the vaccine will provide safety from the new variants, "there is a need to reduce transmission through physical distancing, follow all public health measures scrupulously, wear masks, follow hand-washing, COVID appropriate behaviour, infection control, amplify test, track, isolate efforts."

The scientific advisor's statement came hours after 6 samples of UK returns tested positive for the new strain in Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Pune.

"There is no evidence that

## No need to worry about vaccines: Principal Scientific Adviser K VijayRaghavan

current vaccines will fail to protect against COVID-19 variants reported from the UK or South Africa. Most vaccines do target the Spike protein, in which there are changes in the variants, but vaccines stimulate our immune system to produce a wide range of protective antibodies. The changes in the variants are not sufficient to make the vaccines ineffective," the scientist explained through a presentation made at the press briefing here.

He further said, "The nature of the new variants: eight of the 17 important changes are in the part which codes for the Spike protein. One change (N501Y) increases affinity for the ACE2 receptor, used for viral entry into human cells. It has been linked earlier to increased infectivity and transmission in animal models. Another change (P681H) promotes entry into susceptible cells and increases transmission in animal models of infection. "The South Africa also

shares the N501Y mutation with the UK variants, in addition to other distinct changes."

Regarding the variant detected in the UK, VijayRaghavan said, it was more transmissible and the variant is spreading very rapidly taking over the frequency of other variants.

"It is also reflected in a large increase in positivity rate in the UK. We must take extraordinary precautions to prevent these kinds of variants from dominating populations."

The Scientific Advisor further added, "The Indian SARS-CoV2 Genomics Consortium is conducting testing and sequencing of samples from international travelers. Testing and sequencing of samples also being done from across the country and from those being admitted to hospitals."

However, he had a word of advice. "As vaccines become available, we should not be complacent. There is a need to reduce transmission through physical distancing, follow all public health measures scrupulously, wear masks, follow hand-washing, COVID appropriate behaviour, infection control, amplify test, track, isolate efforts," he added.

# More youths getting Covid infected as they leave their homes in search of jobs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Compelled to move out from homes for jobs amid Covid crisis, more youths are getting infected with the virus, when compared to the old aged people who are usually in the confines of their homes.

But when infected, it is the patients over the age of 65 years, account for 55% of India's Covid-19 deaths while it is 43% for those in the age group of 26-60 years. Gender wise, the virus has found to be more virulent for males who accounted for 70 per cent of total deaths.

"About 45 per cent of all COVID-19 deaths in the country have been reported in those below 60 years of age while 70 per cent of total fatalities from the infection were registered in men," Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said on Tuesday.

Addressing a press conference, he said 63 per cent of the total cases were reported in males and 37 per cent cases in females.

"Eight per cent cases have been reported below the age of 17 years, 13 per cent in the 18-25 years age group, 39 per cent in 26-44 years group, 26 per cent in 45-60 years group and 14 per cent cases above 60 years," he said.

Bhushan further said 45 per cent of the COVID-19 deaths so far have been reported in those below 60 years of age and 70 per cent of total

fatalities from the infection were registered in men.

About 55 per cent COVID-19 deaths were reported in those aged 60 and above, 33 per cent in the age group of 45 to 60 years, 10 per cent in the age group of 26-44 years and one per cent each in those aged between 18-25 years and in those below 17 years, according to the data presented by Bhushan.

He said the number of active cases of COVID-19 has been registered at 2.7 lakhs, sliding to a low after six months. The cumulative positivity rate stands at 6.02 per cent while the positivity rate during last week was 2.25 per cent.

"Five States and UTs which account for 60 per cent of total active COVID-19 cases are Maharashtra, Kerala, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh," he said.

Bhushan further said India's rate of cases per million population — at 7,408 — is among the lowest in the world while the number of deaths per million population stood at 107.

In the last seven days, 110 new cases and two deaths per million population have been reported while the number of active cases per million has been registered at 194, he said adding in contrast, the maximum of 52 death was reported in Italy, followed by 49 in UK, 47 in US, 33 in France, 27 in Russia and 21 in Brazil.

# Minister calls Modi's decision to increase post-matric scholarship to 4 crore SC students historic

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Senior BJP leader and Union Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Thawarchand Gehlot on Tuesday described as "historic" the Modi-Government's recent decision to increase post-matric scholarship to "four crore 'Scheduled caste students in the next five-year."

The Modi Government aims to provide post-matric scholarship to over four crore students belonging to the Scheduled Caste category over the next five years, raising the number from existing 60 lakh beneficiaries, said Gehlot here at a press conference.

He also told reporters the government's recent decision to raise the Centre's share in the scholarship amount to 60 per cent, and hike it progressively to 80 per cent, will result in a total expenditure of over ₹ 59,048 crore by 2025-26 and ensure monetary assistance to the underprivileged students in time.

The Union Cabinet had last week approved changes in the centrally sponsored Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme to benefit more than four crore Scheduled Caste students in the next five years and approved a total investment of over ₹ 59,000 crore for the purpose.

The Centre had spent only around ₹ 1,100 crore annually in the last two years under an earlier formula, now changed by the Modi Government, which had led to a rise in state's share, with almost half of the 36 states and Union Territories not

## Money will now be directly transferred to the students' bank accounts and the Centre will contribute only after the State has done so

getting any contribution from the Union dispensation, the minister said.

Many States would not pay scholarship on time or use the fund for some other purposes resulting in increasing dropouts from SC students due to lack of scholarship, he said, adding this will change now.

"Money will be now directly transferred to the student's bank account and the Centre will contribute only after the State has done so," he said.

"This is a historic decision. It will boost educational standards. No State has opposed our announcement," Gehlot, a Dalit face of the ruling party, said.

The percentage of students benefiting from the post-matric scholarship has risen to 23 from 17 in 2014-15, and the government is working to augment the number of beneficiaries to 27 per cent, he said.

Also addressing the press conference, BJP general secretary Dushyant Kumar Gautam hit out at the previous Congress-led UPA Government at the Centre, saying over 50 lakh fake beneficiaries were getting scholarships at the cost of Dalit students.

# CBI files chargesheet against Parekh Aluminex, IOB officials in ₹300-crore bank fraud case

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI Tuesday filed a charge sheet against Parekh Aluminex Ltd (PAL) and its director, besides some officials of Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) in an alleged bank fraud case worth ₹297.80 crore, officials said.

The company which is into manufacturing of Aluminum Foil Containers, Aluminum Foil Rolls, Lids and other related products is facing multiple CBI cases with outstanding dues of ₹917.61 crore to various banks as detected by the CBI so far, they said.

In the case related to the IOB, the agency has chargesheeted 24 accused persons including the Mumbai-based company, its director,

chartered accountant, then officials of the public sector bank and directors and proprietor of associated companies, they said.

"It was alleged that the accused allegedly aided in diversion of funds and facilitated in siphoning-off funds by way of submitting fake and forged purchase invoices and LCs."

"It was also alleged that the said company had availed credit limits from various banks and financial institution. Out of these Nationalized banks, Indian Overseas Bank Mumbai Branch has disbursed credit facilities to the tune of ₹292.20 crore (approx) under consortium arrangement," CBI Spokesperson RC Joshi said.

# CSC ties up with IIT-D for design and innovation lab

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-run Common Services Centers (CSC) on Tuesday said it has partnered with IIT-Delhi to establish a design and innovation lab which will conduct research on new products and services for village level entrepreneurs (VLE).

The labs would conduct research on design-led innovations related to leveraging livelihood and enhancing all-round entrepreneurial outlook, a statement said.

The project named 'Design and Innovation in VLE's

Indigenous Network Ecosystem' (Divine) Lab will promote design and innovation among the village level entrepreneurs (VLE), CSC said in a statement. CSC managing director Dinesh Tyagi said that CSCs and VLEs are driven by an entrepreneurial spirit.

"The Design Lab will benefit from IIT Delhi's unparalleled expertise and experiences of VLEs who will bring hyper-local realities and challenges of delivering services to the partnership," Tyagi said. The Divine Lab aims to provide continuous research into

the rural entrepreneurial ecosystem and design new products and services for VLEs.

IIT-Delhi Director Prof V Ramagopal Rao said that the collaboration with CSC will support IIT students to access CSC's network and identify problems in rural India. "World-class research infrastructure and expertise available at IIT-Delhi will support to design and innovate solutions for rural problems through the wide network of VLEs across the country," Ramagopal said.

# More than 6.5L posts vacant in State police, Central forces



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

More than six and a half lakh posts are lying vacant in various State police and Central forces.

According to the data released by the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) on Tuesday, 5.31 lakh posts in different state police forces and 1.27 lakh posts in Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) are lying vacant.

Releasing different aspects of policing in the country as on January 1, 2020, the BPR&D also said a total of 1,19,069 police men were recruited in 2019 in various police forces across India. These vacancies are expected to increase further due to the Covid-19 pandemic as many organisations have not conducted fresh recruitment in the entire 2020.

According to the data, the total sanctioned police forces in States and Union Territories is

26,23,225, while there are 20,91,488 police personnel actually in service. Therefore, 5,31,737 posts in police forces are lying vacant as on January 1, 2020.

The figures include civil police, district armed police, special armed police and India Reserve Battalions. The BPR&D, a wing of the Ministry of Home Affairs, said the strength of women in police forces is 2,15,504, which is 10.30 per cent of the total police force in India.

There has been a 16.05 per cent increase of women police over the previous year, it added. The data said the total sanctioned strength of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) is 11,09,511 but the actual strength of the CAPFs as on January 1, 2020, is 9,82,391. The total number of women police personnel in CAPF is 29,249, which is 2.98 per cent of the total strength. The



CAPFs are CRPF, BSF, CISF, ITBP, SSB, NSG and Assam Rifles.

According to the data, there are 800 police districts in the country and the number of sanctioned police stations is 16,955. The total State Armed Police Battalions is 318 and the total police commissionerates is 63. A total of 2,02,925 police vehicles are available with the states and UTs police, besides 4,60,220 CCTV cameras, the BPR&D said. The governments has spent Rs 1,566.85 crore in 2019-20 for expenditure and police training.

# Vardhan nominated to board of Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan has been nominated by the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI) as a member on its board, according to an official statement on Tuesday.

The GAVI Board is responsible for strategic direction and policy-making, oversees the operations of the Vaccine Alliance and monitors programme implementation.

Vardhan will be representing the South East Asia Regional Office (SEARO)/Western Pacific Regional Office (WPRO) constituency on the GAVI Board. The seat is currently held by Myint Htwe of Myanmar, the Union Health Ministry said in its statement.

The Union health minister will be representing India at the board from January 1, 2021, until December 31, 2023, it said.

The board normally meets twice a year in June and November-December and holds an annual retreat, generally in March or April. All these meetings are normally attended-in-person.

With membership drawn from a range of partner organisations as well as experts from the private sector, the board provides a forum for balanced strategic decision-making, innovation and partner collaboration, the statement said.

GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance as part of its mission to save lives, reduce poverty and protect the world against the threat of epidemics, has helped vaccinate more than 822 million children in the world's poorest countries, preventing more than 14 million future deaths.

Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala presently serves as Chair of the GAVI Alliance Board.

# Coronavirus brought tourism to its knees in 2020

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The year 2020 exposed the vulnerability of our cultural heritage which is dependent on tourism for its survival and forced the government to look at alternatives to keep not just the sites and monuments alive, but also to position India as the choice of destination when the coronavirus pandemic ends.

While acknowledging that in 2021, both approaches towards policy making and implementing them would be vastly different from what was done so far, Union Minister for Tourism and Culture Prahald Patel said he wants to be cautious about the way forward.

"We are still dealing with the pandemic and alternatives that work now, like our activities on the digital platforms, they might or might not work when things are normal. We have to analyse if people would still prefer online platforms at a time when they can visit and actually see the sites. We have to be cautious and not take any drastic steps," Patel told PTI.

In the past nine months, the ministry conducted more than 65 webinars depicting the culture, tradition, museums, monuments and artists of the country under the Dekho Aapna Desh initiative.

The tourism sector is one of the largest industries and accounts for 6.23 per cent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and provides employment to 8.78 per cent of the population.

It managed to generate around 275.5 billion dollars in revenue in fiscal 2018 with an annual growth rate at 9.4 per cent.

The tourism sector experienced a crippling effect with the nationwide lockdown announced in late March coinciding with the peak tourism season kickstarting from early April onwards.

Guides, tour operators, vehicle drivers, hotels, restaurants, shops and other facilities related directly or indirectly to tourism have taken a hit owing

to the spread of the virus.

With both flights, inbound and outbound, and domestic train operations suspended, the Indian tourism industry is projected to book a revenue loss of Rs 1.25 trillion in calendar 2020 as a fall-out of the shutdown of hotels and suspension in flight operations after the onset and spread of the pandemic.

A study by CARE Ratings notes that the figure corresponds to a 40 per cent decline in revenue over calendar 2019.

