

OPINION 8
CAVALIER
LEADERSHIP**WORLD 11**
10 KILLED IN YEMEN AIRPORT
BLASTS AFTER ARRIVAL OF NEW GOVT**SPORT 14**
NZ GO TOP AFTER
THRILLING WIN

LUCKNOW, THURSDAY DECEMBER 31, 2020; PAGES 14 ₹3

the pioneer

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EXCITED FOR
NEW YEAR:
MRUNAL THAKUR
12 VIVACITY**CAPSULE****AFSPA EXTENDED FOR SIX MONTHS IN NAGALAND**

New Delhi: The entire Nagaland was on Wednesday declared a "disturbed area" for six more months by the Central Government, enabling the continuation of the controversial AFSPA which empowers security forces to conduct operations anywhere and arrest anyone without any prior warrant.

BJP-BACKED CANDIDATES LEAD IN K'TAKA POLLS

Bengaluru: Initial trends indicate that the candidates backed by the BJP have won a majority of panchayat seats in Karnataka as the counting of votes progressed on Wednesday.

DELHI ZOO LOSES TIGER CUB

New Delhi: The Delhi zoo has lost a tiger cub, 17 days after its mother died due to complications, officials said. The six-year-old white tigress, Nirbhaya, had given birth to two cubs on December 10.

SC RELIEF FOR ZEENAT'S ESTRANGED SPOUSE

New Delhi: Sarfaraz Jaffar Ahasan, embroiled in legal battle with estranged spouse and Bollywood actress Zeenat Aman, on Wednesday got a breather from the Supreme Court which allowed him not to surrender to jail till its further orders due to non-payment ₹60 lakh as instalment of settlement amount to the actress by December 31.

2-yr-old UK returnee +ve for strain, raises total to 16

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

A two-year-old girl who recently returned to Meerut with her parents from the UK has been found to be infected with the new Covid-19 strain. With this, the number of UK returnees found carrying the new variant of SARS-CoV-2 has increased from 6 on Tuesday to 14 on Wednesday out of 107 positive Covid cases.

As a preventive measure, the Centre has dashed off a missive to States asking them to curb crowding in the wake of New Year celebration and keep a strict vigil on all events that could be a potential super spreader.

Of the 20 new UK coronavirus mutant strain, 8 have been registered at the National Centre for Disease Control in Delhi, 7 at National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences in Bangalore, two at Cellular and Molecular Biology in Hyderabad.

One each has been logged at the National Institute of Biomedical Genomics near Kolkata, National Institute of Virology in Pune and CSIR Institute of Genomics and



Integrative Biology in Delhi. Of the total 107 cases, eight are from the national Capital.

The new variant is considered to be more lethal than the original coronavirus and is more transmissible among young people.

Keeping in view the fresh surge of coronavirus cases in Europe and America, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said in the letter to the States and UTs that there was still a need for maintaining comprehensive precaution and strict surveillance within India.

"You will appreciate that in the wake of New Year and various

celebratory events associated with it as well as the ongoing winter season, a strict vigil is required to be maintained to curb all potential 'super spreader' events and places where crowds may gather," Bhushan said in the letter.

A senior official with the Union Health Ministry said the two-year-old girl in Meerut and her parents, who have also tested positive for the new strain, had returned from the UK. The child is in an isolation ward with her parents at Meerut's Subharti Medical College.

Continued on Page 11

India to decide on 3 Covid vaccines on Fri

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India will take a call on giving approval to the three Covid-19 vaccines developed in the country on January 1.

A high-level DCGI panel met on Wednesday to discuss the approval issue even as the UK became the first country to give nod to the Covishield shot from the stable of drug firm AstraZeneca and the University of Oxford.

In India, Serum Institute of India is developing the vaccine in collaboration with Oxford University and pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca.

The Union Health Ministry in a statement here said the Subject Expert Committee (SEC) in the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) had met on Wednesday to consider the Emergency Use Authorisation (EUA) request of Pfizer, Serum Institute of India (SII) and Bharat Biotech Pvt Ltd.

"While further time was requested on behalf of Pfizer, the additional data and information presented by SII and Bharat Biotech Pvt Ltd was perused and analysed by the

SEC," said the Ministry.

The analysis of the additional data and information is going on. SEC will convene again on January 1, 2021, said the statement.

However, sources said the approval by the UK is likely to pave the way for authorisation of the vaccine in several countries. India successfully completed two-day dry run of the Covid immunisation.

India is hoping to launch the immunisation drive soon once vaccines are approved.

Earlier this month, the SEC had sought more data on the safety and efficacy of Covid-19 vaccine candidates after deliberating on the company's application that sought emergency use authorisation.

While considering the application submitted by Serum Institute of India, the committee had recommended that the firm should provide safety data of phases 2 and 3 clinical trials in the updated applications.

The committed had also sought immunogenicity data from the clinical trial in India as well as in the UK along with the outcome of the assessments made by the MHRA.

Govt to raise Defence export to \$5bn in 5 yrs, OK's Akash sale

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In an effort to give a boost to defence exports, the Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday gave the go-ahead for export of indigenously-developed and manufactured Akash short range surface-to-air (SAM) missile.

The Cabinet also approved the setting up of a committee comprising Defence and External Affairs Ministers, besides the National Security Adviser (NSA), to clear such exports. This committee will also explore various available options, including the Government-to-Government route. It will help in forging stronger strategic and defence ties with various countries all over the world. The aim is to touch the five-billion dollar mark in the next few years by exporting high-value defence platforms.

At present, India is one of the biggest importers of weapons, while the exports are relatively poor. In the fiscal year 2019-2020, the export figure stood at slightly more than ₹8,000 crore. The Government



wants to breach the ₹15,000 crore mark in the next fiscal.

The Cabinet approval on Wednesday will facilitate Indian manufacturers to participate in tenders issued by various countries.

The major decision came against the backdrop of several countries, especially in the Indian Ocean region, keen to procure Indian missile systems, including the supersonic Brahmos and Prithvi. So far, India only exports components and specialised parts.

Moreover, with the Indian industry ramping up its production capabilities and sophistication in the last few years, many countries also want to

acquire coastal surveillance system, radars and aircraft and helicopters.

Giving these details, the Defence Ministry officials said in order to fast track exports through quick approvals, a committee comprising of Defence Minister, External Affairs Minister and NSA has been created.

"This committee would authorise subsequent exports of major indigenous platforms to various countries. The committee would also explore various available options including the Government-to-Government route," the Ministry stated.

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UP Assembly winter session cancelled

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The winter session of UP Assembly has been cancelled in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Earlier this month the Central government had also announced to cancel the winter session of Parliament in view of the coronavirus pandemic. UP Assembly secretariat sources said the power to convene a session of the assembly rested with the government. He said the decision to cancel the winter session was taken by the Cabinet. "The announcement of the cancellation of the winter session of Parliament on December 18, was made by the Union Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Prahlad Joshi, not by the Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla," the official sources said.

CBI: Conducted detailed probe into Sushant Singh's case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has conducted a detailed investigation in connection with the death of Bollywood star Sushant Singh Rajput and the agency continues to maintain that "all aspects are being looked at and no aspect has been ruled out."

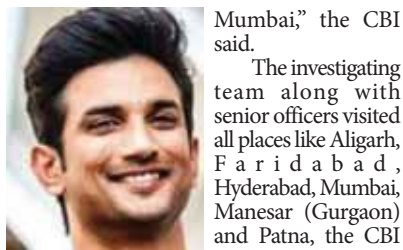
CBI Superintendent of Police Nupur Prasad in a letter addressed to BJP MP Subramanian Swamy on Wednesday said, during the course of the probe CBI teams visited Aligarh, Faridabad, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Manesar and Patna and examined all the witnesses.