The report assumes the impact of the pandemic on tourism at about 50 per cent during January and February 2020, while it may be higher at 70 per cent in March alone, following the suspension of international flights.

During April-June, the Indian tourism industry is expected to book a revenue loss of Rs 69,400 crore, denoting a year-on-year loss of 30 per cent.

Patel said now is the time to look inwards and promote unexplored parts of the country. If one cannot go abroad for their holidays or foreign tourists can't come in, domestic tourism is the only way to keep the sector above water, he said.

"The loss to the tourism sector cannot be ascertained at this time as the pandemic is still underway. But, domestic tourism is the way to revive the tourism sector. Unexplored, unexploited destinations have to be identified and promoted. That is what we are trying to do, encourage people to visit places within the country," Patel said.

He also said that India's health, wellness centres, Ayush hospitals offering alternative care will draw tourists post the pandemic and they should be promoted as post-COVID care solutions.

The ministry is in talks to tie up such centres with insurance firms so that tourists can avail the insurance before arriving in India for treatment.

## Resilience pays!

India's victory in Melbourne is a lesson in the power of commitment. A determination to bounce back



In the pantheon of India's top cricketing wins, Melbourne 2020 may not be at the top. In fact, it won't because until something truly remarkable happens, nothing will ever top Eden Gardens, 2001. But Melbourne will have a place near the very top; not because it was a great win, but because of what preceded it at Adelaide a week ago when India's vaunted batting line-up was bowled out for a truly embarrassing 36. India then lost two of its strike bowlers, Mohammed Shami and Ishant Sharma, to injury and its talismanic leader Virat Kohli took paternity leave in order to be next to his wife when she delivers their first child. With all this happening, Indian crick-

et fans feared the worst, a truly apocalyptic whitewash Down Under. Yet, powered on by a desire to redeem themselves, not only in the eyes of 1.3 billion fans but also their own, the Indian cricket team delivered a truly astonishing and comprehensive win at the Melbourne Cricket Ground which, like Eden Gardens, is one of those cathedrals to the sport. As we head into a new year, after living through the worst year in recent memory, and one where unfortunately many millions across the world who have lost their lives to a truly awful disease will not join us, this win should give every single one of us hope. Sport is, in essence, a distraction from life but nothing is as powerful as a story of redemption in sports. And more powerful still is a story of an unexpected redemption. Because such stories give us hope, false hope some might argue, because we do not know how the remaining two Tests in the series will go and India might still lose the series just like even with several vaccines being deployed, humanity might not win the battle against COVID-19 anytime soon; but hope is what is important.

Hope comes from leadership. Ajinkya Rahane was thrust into a leadership position he did not necessarily want but one where he conducted himself brilliantly. The debutants Mohammed Siraj and Shubman Gill calmed the fire of the crucible of Test cricket well. Ravichandran Ashwin and Jasprit Bumrah proved again that they are among the best bowlers in the sport, and India fell in love with Test cricket, a format pilloried by the attention-deficit generation as old, stodgy and way too long. Most importantly, India's players have dealt with the emotional deprivation of the "bubble" well, steering clear of breaking it no matter what the temptations, something many other Test teams such as Pakistan, the West Indies and even England at home have not managed. The pandemic has not been easy on anybody but trying to understand how top athletes can manage themselves in a bubble is beyond most of us. On this front, Lewis Hamilton, who recently won his record-equalling seventh F1 title, should be an inspiration to all. Of course, the Indian team has major questions ahead of it. Our top order, particularly our opening slots, is still up for debate. Injuries have ravaged the bowling unit, the latest victim being Umesh Yadav, and replacements can't just be flown in easily. The next two Test matches will be a challenge; Sydney has already been dropped as the host of the third Test match thanks to the Coronavirus ruling rampant in Australia's biggest city and it losing out on its traditional New Year's slot. Maybe familiarity with the conditions will help India but maybe the Australian players will want redemption themselves with talk of David Warner, an explosive batsman disgraced in a scandalous ball-tampering issue a couple of years ago, potentially making his return to the Test team as well. Who knows? But we should enjoy this win and hope that India, and the world, can learn from this and find it possible to bounce back as well in 2021. This is the best New Year's sports gift that India has ever received.

## The year of loss

Can we convert 2020 from being a 'lost year' to a 'turnaround year' for the sake of humanity?



Many of us would want 2020 to be a blur of memory while history would record it with more clarity as a turning point in human civilisation; one where life as we knew it dissolved and liquefied and the COVID-19 outbreak showed that our species was definitely not sitting comfortably atop the evolutionary peak. And given its prolonged spell, the tiny microbe — foxing us by mutating itself and resisting all our efforts to tame it — has for the first time made us uncertain about the future, something that has been shaping our horizon, helping us plot the roadmap of our lives. Now, with our lives changing every moment, there's certainly nothing to work towards or a predictive compass to guide us. And

it is this absence of a future that is our greatest loss this year, making us look more fragile than the virus has made us feel, claiming millions of lives. And the losses have been on many fronts. First, the loss of people — from scientists, virologists, doctors, celebrities, the rich and the poor, to all the people we loved around us. We lost extraordinary talent, mourned those who still hadn't done their time, cried for those who had no reason to leave so early and left much work unfinished. Humanity has been hollowed out with a severity that has not left a single person unhurt. The second loss has been that of livelihood, be it through job and salary cuts, the closure of businesses and sunrise sectors of the economy shutting down. Never in our experienced history have we felt so economically disempowered, or helpless about continuing life without resources. The third obvious loss, therefore, has been that of a ritualised lifestyle that we had built up around ourselves on aspiration and which we fuelled with our ambitions. The forced break on travels, celebrations, gatherings and parties has meant the loss of social communion as we experienced and defined it. A year of denial has meant the loss of conspicuous consumption, something which we used to announce our self-worth with in society.

Perhaps these losses have confirmed our worst failures as human beings and provided an opportunity to not just improve ourselves but rebuild a more compassionate, shared and equitable future. Even reset the template with the best version of ourselves and making the right choices. That is how we will make good our losses and convert 2020 from being a "lost year" to a "turnaround year" for humanity. It might appear high-sounding but we have to go back to basic values and altruistic living and, given our uncertain life spans, fill the time we have now with meaningful pursuits. Of course, it is difficult to overturn the politics of convention and power play. There is too much focus on returning to our pre-pandemic ways by overtly depending on the vaccine to defeat the virus and reclaim our lives. But the emergence of a recent deadlier strain has shown that we need more and that old selfish mindsets and self-serving attitudes simply won't work anymore. We must become our own hope to silence the virus. For that is forcing us to look inward and value our families and the communities around us. Making us realise that an experiential indulgence of the senses is no substitute for the emotions of fulfilling relationships. Where a shared chore, a mundane task or running an errand seems exciting and less of a drudgery. Where the satisfaction of a job well done and moments well lived, no matter how small or insignificant, settles deep inside us. And where the honesty of what we really are can lift the haze around us. That would dissolve the fear of the virus. Yes, 2020 has been a great disruptor. The question is can we make 2021 a great creator of human gains?

**ASHOK K MEHTA**  
 The vertical split in the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) was inevitable. After all, it was an artificial alliance of two ideological variants of Marxist-Leninist ideology and bitter rivalry between two unrelenting leaders — Prachanda, who led the Maoists in the civil war and set the stage for transformation in Nepal, and Prime Minister KP Oli (United Marxist-Leninist) who created the tsunami of nationalism to sweep the polls on a largely anti-India sentiment. The merger of the two parties and power-sharing on the basis of votes won was at the root of the "two-and-a-half years each" agreement between Oli and Prachanda becoming untenable. The attempt at gluing fractures following multiple crises was also bound to fail.

The key actors in Nepal's make-and-mend process are President BD Bhandari and Chinese Ambassador Hou Yanqi. For China, it is a no-holds-barred effort to maintain unity in the NCP which it had helped to forge and establish primacy in Nepal over India for the first time in nearly 200 years. Its ongoing salvage operation includes dispatch of a four-member Chinese Communist Party (CCP) delegation to Kathmandu over the weekend to patch up the Oli-Prachanda feud with whatever it takes. China wants Oli to remain the Prime Minister, with Prachanda and former Prime Minister Madhav Nepal as the party's co-chairs, no revival of Parliament and elections, whenever feasible. But the players are keeping their options open.

Global Times, though, has reported that China has no preference for any party; it just wants a stable Government. India's anodyne statement that "we have noted recent political developments in Nepal; these are internal matters for Nepal to decide as per its democratic process", does not mean that it is a bystander. The split has also destabilised six of the seven NCP provincial governments.

While both sides have appealed to the Election Commission for ownership of the party's name and symbol, the Supreme Court will decide whether the dissolution of the House was legal and whether its revival is possible, and start the hearings next week. The mid-term elections slated for

# Trouble in Nepal

Prime Minister KP Oli and contender Prachanda indulge in a power tussle as China has aimed its salvage operation at maintaining unity in the NCP



April/May 2021 are unlikely to be held on time. Oli has expanded his Cabinet, accommodating several of Prachanda's people. Conspicuous is the lack of support and empathy for Oli's unconstitutional and undemocratic actions with nearly all political parties and civil society condemning his move, the latter even calling it 'Oli-garchy'.

On the streets of Kathmandu, people are saying "India has done it", or that "There was a phone call from Delhi." Some reports are suggesting that Oli and/or Foreign Minister Pradip Gyawali would visit New Delhi shortly, the latter mentioned on Monday by Nepali Ambassador to India Nilambar Acharya. When India was the dominant power in that country, Nepal's crises were blamed on New Delhi's "micro-management". Now China is being accused of interfering in Nepal's internal affairs after Yanqi began her latest round of interventions. Last week's protest held outside the Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu was an extremely rare event as the media and public angst is generally reserved against India.

The Nepalese are linking the "phone call" to the flying visit to Kathmandu in October by R&AW chief Samant Goel, who had a long conversation with Oli that extended beyond

midnight. If India is indeed behind the friendly persuasion of Oli in dissolving Parliament, it is a victory for the "agencies", the name by which R&AW is called in Nepal. For India, the breakup of the NCP is a triumph for NSA Ajit Doval.

In the past, the "agencies" have failed also spectacularly: Preventing the Dasehra alliance of the Left parties in October 2017 or Nepal's Constitution-making coup in 2015. On both occasions, India was stumped. Chinese intelligence saved the short-lived Oli-Prachanda coalition Government once in 2017 but not the second time when Prachanda split and joined the Nepali Congress-led coalition. China supported the Left Alliance in the 2017 elections and the merger of the Alliance into the NCP.

The CCP and the NCP enjoy fraternal relations and the Chinese party's ideologues have been teaching the NCP cadres the "Xi Jinping Thought". China is invested heavily in Nepal — politically, economically, militarily and people to people. They will not easily give up their recent pre-eminence in Nepal.

Two scenarios are being predicted. First, no revival of Parliament and no elections as scheduled, with Oli carrying on as the caretaker Prime Minister indefinitely. Informed observers say this is an Oli-

fixed match that India is supporting. The second scenario envisions restoration of Parliament, a coalition Government formed by Prachanda-NCP with support from the Nepali Congress and the Janata Samajwadi Party Nepal. This combination along with its variant — Deuba supporting Oli in forming the Government — has been doing the rounds for a long time. There is a third outcome which the Chinese are pursuing: Same as the first scenario but with the NCP reunited and Prachanda and Madhav Nepal as party co-chairs. No one has so far petitioned for a caretaker Government for elections like the one in 2012 headed by Chief Justice Khilraj Regmi.

In 1994, Prime Minister GP Koirala's dissolution of the House was upheld by the Supreme Court. In 1995, Prime Minister Manmohan Adhikari dissolved his minority Government but the House was revived. In 2002, King Gyanendra dismissed Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba for failure to hold elections, calling him "incompetent".

The same year, when the Deuba faction split from the NC under GP Koirala to form the NC (Democratic), the symbol and name of the party was retained by the Koirala faction. Consequent to the lessons from frequent turnover of Governments (11 Prime Ministers in 12 years), the

2015 republican Constitution made no provision for dissolution of the House.

Neither Oli nor Prachanda want to be seen as splitting the party. Currently, the deck is arrayed in favour of Prachanda retaining the party's name and symbol, the Sun. He has the support of 300 of the 441 Central Committee members and 100 of the 176 lawmakers. While the EC will take a call on the ownership of the party's name and symbol, the Supreme Court will determine the legality and wisdom of terminating Parliament after 31 months, with more than two years of its term remaining.

The Doval game plan appears to be to support both sides: Oli to keep Parliament in abeyance and hold elections later, and Prachanda to keep the party divided even if the House is restored. China is betting on both too, but to keep its flock together. Oli's Finance Minister Bishnu Poudel came up with this gem: "China should be happy. It has two NCPs — one in Government and the other trying to restore the old one." Best of both worlds is not a Happy 2021 for Nepal!

(The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff. The views expressed are personal.)

## SOUNDBITE

I quit the Cabinet, I quit the Assembly which the people welcomed. I have now joined the BJP and the people of Nandigram supported me.

**BJP leader**  
—Suvendu Adhikari



Right now, we just aren't getting all of the information that we need from the outgoing administration. It's nothing short, in my view, of irresponsibility.

**US President-elect**  
—Joe Biden



The amount of hostility I faced for standing up for my beloved Mumbai baffled me. Today I went to Mumbai Devi and Shri Siddhivinayak ji and got their blessings.

**Actor**  
—Kangana Ranaut



David (Warner) looks really good. He has started training a bit and started running between the wickets. I think the early signs with him are very good for the third Test.

**Australia skipper**  
—Tim Paine



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Need to restore faith

Sir — This refers to the article 'The media must become the voice of people' (December 29). With the world "media" or the Fourth Estate comes to mind a sense of honesty, responsibility, transparency, truth and clarity of expression about all the important developments happening domestically and around the world.

The media's role assumes significance as it keeps people abreast of news and explains the nuances of complicated and intricate issues. The role of the media in disseminating information and spreading awareness against Government policies also keeps the ruling dispensation on its toes. The elected representatives often cite the issues raised by the media to attract the attention of the Government to people's concerns.

This is really a sorry state of affairs that the media seems to have lost track of important news and is focusing its energy and attention on several mundane and insignificant issues only to obfuscate the matters of public interests.

**Azhar A Khan**  
Rampur

### Good decision to shun politics, Thalaiva!

At last, citing health reasons, superstar Rajinikanth has announced that he is not floating any party. A deeply religious man, he has regarded his illness as a premonitory divine warning against taking risks. For all the occasional speeches he made, the superstar appeared to be disinclined and reluctant to join politics. It is widely believed that the pressure from the BJP made him say "yes" after a long period of indecision.

The fluctuations in his blood pressure, besides his family's love for him and his dedication towards his family, have eventually dissuaded him from making a political foray. His ill health would not have permitted him to undertake an extensive campaign without which he could not have fought the electoral battle. He would not have liked to reach the masses only through social media. His decision to not join politics seems to be wise considering his age, fragile health and public resentment against Right-wing politics of which he appears to be a representative. Rajinikanth's espousal of "spiritual politics" has come to be viewed as "saffron politics".

He has sought the forgiveness of his fans for dis-appointing them and assured the people of Tamil Nadu



that he will continue to serve them. Rajini Makkal Mandram will continue its welfare work.

There is no way to know whether Rajini, affectionately known as Thalaiva, has been cut out to be a politician. As a screen hero, Rajinikanth commands a lot of love and affection. But cinema and politics are worlds apart; it is difficult to be successful in both in equal measure. Whether he extends his support to any party in the run-up to the Assembly elections remains to be seen.

**G David Milton**  
Kanyakumari

### Powering ahead

Sir — The recent announcement by the Railway Board regarding the complete electrification of its railway network by 2023 is a welcome step. The Railways is much dependent on fossil fuel and the diesel-powered locos affect the environment badly. The electrification of its entire network will reduce carbon emission levels

and make it a highly sustainable and eco-friendly organisation.

The 2023 target should be achieved well in time by working in phases across all the railway zones, including the railway lines along the Konkan Railway route. The complete electrification move would bring immense opportunities to the Indian Railways, both in terms of pas-

senger commute and freight traffic, and may help identify ways to reduce the burden on the exchequer. The organisation should make all the efforts to inch closer towards achieving eco-friendly electrified lines by doing away with diesel-powered locos by 2023.

**Varun Dambal**  
Bangalore

### New-age warriors

Sir — The plight of migrant workers after the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus will remain imprinted in our minds for a long time, perhaps as long as we live.

However, the scene around us wasn't all bleak all the time. Punctuating the poignant images we saw around us most of the time, were also stories of grit, determination and heroism.

The sheer dedication of doctors, healthcare staff, policemen, suppliers of daily needs, *safai karamcharis* et al stood out and we honoured them with a new name, Corona Warriors. Indeed, they helped millions of Indians by putting their own lives in danger.

While the pandemic showed us the positive side of humanity, poor public healthcare infrastructure was once again exposed. Hopefully, the Government has learnt its lessons and will now pay swift attention to improving it on a war footing.

**Bal Govind**  
Noida

Send your feedback to:  
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

**FIRST COLUMN**

**A labour of love**

A quick glance shows that more than 95 per cent members of US President-elect Joe Biden's transition team fall in the category of volunteers



**RAM ACHARYA**

As we all know, a relay race is a track-and-field sport consisting of a set number of stages. Each leg is run by a different member of a team. The runner finishing one leg is usually required to pass on the baton to the next one, while both are running in a marked exchange zone. This is done so that the momentum of the race is not lost. The American presidential system is quite like a relay race, with each successive President-elect not only selecting the key players of his administration but also setting up a Review Team during the transition period. The job of the Review Team is to help the President-elect in framing the policies of his administration. This enables him to hit the ground running once he is sworn in. This is a time-honoured tradition followed by the US since its inception. The time available to the leader, between his being declared the President-elect and taking over of the presidency, is meant for handing over of the proverbial baton. Of course he may choose to change the colour and shape of the baton or carry an entirely new one on the run. But then that's a different story!

Even as outgoing US President Donald Trump continues to put up roadblocks and the two leaders continue to spar on a daily basis, President-elect Joseph Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris are ploughing on, undeterred. They have set up a website displaying the names of the members of the advisory team which is helping them shape their policies and action plan. The website says the "review teams are responsible for understanding the operations of each agency, ensuring a smooth transfer of power and preparing for President-elect Biden and Vice President-elect Harris and their Cabinet to hit the ground running on Day One."

In order to keep everything transparent and above board, the US Presidential Transition Act requires the President to disclose the all-important "source of funding" of all Review Team members. As per the details on the website, hundreds of volunteers have signed up to help the new administration. Then there are those who are full time transition employees paid by the Transition Fund and, lastly, there are individuals who will be funded through an appropriation administered by the General Services Administration.

However, a quick glance shows that more than 95 per cent of the Review Team members fall in the category of volunteers. In addition to their names, the list also provides their credentials such as area of expertise and employment details. The subjects on which the team is expected to advise the new administration are wide-ranging. They will examine the US Postal Services where the team would review the working of the Postal Regulatory Commission, the US Department of Agriculture where the team would review the Farm Credit Administration and Federal Agriculture Mortgage Corporation.

A team of 28 members, advising on the Department of Commerce which is responsible for steering the nation's economy, would also review the Export-Import Bank, while an even larger team of 38 would advise on matters pertaining to the all-powerful Department of Defence. The team would review the country's force posture worldwide and operations to deter enemies, as well as the budget planning underway at the Pentagon and other security agencies. The 26-strong team on the Department of Education will review the Corporation for National and Community Service and includes a couple of Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) like Ajita Menon of Calbright College and Shital Shah of the American Federation of Teachers.

Each team also has a nominated leader, who will organise meetings, collate views from various members and present an action plan for Biden and Harris to pursue. Interestingly, the crucial Department of Energy, which would review the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, is headed by a PIO, Arun Majumdar of the prestigious Stanford University.

A 32-strong team, mostly comprising volunteers, would be looking into the Department of Health and Human Services and reviewing the Consumer Safety Commission. The team with perhaps the largest number of tasks on its plate is the one reviewing the Department of Justice. It is required to examine the Federal Election Commission, the US Election Assistance Commission, the US Commission on Civil Rights, the National Council on Disabilities, the US Access Board, AbilityOne, the State Justice Institute and the Legal Services Corporation. During this transition period the President-elect also gets to make over 4,000 appointments in key portfolios, such as departmental heads, some of whom may have to be confirmed by a select committee. Compared to this, in the Indian system the all-powerful Prime Minister gets to choose just his Council of Ministers and the top bureaucrat manning his own office, while the majority of the officials in various Ministries and other Government departments and bodies continue as before, studiously following age-old systems and procedures.

How much of the inputs from various US transition teams will bear fruit is anybody's guess. But one thing is certain: It will serve to shake up things and bring about change. Only time will tell if these changes are for the better, or for worse.

(The writer is a former member of the Railway Board. The views expressed are personal.)

**IT'S UNFORTUNATE FOR THE CONGRESS THAT THE PERSON BEING CONSIDERED FOR THE POST OF PARTY CHIEF IS ABSENT ON ITS FOUNDATION DAY.**

—MADHYA PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER  
**SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN**

**POINTCOUNTERPOINT**



**I DON'T THINK THE BJP SHOULD HAVE ANY OBJECTIONS TO HIM (RAHUL GANDHI) VISITING AN AILING GRANDMOTHER.**

—CONGRESS CHIEF SPOKESPERSON  
**RANDEEP SURJEWALA**

**A year of lost opportunities**

In the new year, the judiciary needs to redefine its role in a democracy and it shouldn't be the part that it has chosen to play in 2020



**ANURAG TIWARY**

This was a unique year in many different ways and is bound to be remembered as one of the most eventful ones in living memory. However challenging it might have been for Governments, world leaders and the common man, for the Indian judiciary, 2020 was a year of major challenges and lost opportunities. It was unusual for the judiciary and particularly for the apex court, because the challenges posed before it were unprecedented and the expectations from it were extraordinarily high. This was a year of major constitutional changes, the consequences of which were exacerbated by the Coronavirus pandemic and the challenges posed by it. For the judiciary, particularly the Supreme Court of India, this could have been an opportunity that it might have wanted to grab on to and send out a strong message that it functions independently.

It should have sent out the message that it is not an executive court: An image that has been associated with it only recently. However, at the end of the year, the results are starkly different and suffice it to say that they don't seem to be in favour of the top court.

At the end of last year, the Centre had brought in the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). The challenge to the constitutionality of the CAA and its supposedly deadly combination with the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and later the National Population Register (NPR) was brought before the Supreme Court.

The CAA is arguably one of the most controversial pieces of legislation in the recent past. The Act amends the Citizenship Act of 1955 and allows Indian citizenship for Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians who have fled from the neighbouring Muslim majority countries of Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan due to religious persecution or fear of religious persecution. This is all well and good and a helpful move for the people fleeing persecution. However, the Act perpetuates the exclusion of many who have already sought and continue to take shelter in this country.

Reports have shown that State Governments in several parts of the country have started constructing detention centres for those who will now become illegal immigrants in the country they have considered to be their motherland and have contributed to as well. Those who have been a witness and part of its growth and development story.

In a democracy, when governments turn majoritarian the only option left before the people is to either protest or seek a remedy before the courts. There were widespread protests against the CAA across the country. The Shaheen Bagh protest in the Capital had acquired international fame because of its relentless effort to start a dialogue with the State. The State, on the other hand, had continuously termed the protest and the protesters "anti-national."

In extreme distress, several petitioners approached the court under Article 32 of the Constitution of India challenging the constitutionality of the CAA and the NRC. The respondents, in another petition, also approached the court challenging the right to protest of the protesters at Shaheen Bagh. In the Amit Sahni vs. Commissioner of Police case, it was argued that the protestors must not be allowed to protest at

**“**  
 WHILE 2020 WAS A YEAR OF MAJOR CHALLENGES AND LOST OPPORTUNITIES, 2021 WILL BE A YEAR OF ASPIRATIONS FROM THE JUDICIARY. PARTIES BEFORE THE COURTS WILL WANT TO SEE A DIFFERENT IMAGE OF THE JUDICIARY: ONE THAT IS MORE EMPATHETIC, STRONG, A PROTECTOR OF PEOPLE'S FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS, AUTHORITATIVE AND ONE THAT DOESN'T BACK DOWN BEFORE THE EXECUTIVE  
**”**



public places for an indefinite period because such demonstrations cause extreme inconvenience to the public at large and would, therefore, fall within the ambit of the restrictions within Article 19(2). So, at this point, there were two petitions tabled before the court: One on the constitutionality of the CAA and the second on the protester's right to protest at public places. The court has until today not heard the CAA petition, whereas the judgment in the second petition has already been delivered, wherein the court has held that public places cannot be occupied for an indefinite period for the purpose of a protest and that the State must provide an alternative spot for the same. This, especially when the Government was arresting protesters from several parts of the country. Even until this day, members from the ruling party continue to make statements during election rallies with respect to throwing out illegal immigrants from the country and the Supreme Court has still not heard the matter to clear the air of confusion surrounding it. This has led to the ruling party gaining more and more ground electorally while the protest seems to seep down to irrelevancy with every passing day.