During the probe, the agency deployed advanced mobile forensic equipment, including latest software for extraction and analysis of relevant data available in the

digital devices and also for analysis of dump data of the cell phone tower locations related to the case, she said.

The CBI response came following a letter from Swamy dated July 30 addressed to the Prime Minister.

"After taking over the investigation, a team of experienced investigating officers was constituted for looking into the circumstances relating to unnatural death of Sushant Singh Rajput. The investigating team took over the case papers of FIR No 241/2020 from Patna Police. The CBI also took over the case papers of ADR (Accidental Death Report) No. 43/2020 under Section 174 of CrPc relating to the unnatural death of Sushant Singh Rajput from PS-Bandra,



Mumbai," the CBI said.

The investigating team along with senior officers visited all places like Aligarh, Faridabad, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Manesar (Gurgaon) and Patna, the CBI said in the letter.

The investigating team and senior officers had visited the place of the incident on numerous occasions for a better understanding of the circumstances related to the incident. The Experts of Central Forensic Science Laboratory, CBI, New Delhi considered to be the best in their fields in India, also visited and examined the place of incident. The experts also carried out the simulation exercise, it said.

4 held for defrauding Ram temple trust of ₹6L, kingpin at large

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Ayodhya police claimed to have made a major breakthrough by arresting four miscreants for fraudulent withdrawal of ₹6 lakh from Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trusts bank account in September. The kingpin, however, is yet to be held.

Confirming the news of the arrest, Ayodhya DIG Deepak Kumar claimed on Wednesday that they were making all-out efforts to trap the prime accused after extracting whereabouts of the gang leader from his arrested accomplices.

According to the police, the amount was transferred to the PNB in Maharashtra from

Ayodhya's State Bank of India using two cloned cheques of ₹2.5 lakh and ₹3.5 lakh with the forged signatures of the trustees. The scam was busted after a third cloned cheque was intercepted at a SBI clearing house in Lucknow.

The withdrawal was made on September 1 but the Trust was in the dark about the fraudulent withdrawals till a third cloned cheque of ₹9.86 lakh was presented at a Bank of Baroda's branch and sent to SBI for clearing after a week. Alarm bells rang when a senior bank official intercepted the cheque and made repeated calls to Trust secretary Champat Rai to verify whether he had signed on the high-value cheque.

Continued on Page 11

ITR filing date for individuals extended till January 10

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government on Wednesday extended the deadline to file income tax return (ITR) for individuals by 10 days to January 10, 2021.

The deadline for filing tax returns by businesses too has been extended till February 15, the Finance Ministry said in a statement.

This is the third time that the Government has extended the deadline to file ITR — first from the normal deadline of July 31 to November 30, 2020, and then to December 31, 2020.

Also, the due date for filing declaration under the direct tax dispute resolution scheme Vivad Se Vishwas has been extended till January 31.

Covid protocols to be strictly enforced 187 test +ve for coronavirus

District admn gears up as new year euphoria sets in

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The district administration officials have geared up to enforce Covid protocols on the new year eve as people are planning to step out for celebrations. ADM, East, KP Singh said the administration would enforce government directions through police and other departments.

"The directions are primarily regarding adhering to Covid protocols, including social distancing and wearing masks. In closed areas, only a hundred people can gather while in open areas, 40 percent of the total capacity is allowed to be used," he said.

ASP, East, Sanjeev Suman said they have been getting a lot of applications seeking permission for gathering on new year. "Guidelines have been issued in this regard and the same will be enforced. We will be carrying out police patrolling and ensure other measures like previous year, but enforcement would be stricter because of the pandemic," he said.

SP, Trans-Gomti, Rajeev Srivastava said they have received applications seeking permission for new year parties and the same are being looked into.

DCP, Traffic, Khyati Garg said they conducted a survey in the city for places which had seen large gatherings last year. "There were many such places last year but this time the situation is different and gatherings will be less because of the Covid scare. However, general celebrations will still be there and for the purpose, we have re-deployed our force consisting of 600-700 traffic cops, and we are focusing mainly on food joints, malls, cinema halls in the morning while restaurants, clubs and bars in the evening. We are also deploying

police response vehicles in areas where women and girls will be moving out to ring in the new year. We will also have an all-women police response vehicles through the night," she said.

In view of the traffic snarls on Christmas eve, Garg said they were planning to effect route diversions. "There are two well-equipped multilevel parkings but are not used by the public as much. We have been urging people to use these parking areas but there is lack of interest and habit on the part of people. Traffic department and Nagar Nigam have been working in coordination for the past one week to ensure that these parkings are used by people," she said.

She said they would have to keep the traffic moving at Hazratganj on new year eve. "We are expecting the traffic volume to be heavy and our focus will be on keep it moving," she said. She said they would be towing vehicles parked in no-parking areas.

"However, since women and families are expected to move out to celebrate the new year, we will not be harsh. We will give them warnings through the public announcement system. We will be wielding awareness handle more than the punishment handle," she said.

Two drives to curb drunken driving and speeding of vehicles will be underway on December 31 from 6 pm onwards.

Meanwhile, the Meteorological department has forecast cold weather conditions but clear skies on December 31. "The weather conditions will be similar to those on Wednesday and the new year day is likely to have clear skies, followed by fog," director JP Gupta said.



Senior officers take stock of security arrangements on board a metro train on Wednesday

Pioneer

Traffic to remain diverted

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Traffic department on Wednesday announced diversions for the new year eve (Thursday). The diversions will be implemented from 5 pm. No vehicles will be allowed to move from Saharanjan trisection towards Sapru Marg and will be diverted towards Sikanderbagh crossing from where they can move towards Sapru Marg.

No traffic will be allowed to move from Hazratganj crossing towards Mayfair and will be diverted towards Sapru Marg tri-crossing and Chiraiya Jheel or Sankalp Vatika. Traffic from Charbagh moving towards Parivartan

Chowk via Hazratganj will be diverted at Hussainganj crossing towards Dr Souza road and Kaiserbagh.

Vehicles coming from Aliganj and Kaiserbagh will not be allowed to ply beyond Hindi Sansthan towards Mayfair and Hazratganj, and will be diverted either towards Chiraiya Jheel or Kaiserbagh.

Traffic from Naval Kishore road will not be allowed to move towards the Bank of India crossing, and will be diverted towards the Income Tax Office crossing.

Vehicles coming from Lalbagh will not be allowed to turn right from Valmiki crossing, and will be diverted right towards the DM residence

and UP Press Club.

No traffic will be allowed to move from the commissioner office towards St Francis College, and will be diverted towards Saharanjan.

Vehicles will not be allowed to move from Park road to Hazratganj and from Naval Kishore road to Bank of India.

No heavy vehicles will be allowed to enter the city from 5 pm on December 31.

No-parking zones will be from Hazratganj crossing to Mayfair, from Golf Club crossing to Lal Batti crossing, from Naval Kishore road to Bank of India crossing and from Sikanderbagh crossing to Saharanjan tri-crossing.



Meerut, Jhansi, Saharanpur, Ghazipur, Sitapur, Farrukhabad, Hapur, Bijnor, Banda and Mainpuri, taking the toll to 8,352 deaths.

Besides, 1,202 patients recovered, taking the number of recoveries to 5,62,459. There are 14155 active cases in the state.

Sujeet killed over political rivalry

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With the arrest of two accused, police claimed to have worked out the Sujeet Pandey murder case. The police said Sujeet was killed over political rivalry. The accused were identified as Mulayam Yadav of Mohanlalganj and Arun Kumar Yadav of Banthra. Both the shooters were given the contract to kill Sujeet allegedly by a property dealer, Madhukar Yadav, who is planning to contest panchayat polls.

The police said the accused were surrounded near Bijnaur late on Tuesday night and were asked to surrender, but they opened fire. The police returned fire and the accused suffered injuries. They were later rushed to a hospital.