Similar is the fate of the petition that is pending before the court against the abrogation of Article 370 that took place on August 5, 2019. There were three kinds of pleas before the court post the abrogation. First were the *habeas corpus* petitions against the detention of several prominent political leaders in the Valley. Former Chief Ministers and Union Ministers who have served not just the people of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K)

but also the country were locked up and detained for more than a year and many continue to be detained even today. Many *habeas corpus* petitions are pending before the court and no judgment has been delivered to date. Many of these petitions have become infructuous after the executive branch of the State decided to release the detainees. But the court took no notice of it. Second were the batch of petitions on media restrictions and communications blackout. To its credit, the court passed a pathbreaking judgment in the Anuradha Bhasin and Gulam Nabi Azad vs. Union of India case this year, upholding the freedom of speech and expression through the internet. However, the judgment was not followed by the J&K Administration and a contempt petition is pending before the court for over eight months now. The challenge to the constitutionality of abrogation of Article 370 is also pending for more than a year.

The court faced flak also with respect to its selective outrage on the issue of arrest of citizens, social activists, politicians, free thinkers and writers. The stark dichotomy became a matter of contention and citizens went on to criticise the court on every social media platform. Many journalists and social activists are under arrest even today and the court has taken little to no notice of it, citing some technical ground on which the petitioners have failed to establish their case.

The last issue that I would like to briefly touch upon is the Electoral Bond Scheme. The Finance Bill, 2017, introduced electoral bonds, that are interest-free bearer bonds. It is an instrument that is used to donate money to

political parties. The parties involved will probably be a donor, a political party and the Reserve Bank of India — which acts as the intermediary. Such a scheme introduced in India is one that is first of its kind in a democracy. Political parties are being funded in a non-transparent way and such a scheme would only add to the wounds of Indian democracy. The scheme was challenged before the court as early as 2018; however, the top court has not heard the matter until today.

The fact that the judiciary was in the news this year for the way it has functioned in the recent past is troubling. Contempt petitions against those criticising its style of functioning were evidence of the fact that the judiciary has narrowed its understanding of the role it is supposed to play in a democracy. Citizens have either ways taken to the streets this year and have protested in solidarity with those who have been at the wrong end of the rope when it comes to the protection of their fundamental rights.

While 2020 was a year of major challenges and lost opportunities, 2021 will be a year of aspirations from the judiciary. Parties before the courts will want to see a different image of the judiciary: One that is more empathetic, strong, a protector of people's fundamental rights, authoritative and one that doesn't back down before the executive. Citizens would want their causes to be heard with more alacrity and more concern. In the new year the judiciary needs to redefine its role in a democracy and it cannot be the one that it has chosen to play in 2020.

(The writer is from the National Law University, Visakhapatnam. The views expressed are personal.)

**Put environment conservation front and centre**

As 2021 nears, one can only hope that the Govt will put its might behind fighting climate change and environmental degradation



**KOTA SRIRAJ**

As we approach 2021, we cannot help looking back at the trail of death and devastation left behind by the COVID-19 pandemic. The year 2020 was no less than a nightmare as governments worldwide grappled with the virus even as the global economy plummeted to a new low, leaving millions unemployed and at their wits' end. During the fight against COVID-19 in India, environmental concerns and priorities took a back seat as the Government put all its weight behind fighting the deadly virus and its socio-economic impact

on the nation. As per the latest count, India had a total of 10,224,797 COVID cases and 1,48,190 casualties, while the number of cases worldwide touched 81,767,170 with 1,784,026 people succumbing to the infection. The successive waves of infection and the lockdown necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic left India's economy shattered and ruined. Unemployment figures drastically rose from 6.7 per cent in March to 26 per cent in April, which translates to nearly 140 million people losing their jobs in a shockingly short span of time.

Further, during the same period, business activity fell sharply from 82 per cent to 44 per cent, followed by the largest ever Gross Domestic Product (GDP) contraction of minus 24 per cent in the First Quarter (Q1) of the Financial Year (FY) 2020-21. In fact, the Indian economy is estimated to have suffered a loss of ₹7-8 trillion during the first 21 days of the lockdown. The world has not fared well either. According to a study

conducted by the Asian Development Bank, the economic losses triggered by the pandemic are expected to hit nearly \$8 trillion, which is nearly nine per cent of the global GDP.

Among the adverse impacts of the pandemic, much less debated or talked about is the severe blow to women in the workforce. Many of the women, who lost their jobs or took time off during the pandemic in India and globally, are now finding it difficult to return to any gainful employment. Adding to their woes are a host of factors including unavailability of domestic help, the burden of household chores, care work and online schooling of children forced to stay at home during the pandemic.

Other factors, too, have dealt an unexpected blow to the economy which suddenly finds itself bereft of 30 per cent of its dedicated and skilled workforce. This has not only impacted household finances but also proved to be a setback to gender

equality at the workplace. According to the Zinnov-Intel Gender Diversity study only 11 per cent of the Indian working women make it to top leadership positions compared to the global average of above 20 per cent. This bleak scenario is set to get worse as women find it difficult to find jobs in the current environment.

Needless to say, these extraordinary circumstances have sent Government departments into a tizzy and the overburdened administrative machinery has been unable to pay attention to other pressing areas that were already in a critical stage before the outbreak.

Environmental deterioration in the wake of climate change spurred by rising greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions was a contentious issue, with feverish debates and deliberations happening both on the national and international forums. However, the contagion put an abrupt halt to all this. For a beleaguered environment, this is akin to a death knell.

Even before the pandemic hit the world, the deteriorating state of the environment and the impact of climate change were putting a huge strain on the economy. A report prepared by the United Nations titled 'Economic Losses, Poverty and Disasters 1998-2018' pegged the losses suffered by the Indian economy due to climate change at \$79.5 billion in a period of two decades. This underlines the pitiable condition of the environment and the toll it is taking on our economy.

The pandemic has taught us many painful and expensive lessons besides revealing the vulnerabilities and the strengths of our nation. Amid this suffering, an optimistic India must discover the silver lining and chart the future course keeping the best interests of the environment in mind. The gravity of the pandemic forced us to evolve the best response mechanism that was able to mitigate the spread of the infection to a certain extent, which bought us some time to develop a vaccine. The

same determination now needs to be applied to climate change adaptation, environmental preservation and sustainable development.

More or less, the strategies adopted to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic should also be applied in handling the problem of environmental degradation. The very first stage in fighting the contagion involved accepting the problem. As the pandemic struck, the affected nations, especially India, rapidly acknowledged the problem and set about addressing it. The same strategy needs to be followed for handling environmental deterioration and exploitation. We need to actively understand and acknowledge the depth of the problem that pollution and climate change present.

Second, the COVID-19 outbreak has shown a superlative level of communication between the Government and the common man. This raised the level of public awareness regarding the pandemic and helped in ensuring that each and every member of the community

became aware of the infection and the safety protocols. This became one of the largest public awareness programmes ever conducted in India. A similar large-scale public awareness programme must be kick-started by the Government for the conservation of the environment.

Third, the Government showed exemplary will by strictly enforcing the rules pertaining to COVID-19 prevention and management. It ensured that people adhered to COVID protocols and procedures that helped slow the transmission of the infection. This kind of enforcement, if practised for preserving the environment and ensuring climate change adaptation, will go a long way in preserving the environment and protecting it. As we enter 2021, one can only hope that the Government will put its might behind fighting climate change and environmental degradation.

(The writer is an environmental journalist. The views expressed are personal.)

MARKETS ON A ROLL

Sensex, Nifty scale new peaks

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty scaled fresh record highs on Tuesday, extending their bull run for the fifth straight session on the back of gains in banking and IT stocks.

The BSE gauge Sensex settled with gains of 259.33 points or 0.55 per cent at a new closing high of 47,613.08.

Starting off on a bullish note, the 30-share index went on to hit its all-time intraday high of 47,714.55 before paring some gains.

Likewise, the NSE barometer Nifty ended higher by 59.40 points or 0.43 per cent at a fresh closing high of 13,932.60. Intraday, the 50-share Nifty marked its all-time



record at 13,967.60. "Financials helped key Indices to close the day well into positive territory with the broader markets seeing demand for gas stocks. The day also witnessed upmoves in names that are not usually seen frequently amongst gain-

ers as savvy investors were seen scouting for value in a Bull Market," S Ranganathan, Head of Research at LKP Securities said.

On the Sensex chart, IndusInd Bank, Axis Bank, Tech Mahindra, HDFC, ICICI Bank, HCL Tech, HDFC Bank, SBI and ITC were prominent gainers. On the other hand, Nestle, NTPC, PowerGrid, Dr Reddy, Reliance Industries, ONGC and Mahindra & Mahindra were among the losers.

Sectorally, banking index rallied 1.41 per cent, followed by finance (1.06 per cent) and IT (0.65 per cent).

Of the 19 sectoral indices, 12 ended in the red and seven in the green. Among the top losers, BSE metal, power and energy slid up to 1.32 per cent.

₹ logs fourth straight gains, rises 7 paise against \$

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Rising for the fourth straight session, the rupee appreciated by 7 paise to close at 73.42 against the US dollar on Tuesday, amid heavy buying in domestic equities and unabated foreign fund inflows.

A weaker greenback in the overseas markets also supported the rupee, forex dealers said.

At the interbank forex market, the domestic unit opened at 73.42 against the US dollar and witnessed an intraday high of 73.34 and a low of 73.44.

The local unit finally settled at 73.42 against the American currency, registering a rise of 7 paise over its previous close.

On Monday, the rupee had settled at 73.49 against the US dollar.

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty scaled fresh record highs on Tuesday, extending their bull run for the fifth straight session on the back of gains in banking and IT stocks.

The BSE gauge Sensex settled with gains of 259.33 points or 0.55 per cent at a new closing high of 47,613.08.

Manufacturers should absorb cost increase on mandatory dual front airbags rule: FADA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government's proposal to make dual front airbags mandatory will lead to increase in price and vehicle manufacturers should absorb the major hike in costs to prevent impact on sales, the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) said on Tuesday.

In a draft notification, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) proposed to make it mandatory for automakers to provide an airbag for the front passenger, over and above the existing airbag for the driver of passenger vehicles.

The Ministry has proposed April 1, 2021 as the date for implementation of the move for new models, while it has set a deadline of June 1, 2021 for



existing models. "FADA welcomes MoRTH's intention for mandating dual front airbags. This is a much needed safety norm which India should adopt and be at par with global standards," FADA president Vinkeesh Gulati said in a statement.

He, however, added that while the Government's vision to make driving safer for its citizens is appreciated, it will definitely increase the price of vehicles.

The implementation of BS-

VI emission norms led to a big price increase, and this will also come with a price increase, he added.

"We hope OEMs (original equipment manufacturers) should absorb the major cost of input due to the second airbag as it will impact the sales in short-term which will be bad for the industry, which is able to show growth on MoM (month-on-month) basis, but still lags in YoY (year-on-year) basis after Covid hit us hard," Gulati said.

RBI: Banks need to prepare for challenges after unwinding of Covid-related measures

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Cautioning of imminent stress in the banking sector after unwinding of the measures taken to combat the impact of Covid-19, the Reserve Bank on Tuesday said banks will need to adapt and adjust themselves to meet the upcoming challenges.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), in its report on "Trend and Progress of Banking in India 2019-20", said that the central bank initiated timely measures to relieve stress on bank balance sheets, corporates and households following the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

Observing that banking

soundness indicators are obscured under the asset quality standstill, it said, banks are raising capital in preparation of the imminent stress.

"With the moratorium coming to an end, the deadline for restructuring proposals is fast approaching and with the possible lifting of the asset quality standstill, banks' financials are likely to be impacted in terms of asset quality and future income.

"Going forward, banks will have to adapt and adjust to the rapidly evolving economic landscape due to these challenges and also the entry of niche players and emerging financial technologies," the report said.

Improvement in the health of the banking sector henceforth hinges around the pace and shape of economic recovery, the RBI report said, adding, "The challenge is to unwind various relaxations in a timely manner, reining in loan impairment and adequate capital infusion for a healthy banking sector."

The report further said that in the wake of a severe and unprecedented macroeconomic shock caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the RBI's actions veered towards providing a stimulus to the economy while ensuring financial stability.

The troika of policy rate cuts and liquidity infusion; regulatory forbearance; and time-bound resolution with

additional provisions was employed to ease immediate concerns emanating from the pandemic as well as aid the economic revival going forward, it said.

RBI said the report is being issued in an environment in which the Indian economy, the central bank, and the banking and financial system are

confronting the most testing challenge in more than a 100 years.

On frauds in the banking sector, the report said, operational risk has emerged as a major source of risk. Although 98 per cent of frauds in terms of value were related to loans, their occurrence was spread over several previous years.