Meanwhile, body of a missing 35-year-old man was recovered from Gomti river in Thakurganj police station area on Wednesday. The family suspected foul play but the police discredited their apprehension.

The deceased was identified as Raju of Gau Ghat locality in the area. Around 4 pm on December 26, he had left his house with some friends for the bank of the river. However, he did not return thereafter and his family failed to trace him even after contacting his friends and acquaintances.

On Wednesday, some fishermen spotted the body stuck near the pumping station at Gau Ghat and alerted the police. A team of police reached the scene and identified the deceased as Raju. The police had no answer when asked where had Raju been for the last four days. A police spokesman said Raju's friends would be quizzed even as the autopsy report was awaited. The police said Raju died of drowning, but his family was not satisfied with this claim.

Besides, three dacoits were nabbed by a team of Gosainganj police on the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday. They were identi-

fied as Sunder Lal of Itanuja, Mishri Lal of Sitapur and Raju Ali of Barabanki. Their aides, identified as Pintu Kashyap of Itanuja, Suraj of Madaon, Deepu of Lakhimpur and Pappu of Bahraich, managed to evade arrest. The police team that conducted the raid was led by inspector DP Kushwaha, who said a team was on patrol when informed about the miscreants hiding in the forest cover. "The team overpowered three of them while others managed to flee the scene," he said.

THEFT

Thieves made off with cash and ornaments from a house in Gontinagar. The incident came to light on Wednesday. Anurag Tripathi of Vinit Khand told the police that he had gone to his native house in Azamgarh on December 22 and returned on December 29. "I found the locks broken. The thieves decamped with cash and ornaments," he said.

ED teams raid 7 locations owned by Prajapati

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Sleuths of the Enforcement Directorate (ED), on Wednesday, raided seven premises owned by former UP minister Gayatri Prasad Prajapati in Kanpur, Lucknow and Amethi in connection with a money laundering case.

Sources disclosed that the ED teams searched the places of Prajapati's chartered accountant in Kanpur, 'benami properties' in Amethi and the former minister's house and office in Lucknow. Prajapati, along with others, is also accused of raping a woman and attempting to molest her minor daughter and has been incarcerated since March 15, 2017. Presently, he is undergoing treatment for various ailments at King George's Medical University hospital in Lucknow. The ED is probing the former minister in the SP regime for possessing alleged disproportionate assets. Two FIRs were filed by the CBI



against him and others last year in connection with an illegal sand mining case. Prajapati and four IAS officers were booked by the CBI, on the basis of which the ED filed its money laundering case.

The IAS officers under the lens were Principal Secretary Jiresh Nandan, Special Secretary Santosh Kumar, and then district magistrates Abhay and Vivek. The UP government had mandated e-tendering for renewal and award of fresh lease for sand mining

across the state on May 31, 2012, which was upheld by the Allahabad High Court on January 29, 2013. In the case involving Prajapati, the CBI alleged that beneficiaries Shiv Singh and Sukhraj used the minister's influence to get their lease renewed. The process to get the lease of Sukhraj extended was allegedly facilitated by Jiresh Nandan, then DMs of Fatehpur Vivek Kumar and Abhay in 2014 while Shiv Singh got his lease renewed in 2012. The lease was allegedly renewed in violation of the government's e-tendering policy.

In the second case, the agency alleged that Vivek, while posted as DM in Deoria, allowed lease renewal of Sharda Yadav. Yadav, whose petition for renewal of lease was dismissed by the Allahabad High Court on April 5, 2013, managed to get it renewed the next day in collusion with Vivek and other officials, the CBI alleged.

UPERC nod to tariffs for solar projects

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh Electricity Regulatory Commission (UPERC) has approved a tariff of Rs 3.02 /kWh for NTPC's two solar projects of 20 megawatt each. These two projects are located at Etawah and Rihand in Sonbhadra district.

The UPERC also approved Rs 3.05 kWh as the tariff for a 32 MW solar project developed by Sukhbir Agro at Jalaun in Bundelkhand region.

The UPERC had approved the power purchase agreements (PPAs) signed by the solar power producers and the Uttar Pradesh Power Corporation Limited on February 27, 2020.

The Uttar Pradesh New and Renewable Energy Development Agency (UPNEDA) and UPCL had filed a joint petition with UPERC seeking the adoption of the tariffs to procure 72 MW of solar projects for 25 years.

The UPCL had authorised UPNEDA to carry out the bidding process to procure 500 MW of power from grid-connected solar power projects under Phase-III of the state's Solar Energy Policy, 2017. Accordingly, UPNEDA had invited bids in January 2019.

The UPERC said that as per Section 63 of the Electricity Act, the tariffs discovered through transparent and competitive bidding process should be adopted.

Joint teams of LDA, dist admn free land worth ₹1,500 crore



PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Joint teams of the district administration and Lucknow Development Authority freed land worth Rs 1,500 crore on Wednesday. The land had been illegally encroached upon by builders.

The teams freed a land at

Sarsawan in Sarojininarayan tehsil and another at Malesmau in Sadar tehsil which had been illegally occupied by two builders. The land was registered in the name of LDA. A senior district administration official said that a few farmers had been working on the land and some builders were plotting it and planning to construct an apartment.

"Plotting was done on one part of the land and barricading on the other," an official said. Sadar SDM, Sarojininarayan SDM, tehsildars and huge police force were present as the barricades and plotting were removed.

ing it and planning to construct an apartment.

"Plotting was done on one part of the land and barricading on the other," an official said. Sadar SDM, Sarojininarayan SDM, tehsildars and huge police force were present as the barricades and plotting were removed.

Nanoparticles for better drug delivery in liver cancer discovered

Lucknow (PNS): Dr Sudipta Saha, assistant professor at the department of Pharmaceutical Science (BBAU), and his student Praneesh Kumar have discovered active betulinic acid (BA) nanoparticles against hepatocellular carcinoma or liver cancer.

BBAU spokesperson said as per the research, the nanoparticles will also serve as good anti-hepatocellular agents for better drug delivery in the body. Praneesh Kumar was conferred PhD degree on December 22 this year.

"He has also published three articles related to his research. An article has been published in the International Journal of Auckland, New Zealand, on 'Better Treatment of Liver Cancer'. Two other articles on betulinic acid have also been published by Praneesh Kumar on the subject.

Four die in truck-auto collision

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Four people were killed and four others were critically injured in a truck-auto collision in Azamgarh on Wednesday.

As per reports, an auto carrying passengers was heading to Kharihani market from

Narauli when it collided with a truck near Girdharpur village of Sidhari police station area on Wednesday morning.

It is alleged that the truck driver was inebriated which resulted in the incident.

After the accident, the locals with the assistance of police personnel rushed the

injured to district hospital where they were stated to be critical. Four auto passengers, Prabhavati Devi (55), Chanda (4) along with a two-year-old girl and a seven-year-old boy, were killed in the accident. A case was registered against the truck driver and investigations were on.

Prison brass tap police to get paroled inmates back

Lucknow (PNS): Failing to track the whereabouts of three convicts released on parole during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Deoria jail administration has sought police help to get the offenders back in prison. On Wednesday, Prison officials confirmed that they have been writing regularly to the Deoria police seeking help to catch the three convicts, who were released along with 15 others but did not return to despite the government discontinuing their parole a month ago.

Following a Supreme Court directive to decongest jails amid COVID-19 pandemic, the state government had released 2,256 convicts in April and May. On November 19, the state govern-

ment passed an order directing all prisoners to return to their respective jails within three days. Of the 2,256 released, nine died during parole, 179 were released after their jail term ended and 58 others were jailed in other cases. Only 1,443 returned to jail, while 567 convicts were yet to return.

From Deoria district jail, 18 inmates were released on parole. After the government discontinued their parole, 15 returned, but three are still at large. We have written to the Deoria district administration and police, requesting help to get them back," said Superintendent of Deoria District Jail KP Tripathi. As many as 61 convicts are yet to return to Lucknow jail.