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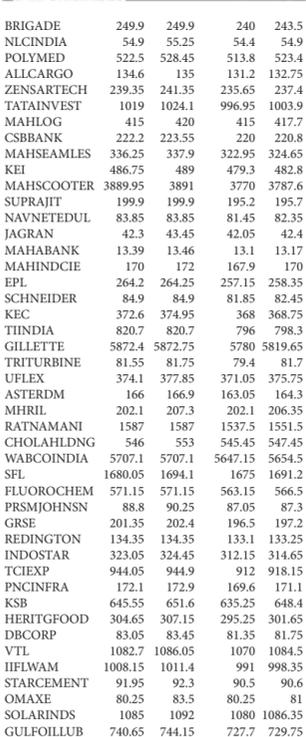
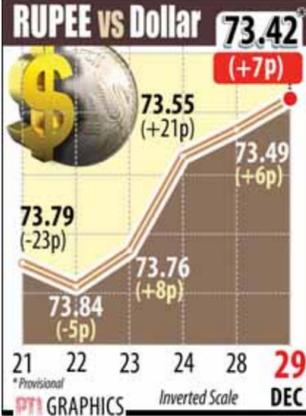
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# Will forget all if Oli admits mistakes: Madhav Nepal

**Kathmandu:** Chairman of the ruling Nepal Communist Party's rival faction Madhav Kumar Nepal said on Tuesday that the party could still be united if Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli was willing to accept his mistakes, as thousands of protesters marched through the streets of Kathmandu against the dissolution of Parliament.

Madhav Nepal made the comments while addressing a massive protest rally organised by his faction in Kathmandu, which was attended by former prime ministers Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' and Jhala Nath Khanal.

"We are ready to forget everything if Oli accepts his mistakes," Madhav Nepal, the former prime minister who has replaced Oli as chairman of the Prachanda-led faction, told the rally.

He also accused Prime Minister Oli of practicing anti-democratic activities by making decisions against the Constitution and the general public.

"All the political parties, intellectuals, teachers, students and public are on the streets against the unconstitutional move of the Oli-led government. The lower house will soon be revived," Madhav Nepal was



Nepalese supporters of the splinter group in the ruling Nepal Communist Party participate in a protest in Kathmandu on Tuesday

quoted as saying by My Republica newspaper.

Nepal plunged into a political crisis on December 20 after Prime Minister Oli, known for his pro-Beijing leanings, in a surprise move, recommended dissolving the 275-member House, amidst a tussle for power with 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.

Addressing the rally, Prachanda said that Prime Minister Oli's recent move to

dissolve the House of Representatives is aimed at killing federalism and republicanism which were achieved after decades of struggle by the people.

"The act of dissolving parliament is totally unconstitutional. It has taken the country toward another round of political instability.

"We did not even imagine that we would be forced to take to the streets against Oli's regressive move. Now, we have to fight collectively against this move," said Prachanda, who claims control over the ruling party after removing Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli from the posts of the party's parliamentary leader and chair. **PTI**

# Biden warns of Trump Administration's 'roadblocks' to transition

**Wilmington:** President-elect Joe Biden is warning of massive damage done to the national security apparatus by the Trump administration and "roadblocks" in communication between agency officials and his transition team that could undermine Americans' security.

During remarks on Monday in Wilmington, Delaware, Biden said his team has faced "obstruction" from the "political leadership" at the Defense Department and the Office of Management and Budget as they've sought to gather necessary information to continue the transition of power.

"Right now we just aren't getting all the information that we need from the outgoing administration in key national security areas. It's nothing short, in my view, of irresponsibility," Biden said.

He warned that his team needs "full visibility" into the budget process at the Defense Department "in order to avoid any window of confusion or catch-up that our adversaries may try to exploit".

Biden's remarks came after he was briefed by members of his national security and defense teams and advisers, including his nominees for secretary of State, Defense and Homeland Security, as well as his incoming national security adviser.

The president-elect said his team found that agencies "critical to our security have incurred enormous damage" during President Donald Trump's time in office. **AP**

Several Republicans have sued US Vice President Mike Pence in an improbable bid to overturn President-elect Joe Biden's victory, according to media reports.

The last-ditch legal effort, filed on Sunday, came from Representative Louie Gohmert, an eight-term congressman from Texas, along with 11 Arizona residents who had been nominated by that state's Republican Party to serve as electors, The Hill reported. **PTI**

# Tibetan Govt-in-exile lauds Trump for new Tibet policy

**Dharamshala:** The Tibetan Parliament in exile has expressed gratitude to United States President Donald Trump for signing a new Tibet policy.

On Sunday, Trump signed the Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020 to modify and re-authorise various programmes and provisions related to Tibet. The bill reaffirms the right of Tibetans to choose a successor to the Dalai Lama and calls for establishing an American consulate in the country.

In a statement issued by the Dharamshala-based Tibetan Parliament in exile, its Speaker Pema Jungney said, "This act officially endorses that recognition of the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama is the sole authority of the great XIV Dalai Lama, the Tibetan Buddhist leaders and the Tibetan people with no interference from the Chinese government (People's Republic of China)".

"This act also recognises the importance of the Tibetan

Plateau and the threat that climate change poses on Tibet," the statement said.

"Over the years, the presidents of the United States of America have consistently supported the Tibet cause and we are immensely grateful for your indefatigable support in taking strong measures against China, a government that is economically the most powerful yet having the record of worst human rights violations," **PTI** added.

## Around the Globe

**Miami:** Paying passengers were scheduled to board a Boeing 737 Max in Miami on Tuesday for the first time since safety regulators allowed the plane to fly again after two deadly crashes.

**Lahore:** A petition has been filed in a Pakistani court seeking a directive for the government to get the name of the minority Ahmadi community leader as a "caliph of Islam" removed from Google.

**Islamabad:** Pakistan on Tuesday confirmed its first case of the new coronavirus variant found in the UK after it identified the strain that spreads at a much faster pace in three samples taken from passengers who had returned from Britain.

**Boston:** A statue of Abraham Lincoln with a freed slave appearing to kneel at his feet — optics that drew objections amid a national reckoning with racial injustice — has been removed from its perch in downtown Boston.

**Cairo:** An Egyptian court Tuesday convicted a former student at an elite university on sexual misconduct charges and sentenced him to three years in prison, the first conviction in a case that has fueled the #MeToo movement in the Arab world's most populous country.

## Iran begins human trial of locally made virus vaccine

**Tehran:** The first study of the safety and effectiveness of a coronavirus vaccine in Iran began Tuesday, state TV reported, with dozens due to receive the domestically developed shot in the hardest-hit country in the Middle East.

The vaccine, produced by Shifa Pharmad, part of a state-owned pharmaceutical conglomerate, is the first in the country to reach human trials. Rouhani has said Iran is cooperating with a "foreign country" to produce another vaccine expected to run in tests in volunteers in February, without offering further details. **AP**

# Hong Kongers charged in China plead guilty, relatives told

**Hong Kong:** Relatives of the 10 Hong Kongers accused of fleeing the city by speedboat during a government crackdown on dissent say they've been informed that the group pleaded guilty and that the verdicts will be delivered by a court in mainland China on Wednesday.

The families were informed by court-appointed lawyers on Tuesday, according to the 12 Hongkongers Concern Group, which is assisting the families of the detainees.

The 10 defendants all faced charges of illegally crossing the border, while two of them

faced additional charges of organizing the attempt, according to an indictment issued in the southern city of Shenzhen.

The trials began on Monday afternoon, according to a statement issued by the Shenzhen Yantian District court.

Separate hearings were expected for two minors who were also aboard the boat that was apparently heading for Taiwan when it was stopped by the Chinese coast guard on Aug. 23.

The defendants are believed to have feared they would be prosecuted for their past activities in support of

Hong Kong's democratic opposition.

Hong Kong media reports said at least one may have had a warrant out for his arrest under a tough new national security law imposed on the semi-autonomous territory by Beijing in June.

Relatives of the defendants say that they have been prevented from hiring their own lawyers and that the accusations are politically motivated.

The defendants can be sentenced to up to a year in prison for crossing the border and seven years for organising the trip. **AP**

## EN ROUTE NEW HOME



Rohingya refugees travel in a naval ship to be transported to an isolated island in the Bay of Bengal, in Chittagong, Bangladesh on Tuesday

## B'DESH NAVY SHIPS TAKE 1,700 ROHINGYAS TO ISOLATED ISLAND

**Dhaka:** Five Bangladesh navy ships carrying more than 1,700 Rohingya refugees left the southeastern port city of Chittagong on Tuesday for an isolated island where they will be relocated despite concerns among human rights groups about their safety.

The refugees were expected to reach Bhashan Char

island after a three-hour naval journey, a government official involved with the process said. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the media, said the refugees were taken to Chittagong from their camps in Cox's Bazar by buses on Monday and stayed overnight

in a temporary camp. Authorities insist the refugees were selected for relocation based on their willingness, and that no pressure was applied on them. But several human rights and activist groups say some were forced to go to the island, located 21 miles (34 kilometers) from the mainland. **AP**

## Magnitude 6.3 quake hits Croatia, 1 death reported

**Zagreb.** Initial reports said the earthquake caused wide damage, collapsing roofs, building facades and even some entire buildings.

The same area was struck by a 5.2 quake on Monday. The regional N1 television reported live Tuesday from the town of Petrinja, which was hard-hit in the Monday quake, that a collapsed building had fallen on

a car. The footage showed firefighters trying to remove the debris from the car, which was buried underneath. The report said a man apparently was in the car when the quake hit.

The earthquake was felt throughout the country and in neighboring Serbia and Bosnia.

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## 'Targeted killings of journalists surged in 2020'

**Paris:** More journalists are being killed outside of war zones, and the overwhelming majority of this year's grim total of at least 50 dead were deliberately targeted, many of them murdered while investigating organized crime, corruption and environmental degradation, Reporters Without Borders said Tuesday.

Its tally of journalists and media workers killed in connection with their work by mid-December was just slightly lower than in 2019, when the press freedom group counted 53 dead, even though many

journalists reported less from the field in 2020 because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The group said 68% were killed outside of war zones this year. That confirms a trend noted by the group since 2016, when only four out of 10 deaths were in countries not at war.

Targeted killings of journalists surged in 2020, accounting for 84% of deaths, sharply

up from 63% in 2019, the group said.

It again listed Mexico as the deadliest country for media workers, counting at least eight journalists killed there in connection with their work in 2020. Among them was Julio Valdivia, a newspaper reporter whose decapitated body was found in September in an area ridden with organised crime. **AP**

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### FROM PAGE 1

## STRAIN TEST FOR ALL +VE RETURNEES

"Their close contacts have also been put under quarantine. Comprehensive contact tracing has been initiated for co-travellers, family contacts, and others. Genome sequencing on other specimens is going on. The situation is under careful watch and regular advice is being provided to the States for enhanced surveillance, containment, testing & dispatch of samples to INSACOG labs," said a Government official.

The Health Ministry has established the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) for laboratory and epidemiological surveillance and to expand the whole genome sequencing of the coronavirus in the country, aiding in the understanding of how the virus spreads and evolves.

The Government last week put temporary suspension of all flights coming from the UK with effect from the midnight of December 23 till December 31 and mandatory testing of all UK returnee air passengers through RT-PCR test.

## UK FLIGHTS SUSPENSION LIKELY TO BE EXTENDED

Meanwhile, the Airports Authority of India (AAI) Chairman Arvind Singh told at the Press conference the Government is planning to hold the next round of privatisation of airports in the first half of 2021. "As far as the next round of airports' privatisation is concerned, we are at the final stages of obtaining Government approvals. Once the approvals are received, I think we will start the process of bidding in the first quarter of 2021," he said. The AAI had in September recommended the Centre now to privatise airports at Amritsar, Varanasi, Bhubaneswar, Indore, Raipur and Trichy.

## FARMERS HARDEN

## STAND, SET AGENDA FOR TODAY'S TALKS

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

However, the protesting farmers have expressed apprehension that the new laws would pave the way for eliminating the safety cushion of the MSP and do away with the "mandi" (wholesale market) system, leaving them at the mercy of big corporates.

## PM INAUGURATES NEW STRETCH OF EASTERN FREIGHT CORRIDOR

Hathras, and locks and hardware of Aligarh district, according to officials.

The section will also decongest the existing Kanpur-Delhi mainline and will enable the Indian Railways to run faster trains.

Noting that a state-of-the-art Operation Control Centre at Prayagraj will act as the command centre for the entire route length of the EDFC, they said this is one of the largest structures of its type globally with modern interiors, ergonomic design and best-in-class acoustics. **PTI/PNS**

## AIRBAG FOR PASSENGER IN FRONT SEAT TO BE MUST SOON: DRAFT

Low-cost inclusions such as speed alert, reverse parking sensors and seat-belt reminders have become standard features in most cars but life-saving airbags are still not mandatory, added the senior MoRTH official.

Vehicle safety in India received a major fillip in 2019, with a number of important safety features made mandato-

ry for both two- and four-wheelers and one of the key changes was a driver-side airbag being made compulsory for all passenger vehicles, a life-saving essential that made its way into even the most affordable cars on sale in the country.

However, because the list of mandatory safety equipment specified under the automotive industry standards (AIS) mentioned a driver-side airbag only, some car-makers - who operate in the price-sensitive budget hatchback segment - chose to give the front passenger airbag a skip, only offering it as an optional extra for an added cost. MoRTH's latest notification is an amendment to the AIS, and mandates the inclusion of a front passenger airbag for all passenger vehicles.

## WARY OF HEALTH, RAJINI SAYS NO TO POL PLUNGE

"I need to meet thousands of people during the campaign and through public meetings. Even now I am taking immunosuppressant medicines. If I develop health complications during my campaign, it would severely affect those who accompany me in politics and they have to face many problems politically and mentally," said Rajinikanth.

His announcement dampened the spirit of his fans and followers alike who were anxiously waiting to see the King of Styles in action in the political arena of Tamil Nadu. In a statement released through the social media, the actor said that his decision follows the requests and suggestions by his close family members who were concerned about his health.

Rajinikanth, who was shooting for his new film at Hyderabad was admitted to a corporate hospital following high fluctuations in blood pressure. He was discharged from the hospital and reached his Poes Garden residence in Chennai late on Sunday night. Doctors had advised him complete bed rest till January 2, 2021. His fans were told on Monday by office

bearers of Rajini Makkal Manram (Fans Association) not to be carried away by rumors about the actor's health and not to believe reports that he may not enter active politics. Sam Rajappa, veteran scribe and political commentator had told The Pioneer on Monday itself that Rajinikanth would not launch the political party or dabble in politics.

Tamilaruvi Manian, the actor's Man Friday remained incommunicado. He had told The Pioneer many times in the past that though Rajinikanth had many health issues, the actor could use the electronics and digital media to reach out to his fans across the State.

S Gurumurthy, editor, Tughlaq, who is a close friend of Rajinikanth and who had forecast that the actor's entry into politics would bring in a tectonic shift in the State's political landscape said he was pained by the decision. "It was inevitable. But read the penultimate para of his statement saying 'without directly in politics he will serve the people of Tamil Nadu'. In my assessment he will make a political impact on TN. Like in 1996," Gurumurthy tweeted.

But SV Badri, a prominent figure in Tamil Nadu's social world, said that Rajinikanth's decision would not make any impact in the State politics. "It is a blow to Gurumurthy who was pushing the actor into politics," said Badri.

## DIDI STORMS BOLPUR 10 DAYS AFTER SHAH RALLY

In a veiled reference to Shah who has on several occasions dined at common people's residences during his recent visits to Bengal, the Chief Minister said, "Some outsiders are frequently appearing at the people's durbar here in quest of votes just before the elections."

While such weekly appearances are punctuated by "five-star feasts they are making a false show of breaking bread with the tribal people at their houses," Mamata

said, adding "no one has this right to insult the adivasi brothers and sisters and the poor people of Bengal."

In a circuitous reference to her once close aide, senior party leader and former Minister Suvendu Adhikari's switching sides to the BJP the Chief Minister said, "There are some rotten MLAs who are going to that party but just by buying a few rejected MLAs don't think you can buy the Trinamool Congress."

Incidentally, Adhikari on Tuesday held a mega rally at Nandigram his home turf from where he is known to have spearheaded the land movement for Mamata Banerjee in 2007 ultimately bringing down the Left Front Government in 2011.

Referring to Shah's promise of converting Bengal into a Sonar Bangla the Chief Minister said, "Who are these outsiders to do so... Sonar Bangla had already been visualised by Rabindranath Tagore... these people are trying to take the credit for that too."

"Those who don't respect Tagore, Netaji and even Mahatma Gandhi are talking of building 'Sonar Bangla'. But Bengal is already golden and Rabindranath Tagore has already written that in his song (which is now the national anthem of Bangladesh). Our duty is to protect that legacy from the communal politics of the BJP," she said.

## LEGENDARY FRENCH DESIGNER PIERRE CARDIN DIES AT 98

A savvy businessman, Cardin used the fabulous wealth that was the fruit of his empire to snap up top-notch properties in Paris, including the Belle Epoque restaurant Maxims, which he also frequented. He had been among its illustrious members since 1992. The academy did not give a cause of death or say where or when he had died.

Along with fellow Frenchman Andre Courreges and Spains Paco Rabanne, two other Paris-based designers known for their Space Age styles, Cardin revolu-

tionized fashion starting in the early 1950s.

At a time when other Paris labels were obsessed with flattering the female form, Cardin designs cast the wearer as a sort of glorified hanger, there to showcase the clothes sharp shapes and graphic patterns.

Destined neither for pragmatists nor for wallflowers, his designs were all about making a big entrance — sometimes very literally.

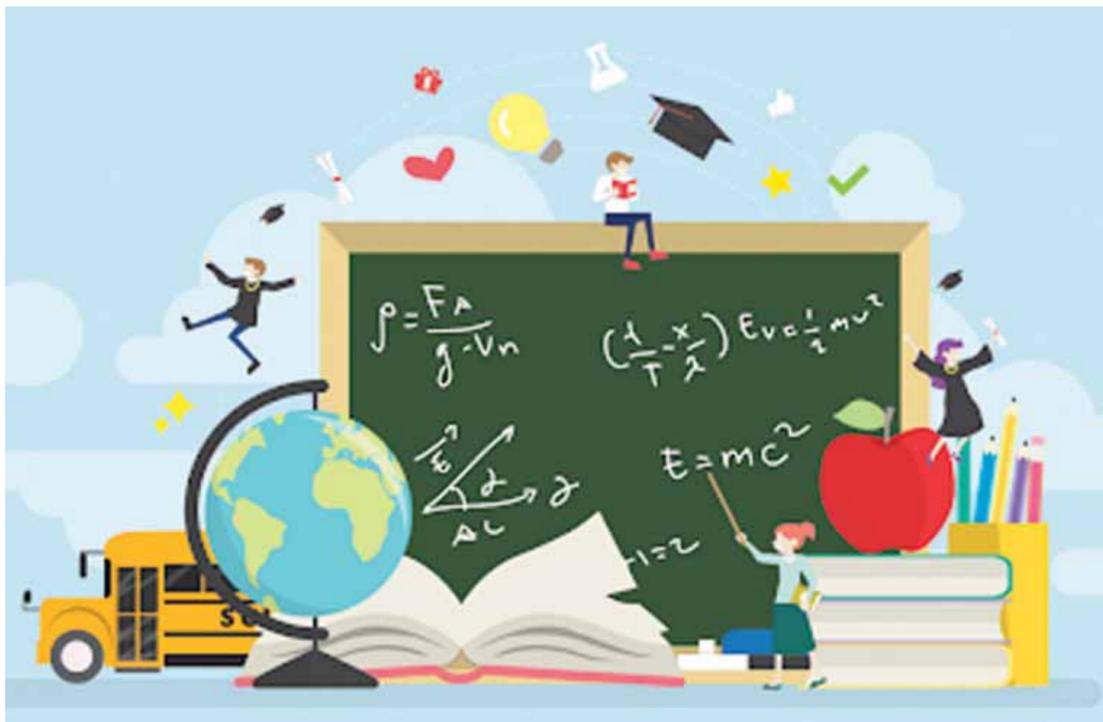
## IMD'S HIGHEST CENTRE IN LEH ...

Located at 3,500 metres above sea level in Leh, it will be the highest meteorological centre in India. It will forecast the weather conditions such as cloud bursts, flash floods, glacial lake outbursts (GLOFs), avalanche, pressure, humidity, temperature, snowfall of the Ladakh region. "Ladakh remains vulnerable to erratic weather and changing climate that have adverse effects on the lives of the locals. The region is unique in terms of weather, climate, culture, topography with extreme temperatures, ranging from minus 40 degrees Celsius in Drass to scanty average precipitation of 10 centimetres annually, which makes the region a distinct cold desert. In addition, the UT is a geostrategic location from the security point of view. All of these together, the Government of India decided to establish an MC in Leh," said Dr Harsh Vardhan.

Ladakh experiences various kinds of extreme weather events like cloud bursts, flash floods, glacial lake outbursts, avalanches and drought.

The meteorological centre will provide short-range (three days), medium range (12 days) and long-range (one month) forecast for the two districts — Leh and Kargil — of the Union Territory. Besides, it will also provide some important services are high way forecast, forecast for mountaineering, trekking, agriculture, flash flood warning, information on gusty winds and low and high temperatures.

The pandemic has tested all aspects of education from delivery of classroom lectures to conduct of examination to internships and admissions. **ASHWANI AWASTHI** analyses how the year has been for the sector



**QUOTE OF THE DAY**  
**Education is the power to think clearly, the power to act well in the world's work, and the power to appreciate life.**  
— Brigham Young

**EXPERTSAY**  
This year was an extremely challenging one for the education sector. Educational institutes closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and technology brought several 'firsts' for the sector. Disruptive changes in online education ensured maintaining continuity in education. Our teachers incorporated technology with élan and included augmented and virtual reality as part of their framework. The future will be about blended learning and education will undergo revolutionary changes that will make it acceptable, accessible, and affordable to students in the remotest corners of our globe. The coming decade is slated to redefine education as technological advancements will further strengthen our education system.  
— Rustom Kerawalla, Chairman, Ampersand Group

# IT'S A TOUGH DEAL

The year 2020 can be termed as a year of two major paradigm shifts for the education sector. While one forced the teachers and students to adopt and adapt to sudden change for the very continuance of education, the other is a welcome announcement of a change long overdue in the Indian educational system.

The educational institutes barring the research levels continue to be in a veritable lockdown since March 2020 following the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. Almost overnight, the education institutions had to shift their delivery model from on-campus face-to-face to an online one. They had to quickly shift from a classroom setup to a virtual technology driven setup. The forward-looking institutions were better prepared with having some technological systems in place and could quickly adopt technology solutions such as Zoom, MS Teams or Google meet and onboarded their audience to the platform.

However, many institutes which were already lagging in technological adoptions due to paucity of time, effort or budget constraints, struggled and their students suffered as well. Knowledge sharing at such places was severely limited and remained restricted to monologue/non-interactive modes limited to messaging, sharing scanned sheets and texted instructions.

The pandemic has tested all aspects of education from delivery of classroom lectures to conduct of examination to internships and admissions. New formats of conducting the student assessments like online Open Book Examination or Multiple Choice Question based examinations were tried out. However, a large section of the student population living in non-urban areas had internet bandwidth concerns and faced huge challenges while appearing in examinations.

Similarly, industry internship is an important part of the professional degree in higher education. Visionary education institutions converted the site-based industry internships into desktop research-based internships but still could not completely fulfill the onsite practice-based learning requirement.

The pandemic also had a huge impact on the student acquisition activity in the education sector. The admission processes changed from on-campus examinations and interviews to virtual campus walks, video interviews, online evaluations and selections. There is a growing feeling that the pandemic will continue to impact education and admissions are never going to be the same again. There has been a decrease in international student enrollment. Also, students are unsure about opting for technical programs which need on-campus practice-based learning. It is anticipated that in future the student preference on college admission would shift focus to college as an experience rather than as a brand.

This period has also provided us with the time to reflect upon where our limitations lie in terms of our personal digital skills and technology. Training faculty on technology usage, preparing content for online learning, internet connectivity, bandwidth, digital etiquette remained a challenge. Different types of health concerns related with screen time, body posture related health concerns, depression in isolation have surged amongst the students this year.

But there has been a big welcome announcement for the education sector in India this year. The greatest gift for education sector in 2020 was the launch of the new National Education Policy (NEP 2020), which was launched on July 29 superseding the last policy that was released 34 years ago. The NEP 2020 is a visionary policy which aims to bring many relevant changes like universal access to schools for all children in the next decade and stresses on increasing the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), putting a stop to the spiraling drop-out rate in India.

The NEP also proposes sweeping changes including opening of Indian higher education to foreign universities and focuses on overhauling the curriculum, easier board exams, a reduction in the syllabus to retain core essentials and thrust on experiential learning and critical thinking. However, a strong need for developing good number of trained quality teachers is needed to meet the challenges of the industry. Many believe that if the new policy could be implemented sincerely with a careful designing of syllabi and curricula, it has the potential to transform India into a self-reliant knowledge superpower.

Currently there is a huge gap between what the students study and what the industry requires. We are on the verge of breaking the barriers that exist between academia and industry. While there are few institutes which closely work with industry to customise their curriculum and prepare industry ready graduates, the need gap is huge. A closer industry-education engagement at the very grassroots can drive the development of curricula, teaching methodologies and applied learning experiences.

Finally, it is felt that future will witness phenomenal change and disruption in the field of higher education. Technology will take a lead in shaping the delivery, teaching methodology and the evaluation process. One clear area of evolution could be a shift of focus from marks based academic curriculum to life based overall development.