Notice Inviting e-Tender

No SSA/Esst/Aids & Appliances/702/2014/3662 Date :29.12.2020

Mission Director, Axiom Sarba Siksha Abhijan Mission, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, Assam (Samagra Siksha Abhijan) invites tender through e-Tendering process from reputed Manufacturer of Hearing Aids for assessment and supply of aids and appliances for Children with special needs.

To participate in the tender process through e-procurement document, bidder should have valid Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) and have to register in the portal <https://assamtenders.gov.in> by themselves.

The Bidder who have downloaded the tender schedules containing the tender details, terms and conditions, from the website shall submit their tender on-line on the website <https://assamtenders.gov.in>, with proof of payment of non refundable tender processing fee of Rs. 5000/- (Rupees five thousand) only in the form of demand draft/Bankers Cheque drawn in favour of Mission Director, Axiom Sarba Siksha Abhijan Mission, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, Assam, from any nationalized Bank and payable at Guwahati. The tender should be submitted on-line as per date and time of submission as per prescribed schedule.

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

Janasanyog No. CF/3586/20

यूनियन बैंक ऑफ इंडिया Union Bank of India

Kanpur Regional Office : 117/H-1/240, Pandu Nagar Kanpur-208005
Head Office : 239, Vidhan Bhavan Marg, Nariman Point, Mumbai - 400 021

SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable assets under the securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 Read with Proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rule, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the secured creditor, the constructive possession of which has been taken by the authorized officer of **Union Bank of India** (Secured Creditor), will be sold on **"As is Where is," "As is What is," and "Whatever there is"** on the date mentioned below, for recovery of dues as mentioned hereunder to Union Bank of India from the below mentioned Borrower(s) & Guarantor(s). The Reserve Price & the Earnest Money Deposit or also mentioned hereunder.

Branch Name : Yashoda Nagar • **Address :** 81, Pashupati Nagar, Yashoda Nagar, Kanpur, **Branch Head :** Shri Balram • **Mob. :** 8840001952

Name of Borrower : Shri Kuldip Kumar Dubey S/o Shri Ramesh Chandra Dubey & Smt. Sarita Devi W/o Shri Kuldip Kumar Dubey, Both R/o: 4C/165, Awasth Vikas, Hanspuram, Naubasta, Distt. Kanpur Nagar
O/s Amount as per Demand Notice : Rs. 17,65,351.00 • **Intt. + Other Expenses**
Property : Property Situated at House No. 4C/165, E.W.S., Awasth Vikas, Scheme No. 2, Hanspuram, Kanpur, **Owner of Property :** Shri Kuldip Kumar Dubey, **Area :** 35.11 Sq. Mtr., **Bounded :** North- 6 Mtr. Road, South- House No. 4C-164, East- 6 Mtr. Road, West- House No. 4C-166.
Date & Time of E-Auction : 18-01-2021 at 11.00 am to 4.00 pm
Reserve Price : Rs. 11.93 Lac, **Earnest Money to be deposited Rs. 1.20 Lac.** For detailed terms and condition of the sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in/english/TenderViewAllAuction.aspx>

Branch Name : Swaroop Nagar • **Address :** 7/135, Mandakini Plaza, Swaroop Nagar, Kanpur, **Branch Head :** Shri Sanjay Kuamr • **Mob. :** 9918500735

Name of Borrower : Shri Vipin Mishra & Shri Nitin Mishra Both R/o : House No. EWS, 646 & 647/1550, Ratanpur, Panki, Kanpur.
O/s Amount as per Demand Notice : Rs. 21,74,726.26 • **Intt. + Other Expenses**
Property (1) : House No. E/646/ 1550, Scheme No. 40 at Ratanpur, Kanpur, **Owner of Property :** Shri Nitin Mishra, **Area :** 47.64 Sq. Mtr., **Bounded :** North : House No. 645, South : House No. 647, East : 7.50 Mtr. Road, West : House No. 659, **Property (2) :** House No. E/647/ 1550, Scheme No. 40 at Ratanpur, Kanpur, **Owner of Property :** Shri Vipin Mishra, **Area :** 47.64 Sq. Mtr., **Bounded :** North : House No. E646, South : House No. E648, East : 7.50 Mtr. Road, West : House No. E658, **Date & Time of E-Auction :** 18-01-2021 at 11.00 am to 4.00 pm
Reserve Price : Rs. 29.00 Lac, **Earnest Money to be deposited Rs. 2.90 Lac.** For detailed terms and condition of the sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in/english/TenderViewAllAuction.aspx>

Name of Borrower : Shri Virendra Kumar Gupta & Smt. Neeru Gupta, Both R/o : House No. 137, Satyam Vihar, Awasth Vikas No. 1, Kalyanpur, Kanpur. **Guarantor :** Shri Kunwar Chandra Gupta, R/o : 104/218, Old Sisamau, Kanpur
O/s Amount as per Demand Notice : Rs. 11,91,352.74 • **Intt. + Other Expenses**
Property : Property Situated at Old Sisamau, Kanpur. **Owner of Property :** Shri Virendra Kumar Gupta, **Area :** 42.64 Sq. Mtr. **Bounded :** North : House of Sundar Lal Vaishya, South : 1.52 Mtr. Road, Wide Gali, East : 1.83 Mtr. Wide Gali, West : House of Sundar Lal Vaishya. **Date & Time of E-Auction :** 18-01-2021 at 11.00 am to 4.00 pm
Reserve Price : Rs. 17.00 Lac, **Earnest Money to be deposited Rs. 1.70 Lac.** For detailed terms and condition of the sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in/english/TenderViewAllAuction.aspx>

For Registration and Login and Bidding Rules visit <https://www.mstcecommerce.com/auctionhome/ibapi/index.jsp>

Date : 31.12.2020 **Place :** Kanpur **Authorized Officer, Union Bank of India**

BSM to form govt in '22: Rajbhar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Former UP Minister and President of Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party (SBSP) Om Prakash Rajbhar said that AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi would come to Varanasi next month in view to strengthen recently formed political alliance Bhagidari Sankalp Morcha (BSM) in which eight political parties joined hands and later on, Owaisi also joined the alliance recently. Talking to the reporters here on Wednesday, Rajbhar expressed confidence that in 2022 the BSM would form its government in the state.

According to him, if the BSM comes to power it would provide free electricity to all for five years and ensure employment to all the youths. Besides, he said that his alliance supports free, compulsory and uniform education apart from free health facilities to all. He said that after coming to power



SBSP chief OM Prakash Rajbhar addressing a press conference in Varanasi on Wednesday

Pioneer

his alliance would ensure desks and benches in all the primary schools. SBSP chief strongly criticised the UP Police for stopping Delhi Education Minister Manish Sisodia.

Criticising the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) he said that when Amit Shah, JP Nadda and others addressed rallies, the government did not raise the issue of COVID-19 restric-

tions but whenever he had planned to hold a meeting he was threatened by the administration to lodge case against him. According to him, when the Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that he was a 'chowkidar', all the BJP workers had started claiming themselves as chowkidars but they did not tell whose watchman the PM was, alleging him as the

chowkidar of Ambanis and Adanis.

He said that there are 43 per cent population of most backward caste votes in the state apart from 22 per cent dalits and 35 per cent minority. Besides, there is eight per cent population of Rajbharis and every party is now trying to woo the community but the Rajbharis had seen the real faces of all the parties. However, he added that the alliance would contest 2022 assembly elections irrespective of raising any caste lines and fight against those who are trying to create communal disharmony in the name of riots and Love Jihad. He also flayed the three farm laws terming them as black laws as they were brought to help the Advanis and Adanis like corporate world. In the press conference, party MLA from Ajgara Kailash Nath Sonkar, state vice-president Shashi Pratap Singh and others were also present.

46 people came from UK: CMO

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr VB Singh has informed that on the instructions of the Central and state governments, the Health department has already traced people who came here from the UK in the recent past. Since the outbreak of the new corona strain in Britain on November 23 last, a total of 46 passengers have arrived in the district so far from the UK and of these, 21 passengers have arrived between November 23 and December 8, while 25 passengers have come since December 9. Currently, the Health department is monitoring all 31 UK-returned passengers residing in the city, claimed the CMO.

District Surveillance Officer and ACMO

(Communicable Diseases) Dr SS Kanaujia said that the passengers who have come from abroad between November 23 and December 8 and if they do not have any symptoms, then they will be put on surveillance for 28 days from the day of their arrival and they will be tested only if there are any symptoms. According to him, four out of 21 passengers have gone back to London and five others are residing in the district or state. Of the 25 passengers who have come since December 9, five passengers are residing in the other states and the remaining 20 are staying in Varanasi. All these passengers have been tested for RTPCR and all of them were found negative. At present, all 31 passengers residing in Varanasi are being followed up by phone daily and they have been told that if any symptoms

appear in any of them, then immediately inform the Health department on the toll free number 1077.

Earlier, CMO said that the Health department has completed the preparations for Covid-19 vaccination proposed to be held in the coming days. He was addressing a seminar on COVID-19 organised under the auspices of the Indian Medical Association (IMA) at IMA Building, Lahurabir. He expressed confidence that all IMA members will cooperate in this vaccination programme. District Immunisation Officer Dr VS Rai said that the cooperation of IMA practitioners in the COVID-19 vaccination is important and it is expected that all the doctors will participate in this programme and will make the COVID-19 vaccination a success. He also

informed that in the first phase vaccination in which the health workers are to be vaccinated, in addition to staff of government and private hospitals. The list of which has already been prepared and uploaded on the portal, he informed.

IMA President-elect Dr Kartikya Singh welcomed all the IMA practitioners and encouraged them to cooperate in the COVID-19 vaccination. IMA State Vice-President Dr Sanjay Rai also welcomed the distinguished guests and key speaker Dr VS Rai. IMA Secretary Dr Rajeshwar Narayan Singh conducted the programme. On this occasion, Dr Arvind Singh, Dr NP Singh, Dr Madhu Agarwal, Dr Nutan Singh, Dr Suresh Singh, Dr AK Pandey, Dr Shiv Shakti Dwivedi, Dr Rakesh Patel and many others were also present.

Narsingh Das elected VNN dy chairman

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Narsingh Das of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has been elected deputy chairman of the Nagar Nigam Executive Committee, once again. In a close contest, he was elected with the vote of Mayor Mridula Jaiswal. Opposition parties fielded Bablu Sahab in front of Narsingh Das. In the contest of thorns, both the candidates got 6-6 votes each. During such a situation, the deciding vote was of the Mayor who voted in favour of Narsingh



Narsingh Das being greeted by Mayor and senior BJP leaders and corporators on his being elected as vice-chairman of Nagar Nigam in Varanasi on Wednesday

Das.

After the victory, there was jubilation in the BJP camp and the party workers started congratulating each other offering sweets. Narsingh Das termed his victory as the strength of the organisation and said that if united, BJP will win in every election. He said that it is the victory of the party. According to him, service to the people will be his top priority. In view of the election, a heavy force was deployed at Nagar Nigam and no outsider was allowed to go to the election venue.

69 more test positive in Varanasi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

As many as 69 new COVID-19 patients have been detected in the district on Wednesday, increasing the total number to 21,166. The day also saw one more death, increasing the toll to 358. During the day, the follow-up negative reports included 42 and all of them have been recovered from home isolation, increasing the number to 17,440. 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 20,349, leaving 459 active cases.

In the first report of the day, 52 positive patients were found out of 2,389 reports received. Till then, the total test reports received were 5,14,130 and the results of 2,722 are awaited. Out of them, 4,92,981 were negative, while 21,149 positive. The total number of samples collected was 5,40,488. Earlier, two males aged 56 and 80 from Mirza Murad

and Chandpur respectively succumbed to COVID-19 at Sir Sundarlal Hospital, Banaras Hindu University (SSH BHU). With the addition of three new red zones, the total number of hotspots has increased to 2,642 including 198 red zones. Three green zones have been converted into the red zones again. There are 2,444 green zones with seven new ones.

Meanwhile, mass / group corona antigen tests continued and all the 190 tests were

found negative at SSPG Hospital Kabirchaura apart from 96 at District Women's Hospital, 32 at CHC Shivpur, 57 at Vivekanand Hospital Bhelupur, 225 at LBS Hospital Ramnagar and 72 at SSH BHU. Apart from this, all the 41 tests at Varanasi Junction (Cantt) railway station and 29 at Manduadih were also found negative. Along with this, samples of 178 from SSPG, 26 from Vivekananda and 200 from LBS have been sent for RTPCR investigation.

DM imposes checks on boating

VARANASI (PNS): Keeping in view the New Year celebrations, District Magistrate (DM) Kaushal Raj Sharma has imposed certain restrictions regarding public safety in respect of boating in the river Ganga on December 31, 2020 and January 1, 2021. Imposing Section 144 under CrPC in the district, he has ordered that there would be no boating in the river after 8 pm on both the days and the boats would only be allowed to be operated going across the river from different ghats to the sandy areas till 4 pm. According to the orders, after 4.30 pm, no persons or boats will be allowed to stop on the sandy areas. Besides, no party of any kind will be organised on the boats. Alcohol consumption is prohibited on across the river on sand and on any boat. Apart

from both these dates, no person or ferry will stop after 4.30 pm on the sand across the Ganga till February 28 next year during this winter season. Any violation of the orders would be punishable offense under Section 188 of IPC, the DM added. Meanwhile, a virtual meeting of district level Udyog Bandhu was held under the chairmanship of DM here on Tuesday in which DM while hearing the problems related to various entrepreneurs asked the officers concerned to solve them. On the complaints of entrepreneurs, Sharma also asked the PWD officers to do construction work on roads, drains and pathways as per the norms in Chandpur Industrial Estate. He has also directed to postpone the allotment process till further order as per the orders of High Court regarding

the allotment of the cancelled plots of Industrial Estate, Chandpur -Maheshpur and Mini Industrial Estate, Chiragaon-Pacharav. To further improve the ranking of the district under the 'Ease of Doing Business', he directed the departments related to settle the pending cases within the stipulated period. He also asked for speedy disposal of all applications related to land use change in view to promote establishment of new industrial units in the district. Deputy Commissioner (Industries) Virendra Kumar and other officials and entrepreneurs were also present in the virtual meeting.

CONG TAKES OUT SANDESH YATRA: Continuing their party's Foundation Day celebrations for the third and last day here

on Wednesday, Congress workers under the auspices of City North Assembly constituency took out a Sandesh Yatra as per the instructions of the state unit of the party.

The party workers started their procession after offering prayer at Mahabir temple and after passing through Taktakpur, Meerapur Basahi, Narayanpur and Bhojubar, they reached near the statue of Rajarshi where their procession culminated.

Presiding over the meeting, city president Raghvendra Choubey said that the procession was taken out during the last three days to send messages among the people towards the ideologies of the party and apprise them of the anti-people and anti-democracy policies of the Central and state governments.

Union Cabinet puts its seal on closure note of BPCL

ABHILASH NARAIN ■ ALLAHABAD

Once a pride of Allahabad companies, the Bharat Pumps and Compressors Limited (BPCL), Naini, Prayagraj will exist no more. The Union Cabinet has put its seal on the closure note of the company on December 9, 2020, and the Director, Heavy Industries Rama Kant Singh conveyed the same to the BPCL CMD Sunil Parwani on December 17.