The writer is Managing Director, RICS School of Built Environment

Edtech moved from the category of a vitamin to a category of pain killer in 2020. We have witnessed the growth of platforms focused on teaching individual subjects, full curricula, hobby classes, professional qualifications, and even meditation. While 2020 was the year of acceptance for readily available Edtech tools, I believe that 2021 will be the year of innovation, consolidation and regulation. We will see significant consolidation of many Edtech systems as the currently accepted solutions become redundant with newer innovations. Consumers will realise their needs better and demand newer solutions. While Edtech has been around for almost two decades, it's the first time that it has been accepted at this scale. Such scale of traction will attract regulatory implementation from Governments. We are headed towards exciting times as Edtech has been able to deliver the promise and is ready for the next level of skill development.  
— Rishabh Khanna, Cognitive Scientist & Founder of Suraasa

COVID-19 has benefitted education industry's digital adoption. In these times, it enhanced the learning process not just for the students but also the educators. The ed-tech space saw a lot of advancements such as learners were provided with digital first academic support and accessibility, smart assessment and novel types of curriculum in specialized areas such as science, coding and languages. This overall transformation has benefitted both investors and ed-tech start-ups. This year, we also saw that increasing number of people focused on up skilling which increased the need for online courses (both synchronous and asynchronous). The trend of online learning is seeing an upward graph from here on. To sum up, I can say that the year 2020 has been a blessing in disguise for the ed-tech sector and given us an opportunity to up skill and upgrade ourselves too to deliver the best product out there.  
— Sumesh Nair, Founder & CEO, Board Infinity

Education is an essential and most important aspect of life. In this world of advancement and technology education is the only key to pass through the gate of success. Education is the safest means to achieve your dreams, goals and aims. Relevancy and importance of education is increasing day by day and so its expenses. To secure educational future of your child or your own, one should save money to harbinger the message of smoothness and prosperity in one's life. To implement this task, Systematic Investment Plans (SIP) is here for your help. Don't take any pressure, whether you want to go over board or abroad, SIP is here for you to make you ride on the goal board.

In the world of modern advancement, dearth and uncertainty, one has to be certain in their decision to have secure future. Investing in education, for education and by education is profitable in all terms. Inflation is spiking day by day to fulfill basic needs i.e., food, water, shelter and education one should not restrict on single income, make income through investment to create a second source. Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today. SIP gives an opportunity to you to invest as per your convenience.

Being humans, we cannot predict future but being responsible for our family and future one can prepare oneself for future. All days are not same. Save for a rainy day. When you don't work, savings will work for you. It works as a helping hand to you. It is easy on pocket,

To secure educational future of your child or your own, one should save money to harbinger the message of smoothness and prosperity in one's life. **JYOTI BHANDARI** tells you how systematic investment plans can help



Starting with as low as ₹500 per month towards your first step to financial freedom. Depending on your current financial situation, risk appetite and the nature of your goal, you can choose a scheme from debt asset class to equity.

The formula to create wealth is time invested not the timing. SIPs bring financial discipline in your both spending and investing behavior by making you save first before you spend. Buffet rule, helps one to lead the independent thought in right direction independently. It can help you to create your short term

and long-term goals and allows your money to work for you while you are focusing on career and family.

Power of Compounding is highlighted by well-known scientist and mathematician Albert Einstein, "Compound interest is the eighth wonder of the world. He, who understands it, earns it...he who doesn't... pay it. Is the one and only non-biased phenomenon on earth as it doesn't care about your colour, age or gender? It works for both poor and rich. The most important factor that works in compounding is the time invested. Along with

reward, it teaches you discipline, patience and living in your means. It gives wings to your dream. If you dream big, experience the eighth wonder of the world.

When money realises that it is in good hands, it wants to stay and multiply in those hands." It's your money, your goals, and your convenience. SIPs offer you convenience from choosing the date of investment, amount that you can afford and most importantly the liquidity to call for your money when you need it. Our life has ups and downs and so do our investments!

The economy depends about as much on economists as the weather does on weather forecasters." Jean-Paul Kauffmann. SIPs give us an opportunity to spread our risk through fixed amounts and dates across the years, capturing the volatility and benefiting from the highs and lows by investing in the lowest NAVs to bring down the purchase costs. While you focus on your daily affairs, this technique of rupee cost averaging works for you to bring the maximum benefit to the portfolio.

The writer is Founder and CEO, Lovak Capital Pvt Ltd

# Time to bridge the gap

It is important to understand that in order to provide access to education to the people with lack of facilities, some extra efforts need to be put in, says **SUNIT GAJBHIYE**

Accessibility of education has been one of the major problems prevalent in our country, which despite several efforts, is still a far-flung reality. The lockdown imposed due to Covid outbreak across the globe added more woes to the education sector. However, with the Government putting emphasis on online education and stakeholders of the ecosystem adopting it quickly, the accessibility of the education to the masses somehow improved and the ball kept rolling.

Accessibility should be seen as equal opportunities, from education to employment, for all in every aspect of life. Providing accessibility to all helps in facilitating empowerment which is directly connected to inclusive and accessible education for all. Though a lot of people who don't have the facility of mobility are forced to choose between the right to education and an inclusive educational environment.

Not only this, but access to education should be beyond transportation and infrastructural provisions. It is important to understand that in order to provide access to education to the people with lack of facilities, some extra efforts need to be put in and ensure their reach to intend people.

Though a lot of initiatives have



been taken by the Government and the educational institutes have been smart enough to adapt to the new normal, there still remains a gap which needs to be filled. This would require involvement of many more sectors and a greater participation from the corporates as well as private firms.

The new National Education Policy shows a lot of promise in terms of educational reforms but its actual implementation will take serious efforts. The policy provisions make comprehensive use of resources so as to make quality education accessible to all. More importantly, the hybrid or the blended mode of education where classroom and online education needs to remain

the focus. Going forward, blended mode of education seems to be the future and, in such a scenario, the measures to strengthen the basic infrastructure are pivotal. This, however, would require private players to jump into the fray and provide their expertise to fulfil the goal of education to all. As of now, internet connectivity is a major issue in a lot of schools/colleges and due to this online classes are a distant dream. Also, the online examinations are full of technical glitches and timely results are considered out of question. This calls for an urgent need of a fruitful partnership between private players and the Government agencies.

The writer is Chief Business Officer, CBO

## Session on primary education

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In continuum to the ongoing 'The Principal Round Table', the Education Leaders Confluence 2020 (ELC) saw yet another fruitful session on "Challenges for Primary School Kids in the Changing Education System", that was successfully conducted on December 21, 2020.

Organised by Pratham Test Prep, the confluence focuses on holistic development and has also restructured and re-engineered modules to cater to children right from middle school to help them understand the importance of aptitude building.

The ELC 2020 constitutes a series of talks and discussions, conducted to hear out the experts and discuss various issues and

opportunities available in the education sector. Even though India has made significant progress on access to schooling and admissions in primary education, the on-going pandemic has brought new challenges in front of the education system especially in India where we are still in the process to learn and improve.

"There is a paradigm shift witnessed in the education sector in India for the last few months due to the pandemic. The teachers had to adapt to e-learning leaving the traditional way of teaching. Many teachers were reluctant of this adaption, but there was no way out and the result was new innovative ways to teach to make the class engaging and interesting," said Ankit Kapoor, Managing Director, Pratham Test Prep.

## Dr Sivan's motivational speech at SRMIST

Always keep in mind the challenges our country is facing. Each of these challenges offers an opportunity for innovation, said Dr K Sivan, Chairman of ISRO, Bangalore and Secretary, Department of Space, Government of India. Addressing students virtually at the 16th Annual Convocation of SRM Institute of Science & Technology (SRMIST), Kattankulathur, Dr Sivan said, "The job scenario is vibrant today and one must

definitely work more than others, know more than others and expect less than others."

About 17,204 students belonging to the Faculties of Engineering and Technology, Faculty of Science and Humanities, Medicine & Health Sciences and Management studies including 129 PhD scholars received their degrees.

Based on the restrictions imposed by the State Government only Rank Holders and PhD degree

awardees were given their degrees in person at Dr TP Ganesan Auditorium, main campus, Kattankulathur. The rest of the eligible graduates attended the event through virtual mode.

In his convocation address, Dr Sivan said, "SRMIST has the honour of designing, developing, and building its own nano-satellite, SRMSAT, in collaboration with ISRO which was launched with the twin scientific objectives of monitoring and

estimating carbon dioxide and water vapour in the tropical atmosphere globally. Our Government has already announced space sector reforms for greater participation of non-Governmental entities in space activities. Our next PSLV launch will have satellites from start-up agencies as the first product of these reforms. I now invite SRMIST to join hands with ISRO to work on similar projects in future."

## Healthcare conclave

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The FORE School of Management has recently organised an online COVID-19 Healthcare Conclave 2020 in association with the Principal Directorate, Southern Command, Indian Defense Estates Service.

The conclave gathered around 50 doctors, Chief Executive Officers of Cantonment Boards, and prominent industry experts who presented their papers

and participated in panel discussions from December 21 to December 23, 2020. The keynote address was delivered by Ajay Kumar Sharma, Principal Director, and Southern Command.

The panel discussions were based on different themes. Day 1 marked a moderated panel discussion with CEOs on 'Ground-level Challenges and Drivers in Administering Healthcare entities during COVID-19 — the Role of Technology.'



## Smart ways to choose PGDM course

Choosing the right institute to pursue post graduate diploma in management can be a daunting task for many. DR KULNEET SURI shares key points to keep in mind

There's no denying that a post graduate diploma in Management (PGDM) course requires a substantial amount of investment, both in terms of money and time. Your selection process is naturally the most vital step. Here are a few tips on how you can choose the best institute for your preferred PGDM course.

**Look into the faculty strength of the department:** If you want your PGDM in marketing, look into the faculty profiles of the marketing department. This will help you to narrow down your institution list and choose the best among them. There are times when a particular department in the best college does not perform that well as the same department in some other college. You must enroll into the later as the college name will hardly help you later.



Dr Kulneet Suri  
Senior Director, Institute of Management Studies Noida

There are a few ways to judge faculty strength. The detailed profile will generally be available on the college website. You can also take to LinkedIn to individually search for the faculties and read more about their expertise. Keep a lookout for permanent faculties and visiting faculties. The best department in the best college will have a combination of both.

**Research into the type of companies that come for recruitment:** A finance company coming for campus hiring will rarely look for an operation expert. Again, human resource managers can land a job in almost any sector. Similarly, there is a steady rise in the demand for digital marketing professionals and almost all companies will look for PGDMs in the near future. These are factors you should evaluate while selecting an institution. Do good companies come to hire from your department? What are the current scenarios and future prospects?

Colleges advertise the companies that come to their colleges to hire. You can evaluate the sector of firms that visit the most. This will further narrow down your list of potential institute.

**Make a list of the average salary offered:** The most lucrative thing about a PGDM course is the salary prospects after graduation. Many students do have it as an evaluating factor and with good reason. Return on investment is something you should

always consider while choosing the institute that you are about to join. You need to know perfectly how much salary you can expect from the campus recruitment programs and for how long will you be paying the EMI.

There are websites that list the average salary secured by graduating students after their PGDM. If you research well, you will get a year by year break up of each institute. Combine this with the above two factors and filters your options further. Look for the median figures as the mean may not always be the correct figures to judge.

**Look at the facilities you will get from your department:** Most of the workshops and events are organised by the individual departments of the top colleges. While classroom studying is fine, you should consider those management colleges who conduct frequent college events for their PGDM students. They bring in field experts to broaden your education scope and give you an insight into the corporate world.

Again, the college website is the best place to research this. Check out how frequently these events happen and which department conducts the most. Also look into the profiles of the visiting guests to understand the depth to which you can learn from these sessions. Exposure is going to be valuable for your career and the more you have it, the better it is for you.

The fashion industry, as we all know, drives significant global economic value. According to the Statista market forecast, the revenue in this industry is expected to show an annual growth rate (CAGR 2020-2024) of 14.1%, resulting in a projected market volume of \$22,291m by 2024

Apart from being an influential business sector, new and innovative approaches to fashion business and fashion management aim to tackle complex global and local issues.

### SKILLS

The soft skills that are needed are: Creativity, persuasion, collaboration, adaptability and emotional intelligence. The hard skills needed are: Block Chain, Cloud Computing, Analytical Reasoning, Artificial Intelligence, UX Design, Business Analysis, Affiliate Marketing, Sales, Scientific Computing and Video Production

Students going into the industry in the coming 10, or 20 years require skills very much different from the past ones, a shift fuelled by the COVID-19 pandemic. Acquiring and training in soft skills like communication, problem-solving, along with the now essential hard skills like analytical reasoning, business analysis, sales amongst others are important skills for the future leaders of this world.

Aspirants seeking to join this fast-growing fashion industry, do not have only fashion designing as a career option, but many other functions which concentrate on the business and man-

# KEEP UP WITH STYLE

COVID-19 has changed how each sector will need different skillsets in the coming years. DR SUNITA KONWAR lists skills that the future fashion leaders will require

agement of this industry.

**Broadening of skillsets:** Agility and Quick Response to challenges and current developments in business and society, to make informed managerial decisions that consider ethical, economic, social and cultural implications, enabling one to work on real-life challenges, solving problems, prioritising resources using analytical, cost-effective approach.