Established in 1970 by the Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises, Government of India, BPCL proved itself to be the pride of Allahabad, but owing to wrong handling and government neg-

ligence, the company started incurring losses, and reached the verge of its closure after 30 years. To give new life to BPCL AK Jain was made CMD in 2005, and he literally enthused life to this sick unit. The BPCL procured valued orders of heavy centrifugal pumps and compressors from top companies of India, and even exported them to earn profits. In the era of AK Jain, BPCL was bestowed the honour of being a Mini Ratna Company, but after his departure the BPCL procured orders and supplied pumps, still it could not make payments of gratuity and Provident Funds, besides other retirement benefits to the superannuating employees,

thus went into losses once again.

The Director, Heavy Industries, Government of India Rama Kant Singh conveyed the decision of the Union Cabinet of shutting down the operation of the BPCL plant and unit by making dues payments to the employees as per law. The employees have been asked to opt for VRS/VSS, and the Union Government has allocated onetime grant of ₹ 316.09 crore to settle closure related expenditure.

The BPCL CMD has also been asked to dispose of the plant machinery through e-tender, and ensure repayment of bank working capital and ONGC loans.

To establish this BPCL unit the UP Government had provided 295 acres of land free of cost to the Ministry of Heavy Industries. Later a Kendriya Vidyalaya and an ESI Hospital came up on a small part of this land allocated for the BPCL, while the major portion of the plot was still possessed by the company. The BPCL CMD has been asked to hand over the land to the UP Government.

Some employees informed that they still had pending orders, and the company was working hard to ensure supply of the ordered pumps to its valued customers. This closure will cast an adverse effect on those companies also who had placed orders with the BPCL.

Railway Week Award function held

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The 65th annual Railway Week Award function was organised at the North Central Railway Headquarters on Wednesday. In this award function organised through virtual medium, Railway week awards were given away to 170 officers and employees by General Manager North Central Railway Rajiv Chaudhry for their outstanding work.

At the beginning of the function, Principal Chief Personnel Officer, North Central Railway, Nand Kishore welcomed General Manager, while Manju Nand Kishore welcomed Lalita Chaudhry by presenting them green plants. On this occasion, AGM NCR Ranjan Yadav, all the Principal head of the department were also present and Divisional Railway Manager Prayagraj, Jhansi and Agra and other officials participated through video link.

Prior to the ceremony, the newly established Zonal Video Surveillance Control Centre

was also inaugurated in the North Central Railway Headquarters by the General Manager. Through this central control centre 24x7 monitoring of 24 stations of North Central Railway equipped with CCTV can be done. This integrated system will be helpful towards enhanced passenger safety.

On this occasion, Rajiv Chaudhry, greeted president and members of NCRWWO, all the senior officials, union and association officials and all officers and employees of North Central Railway on the auspicious occasion of 65th Railway Week. He said that that 'Railway Week' is a time to imbibe the launch, uplift and dignified development of Indian Railways. In 167 years of its journey, Indian Railways has made a continuous and active contribution to the overall development of the country. Human resource is the most important resource and occupies the top and most important place in any organisation. The contribution of all Railway men and women in adverse conditions is very important in

taking the Indian Railways on the path of development. He further said that the North Central Railway has efficiently handled these difficult conditions arising out of the COVID-19 epidemic and the credit for achieving new successes definitely goes to all the Railwaymen and women.

On this occasion, running shields, trophies and other awards were given to all the divisions, workshops, units, stations, hospitals of North Central Railway. In view of COVID-19 situation except for HQ awardees, all awards to the railway personnel working in divisions and other units and running shields were given through virtual medium. Jhansi division bagged shields of Best Division, Best accounts office, Work Horticulture Shield, Rail Track Shield, Construction Department Efficiency Shield, Electric Loco Shed Shield, Traction Distribution Shield, Inter Divisional Medical Shield, Freight Operation Shield, Safety Shield, Passenger Safety Shield, Scrap Mobilisation

Shield, Public Relations and Comprehensive Improvement Shield Board. Agra division was awarded the Commerce Shield, Bridge Shield, Rolling Stock Efficiency Shield, Safety Efficiency Shield, Signal Efficiency Shield, Sports Shield, while Prayagraj division was given away Telecommunication Efficiency Shield, Punctuality Improvement Shield, Best Coaching Rake, Best Coaching Depot, General Service & Energy Efficiency Shield, Running Room Shield, Overall Engineering Efficiency Shield.

Rail Spring Karkhana, Sithouli was given Best account unit (workshop) Shield and MLR Workshop, Jhansi was awarded the Overall Workshop Efficiency Shield. Etawah got best cleaned station award and Jhansi got best station certificate. Central Hospital, Prayagraj got Best Hospital Shield, Subedarganj Health Centre got Best Health unit Shield and General Warehousing Depot, Jhansi was awarded the Efficiency Shield.

34 new Covid cases in Prayagraj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The level of corona infection fell to the same level as it was five months ago on Tuesday. Samples were collected during the day for the Covid test of 5,922 people, of them, the Covid report of 34 people came positive in 24 hours. At the same time, 54 people beat Corona. During the treatment, one infected person died.

According to Nodal Officer for Corona Dr Rishi Sahai, with the scope of testing, the number of infected people has decreased significantly. Those who are reported positive, do not show any symptoms related to Covid. In such a situation, if there are no serious diseases, then the infected are being allowed to be treated in home isolation.

Dr Sahai said that with the death of one infected, the number of people who lost their lives due to corona infection has increased to 373. He said that the department has heaved a sigh of relief after serious patients are relieved from infection. The number of those being discharged from hospitals has increased, but at the same time the number of active patients has now been

reduced to 583.

The Nodal Officer for Corona said that those who were infected included two advocates from the High Court and the Lower Court. The report of the primary school teacher posted in Bahria, a doctor of United Medicity, Kotak Mahindra Bank personnel, a retired judge and a CISF constable has also come positive.

Magh Mela preparations accelerate

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Magh Mela will be set up in Prayagraj for one month. The work of setting up the Magh Mela at the Sangam has accelerated. Now a fortnight is left for the start of the bathing festival. Therefore, officers are engaged day and night in every task. In this context, the work of building ghats is going on vigorously. Fair administration is making one to two ghats in every sector this time.

Following the guidelines of COVID-19, they will be setting up tent city in Magh Mela. In the fair, people do not unite at one place, so camps will be set up far and wide. Even bathing should not be done at one place only, so ghats are being built in every sector. The longest ghat is being built at Sangam Nose. Apart from this, one ghat is being constructed in each sector.



The administration's appeal to the devotees coming to the fair is that people take a bath at the ghat built in their respective sectors. Not all people reach Sangam Nose, so that there is no crowd. Mela Adhikari Vivek

Chaturvedi said that besides Sangam nose and Ramghat, city side ghats are being built near Triveni and Kali bridge. Apart from this, very long ghats are being built in front of sectors three, four and five towards Jhansi. Sand bags have

been laid on all the ghats. The water in the Ganga has increased as the fair draws near. Barricading has also been done to ensure that no devotee is drowned during the fair. Apart from this, the water police team will also be active.

Unauthorised construction demolished

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

An unauthorised construction of Asif alias Malli, considered to be the right hand of the mafia don Atique Ahmed, was pulled down by the Prayagraj Development Authority in Dhoomanganj area on Wednesday.

Malli, a hardcore criminal and sharp shooter of Atique Ahmed is the prime accused of the BSP MLA Raju Pal murder case besides dozens of cases of murder, loot and crime of serious nature.



Kanpur mayor's concern over unabated burning of garbage

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Nagar Mayor Pramila Pandey has expressed concern over the unabated burning of garbage at umpteen places in the city and has launched a crackdown on those who are violating the norms.

She said a joint inspection team comprising UP Pollution Control Board swooped on a factory in Dadanagar where massive piles of garbage with polythene were being burnt. The KNN staff made videos and fined the factories which were openly violating the norms.

She said since the last two months, specific instructions had been issued to the officials at Dadanagar factory area where the norm was being flouted mainly by the factory owners and the safai karmacharis.

She said the UPPCB had expressed concern over the high SPM (suspended particulate matter) and decided to deal with the issue with an iron hand and thus the drive had been launched.

The mayor said burning trash caused long-term health problems and the toxic chemicals released during burning included nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxide, volatile organic chemicals (VOCs) and polycyclic organic matter (POMs). She said burning plastic and

treated wood also released heavy metals and toxic chemicals, such as dioxin which had a dangerous impact on human health.

Later, Additional Nagar Swasthya Adhikari DP Pandey, while addressing a press conference on Wednesday, said open burning was the burning of unwanted material in the open air where smoke and toxic fumes were released into the atmosphere directly thereby affecting the environment.

He said such practice was done outdoors where household waste materials were burnt as a means of waste disposal.

He said the safai karmacharis often set fire to the garbage after sweeping which included polythene and was dangerous for health.

He said the burnt material was released, unregulated, and in its raw form into the atmosphere and materials such as plastics had some toxic chemicals which once released in the air, posed not only a danger to the environment but also become a health concern for life.

He added that there were several reasons behind open burning. He said it had been observed in the city that the safai karmacharis were burning garbage so as to reduce the amount of garbage generated.

He said some of the effects were that it released uncon-

trolled smoke into the atmosphere which polluted the air, causing the destruction of the ozone layer.

He said toxic fumes released by the process affected not only the ozone layer but also plant and animal life, which had a negative impact on the wildlife and eventually declined their count. He added that burning of biomass led to the release of a thick black toxic smoke which mostly contained carbon. He said the large-scale production of soot led to the absorption of sunlight and reduced the reflective nature of the environment.

Pandey said unlike normal air, smoke was not clear and was dense and consequently it hindered the movement from one place to another and resulted in accidents.

He added that by burning garbage, mercury could be released and leached into the soil and water.

He said the presence of nitrogen oxide was activated and increased in the air and this was a toxic compound that combined with other pollutants in the air to reduce the oxygen circulation of the air, which instantly impacted plant and tree life.

He said it was also a cause for global warming.

In simple terms, smog is the result of the mixing up of smoke and fog. This resultant material is more dangerous

than either smoke or fog. Smog causes severe visibility issues that contribute to devastating accidents.

Not just that, added to these visibility issues is the fact that smog causes several health disorders. Above all, it suffocates people to the point that they might even die.

DP Pandey said smog was not just simple fog and smoke but it was mixed suspended particulate matter (SPM) that contributed towards the breathing hazards posed by smog. He said open burning can release dioxins from the burning of tyres and rubber which posed a great threat to man. He said as a result, humans had the highest concentration of toxic substances in their bodies. He said this was because dioxins were bio-accumulative, which meant that their concentration levels increased as one advanced upwards in the food chain, with human beings being at the top of that chain.

He said it could pose threat to normal functioning of liver, brain, kidney, heart and lungs.

Pandey said the ash residue left after the open burning was itself riddled with a lot of chemicals and metals such as lead which could be leached in the soil when it rained or by the wind and once in the soil, it could be absorbed by plants that were consumed either directly by man or by animals kept by man.

30 more test positive in Kanpur

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Chief Medical Officer Dr Anil K Mishra said 30 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 32,263 on Wednesday evening.

The CMO said 8 COVID-19 patients were discharged. He said no COVID-19 death reported in the city during the past 24 hours.

Dr Mishra said 529 active cases were undergoing treatment in the city at present. He said 4028 samples were taken in the city on Wednesday for testing.

Girl kidnapped from Kanpur found in Kannauj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A teenaged girl kidnapped by some car-borne youths in Kanpur was recovered in an unconscious state near Jalalpur Panwara level crossing of Kannauj on Wednesday morning.

She was admitted to the district hospital there.

According to reports, seeing a teenaged girl lying in unconscious state near Jalalpur Panwara level crossing, the villagers informed the police about it. Immediately, Circle Officer (City) Shiv Pratap Singh, Senior Sub-Inspector Vikram Singh and Lady Sub-Inspector Parul Chaudhary reached the spot and got the girl admitted to the district hospital. After some time, on regaining sense, the girl identified herself as Radha Awasthi (17), daughter of Kalloo Awasthi of Nai Basti, Mandhana (Kanpur).

Senior gynaecologist Dr Nidhi Goel, after medical check-up, denied rape.

Radha old the police that she was an intermediate student at BPMG Inter College, Mandhana. Around 2:30 pm on Tuesday, when she was returning home from the college and crossing the railway track, a youth dragged her into his van. She was given an injection which made her fall unconscious. She did not remember anything after she fell unconscious. The CO said the parents of the girl were called and investigations were on in the matter.

NEP a historic development in education system: Verma

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Dean of Students Welfare at NIT, Jalandhar, Dr Rohit Verma, while addressing a virtual session on 'Impact of New Education Policy' at Axis College, said the National Education Policy 2020 aimed to transform education landscape in India. He said it would bring in curricular changes to build strong foundational skills, improve quality of learning across all levels of education, bring a shift in the ways of assessment and systemic transformation.

He said the current regime had been strong on reforms and it was high time they opened up the education sector to private investment that would bring the cost of education down. He said it was critical to recognise the role and contribution of independent schools in the policy narrative, and time was ripe for the government and independent forces in education to start aligning and collaborating towards nation-building.

He said professional development of teachers, building their accountability through tenure track system and periodic performance appraisal could create a positive impact.

He said this policy marked a historic development in the education system and the first was a focus on universalising access from early childhood to higher education, integrating over two crore out-of-school children, and efforts towards socio-economically disadvantaged groups.

NER GM discusses various safety aspects

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

General Manager of North Eastern Railway (NER) Vinay Kumar Tripathi on Tuesday during a virtual meeting held on MS Teams discussed various dimensions of safety and security on NER and reviewed works being done and achievements in this area. In the meeting AGM Amit Kumar Agarwal, Principal Chief Operating Manager Anil Kumar Singh, Chief Commercial Manager SC Prasad, Principal Chief Mechanical Engineer AK Pandey, CAO/Construction RK Yadav, Principal Chief Engineer Satish Kumar Pandey, Principal Chief Signal and Telecom Engineer Anil Kumar Mishra, Principal Financial Adviser Tanuja Pandey, Principal Chief Security Commissioner/Railway Protection Force (RPF) Atul Kumar Srivastava, Chief Project Director/Station Development SK Mishra, (CPO)/ Administration Nuruddin Ansari, secretary to General Manager DK Khare, CPRO Pankaj Kumar Singh and Deputy General Manager /General Krishna Chandra Singh, DRM/Lucknow Dr Monika Agnihotri, DRM / Izzatnagar Ashutosh Pant and



DRM/Varanasi Vijay Kumar Panjari and other branch officers participated. GM held detailed discussions with officials on various points related to safety during running of trains and security of passengers. In the sequence of achieving the goal of ensuring safe running of trains under the process of gradually eliminating manned level crossings detailed information was obtained about progress of works regarding under construction road underbridge and their target date. Along with keeping in mind quality of works completing them on time was our priority, Tripathi said. During the meeting GM appreciated Lucknow Division's Operating Department gate-man Vrindavan Yadav's alacrity towards safety and dedication towards work while working on gate No-310/C at Bindora Yard on December 27 stopped an empty goods train going to Lucknow via Gorakhpur by showing red flag to the guard on seeing brake assembly hanging and touching the railway track. As a result a possible accident could be avoided. The GM also released the digital calendar for the year 2021 of the NER.