**Communication:** Analysis of cases to diplomatically respond to conflicts and to present innovative ideas to interested parties.

**Employability:** Transferable skills and strong business knowledge that could be used for consultancy, marketing and advertising, human resources, retail and sales, and finance.

**Students will require different skillsets now, a shift fuelled by COVID-19. Acquiring and training in soft skills like communication, problem-solving, along with hard skills like analytical reasoning and business analysis are important**

**Multidisciplinary:** Skills acquired can be applied in different roles across the fashion supply chain, contributing to the success of a business, ranging from human resource management, entrepreneurship, finance, service operations, consultancy, supply chain management to global business.

### OPPORTUNITIES

■ **Fashion Merchandisers:** Analysing market trends, strategic production planning and managing purchase negotiations.

■ **Fashion Buyers:** Travel to production facilities, trade fairs and fashion shows worldwide to see what a company will showcase based on emerging seasonal trends.

■ **Sourcing agents:** Assessing the needs of the company, locating suppliers, and meeting them to see if they will be able to take on the orders.

■ **Sales and Distribution managers:** Processing orders and reorders, updating stock levels, dealing with any queries, logistical problems, distribution management and continually visiting retail stores to get updates on customer feedback.

■ **Fashion Product managers:** Thorough understanding of the market and is therefore able to analyse the consumer requirement of the product at appropriate pricing.

■ **Fashion Brand managers:** Devises strategies to improve the brand value in

the eyes of the customer and takes it to a next level.

■ **Retail Merchandisers:** Link between buyers and the sales floor, ensuring the right stock is in the right place at the right time to maximise sales and margin performance. They decide which products, sizes, colours, quantity should be there in store.

■ **Visual Merchandiser:** Promote the image, products and services of retail businesses and other organisations. They create eye-catching product displays and store layouts and design to attract customers and encourage them to buy.

■ **Fashion Market managers:** Increase the market share of their product through developing marketing strategies that draw the customers to buy their products.

■ **PR and Event managers:** Public relation and event personnel work to generate positive publicity and client brand recognition. These individuals engage in networking initiatives with celebrities, models and other public figures who can elevate a brand.

■ **Fashion E-Commerce:** In the 21st century, it is very clear that E-commerce is expanding rapidly. Not only do their employees work in an innovative environment, they are also at the forefront of the latest developments in fashion and technology.

The writer is Course Leader- Fashion Business Management at IAD

Over the past months, the concept of traditional learning changed drastically as students moved to an online learning environment. However, brushing aside the pandemic blues, several Ed-tech startups stepped up to help every student continue their learning.

With an aim to make education truly interesting, Ed-tech startups are changing the education landscape. The emphasis today is not on rote-learning but to nurture the right skills from a young age. Further, as technological advancement is taking place at a breakneck speed, these startups also aim to provide tech skills relevant for the future.

In this regard, let us look at five innovative education technology practices

that India saw in 2020:

**Concept-based learning:** The idea is to make learning a "joyful affair" for students where they can share knowledge, new experiences, and deeply engage in problem-solving activities to develop intellect from the very childhood. SP robotics is one such ed-tech platform that helps students learn, build and showcase robotics, coding, image processing, virtual reality, and other next-generation skills or education. The best part is that concepts are taught using animation videos and real-world examples. It only enhances coding skills but also problem-solving skills and creativity.

**Training healthcare practitioners:** A Gurgaon based start-up provides vocational

## MINDIT

training for paramedics such as OT technicians, lab technicians and x ray technicians. The company is replicating the Uber-model but instead of taxis, it's focusing on vocational education for paramedics, a critical need for India. It is estimated that the demand for paramedics stands at 6.5 M, whereas the available skilled workforce is only 0.45. M Virohan is a health ed-tech player and has developed an end to end, proprietary technology stack to aggregate training providers and standardise operations from mobilisation to

training to placements. It has even built a job aggregation solution for demand aggregation and job prediction by geography and trade. Finally, it partners with industry players like GE Healthcare and Siemens Healthineers to ensure that their content is relevant and demanded by the industry.

**Skill development:** Upskilling means learning new skills to enhance competencies as it plays a critical role in a student's life as well as career. School of Accelerated Learning (SOAL) is the first hybrid product

School for learners who are looking to build tech-focused careers. It is India's first-ever hybrid coding boot camp for emerging technologies and future work skills. The platform provides in-depth knowledge of courses in Product Engineering and Product Design and helps to build real-life, robust web applications from scratch. Another live online upskilling academy for kids is BeyondSkool.

**Job leading courses for engineers:** Chennai headquartered global start-up Skillync launched a special masters course in electric vehicle design and simulation. The start-up provides job leading courses for mechanical, electrical and civil engineering. This special course launched in May 2020

was the first such curriculum in India which focuses on EV. With colleges shut and students looking to make the most of the time that they are at home the startup has fast tracked the development of this programme and releasing it amid COVID-19.

**Contextual learning for young minds:** Kutuki is one of India's first early learning app that uses proprietary stories and songs-based curriculum to attract India's youngest learners. The interactive app aims to transform the young minds by creating contextual, multi-lingual content that parents and children can identify with. is one of the top apps recognised by PM Modi as one of the winners of AatmaNirbhar Bharat App Innovation Challenge.



last date to apply is January 15, 2021.

The Internshala has announced its annual scholarship, Internshala Career Scholarship for Girls (ICSG)-2021. The ICSG is an annual award of ₹25,000. The reward is meant to recognise a girl who has fought against odds to pursue a career of her dreams in any field like academics, sports and arts.

**Eligibility:** Any girl of Indian nationality between the age group of 17 to 23 years (as of December 31, 2020) is eligible to apply.

**Application process:** It has three steps: Online form—Submission of application. Interview: A short-list for a telephonic interview would be announced and interviews would be conducted.

You would be asked to furnish all the necessary documents and proofs before the interview.

**Referee check:** After the interview, your referee (provided in the form) would be contacted for verification, after which the final winner would be selected and announced.

**How to apply:** To apply, the girl students need to fill form and state their career objective. The applications will be shortlisted based on four elements including the fight against odds, achievement, purpose, and need.

For more information or to apply to the scholarship, visit: <http://bit.ly/ICSG-21>.

**Application deadline:** The

With the intention of providing a world-class education for high-calibre international students, the University of Waterloo is offering the International Student Entrance Scholarships in Canada.

**Benefits:** Each successful scholar will receive the amount of \$10,000 accredited towards tuition fees.

**Course Level:** Undergraduate India students can apply.

**Eligibility:** Students are obliged to enrol in a bachelor's degree programme at the University of Waterloo.

The sponsorship will be awarded in any subject offered by the university.

**Supporting documents:** Must attach your academic transcripts of all the previous school attended and copy of passport.

**Admission requirements:** For being admitted, you must have a minimum 90% admission average and also meet the admission requirements of the university.

**Language requirement:** Having good English language proficiency is important for an undertaking degree programme at the university.

**How to apply:** If you want to empower with this educational award, the interested student has to take admission in the undergraduate degree coursework at the university and also complete the admission information form.

**Application deadline:** The last date to apply for this scholarship is June 1, 2021.

### WEB DEVELOPMENT AT PRECISELY

Location: Work From Home  
Stipend: ₹50,000 per month  
Link: [internshala.com/i/6650079](http://internshala.com/i/6650079)  
Deadline: January 5, 2021

### SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT AT CORWIN TECHNOLOGIES

Location: Work From Home  
Stipend: ₹10,000-₹20,000 per month  
Link: [internshala.com/i/6650081](http://internshala.com/i/6650081)  
Deadline: January 5, 2021

### TECHNICAL SUPPORT AT SQUADCAST

Location: Work From Home  
Stipend: ₹15,000 per month  
Link: [internshala.com/i/6650082](http://internshala.com/i/6650082)  
Deadline: January 5, 2021

### RESEARCH AT CLEAN ENERGY ACCESS NETWORK

Location: Delhi  
Stipend: ₹15,000 per month  
Link: [internshala.com/i/6650084](http://internshala.com/i/6650084)  
Deadline: January 5, 2021

### OPERATIONS AT EDHUSK

Location: Chandigarh, Jaipur  
Stipend: ₹6,000-₹9,000 per month  
Link: [internshala.com/i/6650086](http://internshala.com/i/6650086)  
Deadline: January 5, 2021

### COUNSELING (EDU) AT CHAHAL ACADEMY

Location: Ranchi  
Stipend: ₹6,000-₹10,000 per month  
Link: [internshala.com/i/6650087](http://internshala.com/i/6650087)  
Deadline: January 5, 2021

### CONTENT WRITING AT EZERX HEALTH TECH

Location: Bhubaneswar  
Stipend: ₹5,000-₹10,000 per month  
Link: [internshala.com/i/6650088](http://internshala.com/i/6650088)  
Deadline: January 4, 2021

## STUDY ABROAD

**'Time to help students' grow business ventures'**  
There are many opportunities for Indian students to hone entrepreneurial skills, says GARETH TRAINER

Enterprising students will play a vital role in helping societies and economies from all over the world recover from the global pandemic. Students and graduates should not only be extremely well equipped to seek and successfully obtain graduate level work but should be able to create opportunities for themselves and for others.

By supporting the students and graduates to be innovative, creative, and enterprising whatever their discipline or employment aspiration, we are enabling them to have an impact and make things happen in a huge variety of economically important ways.

The Newcastle University offers many opportunities to international students during their studies and for three years after they graduate, whether they want to remain in the UK, return home or

emigrate elsewhere. From tailored gateway programmes and bespoke events to one-to-one career advice, further study guidance or start-up support, there is help for all chosen graduate-level career paths, whether they are pursuing employment or self-employment.

For the latter, the Career Services initiative — Start Up — has been supporting students and recent graduates to start businesses or work as independent professionals for over 20 years through coaching, mentorship, workshops, equity-free grant funding, co-working space, a business pre-accelerator initiative, and visa endorsement.

As a Home Office Endorsing Body — Start Up — can award up to 25 endorsements per year to the university graduates who meet the eligibility criteria for the start-up visa route and want to stay in the UK.

The writer is Assistant Director (Enterprise and Entrepreneurship), Newcastle University Careers Service

## QUOTE UNQUOTE

One of the very few positive aspects of COVID's effects in 2020, was that traditional resistance to adopting Edtech in the classroom by schools & colleges around the world was broken. Institutional faculty and administrators had to quickly adapt to new pedagogies to facilitate effective online education of their students. I believe that some of these advanced methods of teaching will remain even after physical classrooms restart in 2021. The Government released a very forward-thinking National Education Policy which emphasised the need to move the education system away from exam-oriented rote learning and adapt to more interactive pedagogical methods which develop critical thinking and employability among graduates.

Dr Akhil Shahani, MD, Shahani Group and Ask.Careers

Robotic process automation (RPA) is expected to witness a vast adoption in India and across the globe. The pandemic has made it imperative to reduce our dependency on human-driven processes and RPA has been a critical enabler for automating repetitive tasks. Many sectors, including banking, insurance, Government, healthcare, and shared services, are already leveraging RPA to increase process efficiency and accuracy. In the near future, hyperautomation will take the centre stage by leveraging artificial intelligence, data analytics, and end-to-end process orchestration to deliver experiential automation.

Varun Goswami, Global Head, New Products COE, Newgen Software.

What a year 2020 has been. Most countries have undergone the first wave of pandemic and are experiencing the second or third wave. There are some that are waiting to see it shortly. However, even during such trying times, the tech space has undergone many amendments. Right from the talent opting for online skill enhancement programs to a surge in the digital world, our dependency on the tech industry has increased. This means that the opportunities and employability in the tech space is likely to witness an upward trend in the coming year. There has also been a change in the hiring space, companies have started relying on non-traditional methods of hiring. However, the hiring stakeholders still need to embrace these methods of recruitment. This is likely to be seen in the coming years.

Narayan Mahadevan, Founder, BridgeLabz

The significant disruption of the higher education industry during the pandemic has resulted in both negative and positive aftermaths. A paradigm shift in the learning structure has given birth to the potential of online learning modules. If we can overlook the obvious one-on-one interaction of the classroom mode, we notice how the pandemic has transformed the centuries-old chalk-talk teaching model to the one we see now — a technological revolution that has metamorphosed the modes of learning forever. Entrepreneurs across the world are bringing new-age tools and programs to help learners navigate through a simpler process of education that disseminates information in 15-minute modules to accommodate the limited attention span of Gen Z and Gen Alpha learners.

Shekhar Bhattacharjee, Founder, Dalham Learning

The pandemic resulted in a sudden shutdown, thus taking the expected growth of many businesses backward. While the festive season did bring a breath of relief in the country, especially for the blue-collar jobs, it may eventually die down. We expect the hiring will see a downward curve in the next 1-2 months. But, successful clinical trials of the coronavirus vaccine will reprogram people's minds to get over the mental blockage.

Navneet Singh, Founder & CEO, Avsar HR Services