'Congress jan sandesh padyatra' taken out

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

On the foundation day of the Congress its workers took out a 'Congress jan sandesh padyatra' under Lalgaraj block on Tuesday. It was taken out from Basit Ali village and after passing through many villages, including Lalgaraj tehsil, culminated into a public meeting at Babu Uparadhi Inter College, Lalgaraj. After garlanding the statue of freedom fighter late Shivmurti Dubey former MLA Bhagwati Chaudhary alleged that prevailing scenario was against democratic set up and the need of the hour was that we go to door to door and

make people agree to bring the Congress back to power in the larger interest of the nation. He said the days were not far when people will realise that the Congress was the need of the nation. District secretary Manish Dubey said party had been a symbol of struggle and constructive approach and it was due to people's trust that they could complete the long journey of 136 years. The meeting was chaired by Shah Nawaz Khan and conducted by veteran party leader, Shashi Bhushan Dubey.

RENOVATION WORK: Renovation work of ancient Hanuman temple was carried out by a team of CDO in Deori village under Chhanbey block. At

a programme held there on Tuesday MLA Ratnakar Mishra praised the initiative of the administration for fulfilling the demand of the people of the area. Proposing the vote of thanks CDO Avinash Singh thanked the DM for his moral support and appreciated his colleagues who helped in completing the temple's renovation work by getting a high-mast light installed, making available facility of potable water besides getting electrification done. The function concluded with 'Akhanda Manas Paath' and a 'bhandara'. Among those who graced the programme were MLA Rahul Kol, IG police, Piyush Srivastava, DM Sushil Kumar Patel and SP Ajay Kumar Singh.

Mask decoration competition organised

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

Amidst the difficult situation in view of the Covid-19 in order to bring a smile on the faces of its members Suhasini Sangh, a voluntary organisation of NTPC-Vindhyachal organised a mask decoration competition. Showing glimpses of their interest the participants made different types of masks in their homes. All the women members participated in this competition with great enthusiasm and showed their creativity through their amazing activities, which were appreciated by the chairperson, Suhasini Miridula Johri. In this competition Shobha Meena was awarded the first prize, Vibhuti Rastogi and Basanti Vishwas second prize and Kiran Singh and Neha Singh the third prize. Among those present on the occasion were chairperson of Suhasini Sangh Miridula Johri, adviser (Tiny Tots) Suman Bhatia, adviser (Welfare) Vinita Subedar, adviser (Adult Education), Anju Mishra, Sports Secretary Anita Singh, Sports co-secretary Annapurna and general secretary of Suhasini Sangh Richa Mangala.

MEETING: In NTPC Vindhyachal the HR Rajbhasha section through Microsoft Teams organised a meeting of the 68th Rajbhasha (official language) Implementation Committee meeting. Its main function is to ensure compliance of the Rajbhasha Act/Rules in the departments/sections under the project and to review the progress being made in this direction and to guide for further action.

It was held under the chairmanship of ED (Vindhyachal), Munish Johri for the quarter from October to December this year. GM (O&M) SC Nayak, other GMs, heads of department and other members of the committee joined the online meeting. Chairman of Rajbhasha Implementation Committee/ED (Vindhyachal) Munish Johri directed all heads of departments to speed up propagation of Hindi, increasing correspondence in it besides compliance of decisions taken by the committee and of constitutional provisions related to it and doing maximum work through Hindi. He said the organisation of this meeting through Microsoft Teams for promotion of Hindi by the Rajbhasha section was a commendable work. The Vindhyachal Hospital gives presentation related to various diseases in Hindi which is also a meaningful step for its promotion. The ED also wished everyone a Happy New Year. GM (HR) Uttam Lal while welcoming chairman of the committee, GMs and its members said NTPC management is organising various meetings through online technology in times of this pandemic. In this series the third meeting of the committee organised by Rajbhasha Section was a good effort. He said NTPC Vindhyachal falls in 'A' region therefore all of us should do official work in 100 per cent Hindi. The GM (HR) appreciated work being done by the Rajbhasha section for promotion of Hindi. In the beginning Assistant Manager (HR-Rajbhasha) LM Pandey informed about special achievements of the Rajbhasha Section during the quarter from October to December and facts regarding various decisions taken during the last meeting. Senior specialist, Vindhyachal Hospital, Dr Antosh Kumar, gave a presentation in Hindi related to thyroid disease through online medium which was appreciated by all. In the end LM Pandey thanked the chairman and all committee members.

Gkp-Shalimar weekly extended till March 19

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The railway administration for the convenience of passengers has extended the following puja special trains. Changes have also been made in their timing and stoppages from January 1, 2021. Their coach structure will remain the same. All coaches will be reserved category and passengers traveling will have to follow the Covid-19 guidelines, CPRO PK Singh said.

CHHAPRA-LTT PUJA SPL: The 05101 Chhapra-Lokmanya Tilak Terminus (LTT) weekly puja special has been extended till March 30. Its terminal station has been changed from Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT) to Lokmanya Tilak Terminus and will be run via Mankapur-Gonda-Barabanki instead of Mankapur-Ayodhya. From January 1 as per the changed terminal station, timing and stoppages, the 05101 Chhapra-LTT puja special will every Tuesday leave Chhapra at 17.35 hrs, Siwan at 18.30 hrs, Bhatni 19.13 hrs, Deoria Sadar at 19.40 hrs, Gorakhpur at 21.15 hrs, Basti at 22.24 hrs, Mankapur at 23.18 hrs, Ayodhya on second day at 00.45 hrs, Faizabad at 01.15 hrs, Sultanpur at 02.35 hrs, Pratapgarh at 03.30 hrs, Prayagraj at 05.35 hrs, Fatehpur at 06.52 hrs, Kanpur Central at 08.10 hrs, Orai at 09.42 hrs, Jhansi at 11.55 hrs, Bhopal at 16.20 hrs, Itarsi at 18.10 hrs, Khandwa at 20.45 hrs, Bhusaval at 22.35 hrs, third day Mamad at 01.00 hrs, Nashik Road at 02.00 hrs, Kalyan at 04.20 hrs and reach LTT at

05.30 hrs. The 05102 LTT-Chhapra weekly puja special train has been extended till April 1. Its starting station has been changed from CSMT to LTT and it will be run through Barabanki-Gonda-Mankapur instead of Ayodhya-Mankapur. As per changed starting station, timing and stoppages, from January 1 the train will every Thursday leave LTT at 16.40 hrs, Kalyan at 17.20 hrs, Nasik Road at 20.45 hrs, Mamad at 22.00 hrs, on second day Bhusaval at 00.30 hrs, Khandwa at 02.35 hrs, Itarsi at 05.05 hrs, Bhopal at 06.50 hrs, Jhansi at 11.05 hrs, Orai at 12.34 hrs, Kanpur Central at 16.35 hrs, Fatehpur at 17.42 hrs, Prayagraj at 20.05 hrs, Pratapgarh at 21.54 hrs, Sultanpur at 22.52 hrs, Faizabad on third day at 00.56 hrs, Ayodhya at 02.00 hrs, Mankapur at 02.35 hrs, Basti at 03.30 hrs, Gorakhpur at 05.15 hrs, Deoria Sadar at 06.10 hrs, Bhatni at 06.33 hrs, Siwan at 07.17 hrs and reach Chhapra at 08.30 hrs.

GKP-SHALIMAR SPL: The 05022 Gorakhpur-Shalimar weekly special has been extended till March 19 next year. As per the revised timings and stoppages, from January 1 the train will on every Monday leave Gorakhpur at 13.50 hrs, Deoria Sadar at 14.42 hrs, Bhatni at 15.09 hrs, Mau at 16.20 hrs, Aunrihar at 17.18 hrs, Varanasi at 18.40 hrs, Pt Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn 19.35 hrs, Sasaram at 20.38 hrs, Gaya at 22.10 hrs, Koderma at 23.29 hrs, Gomo on second day at 01.15 hrs, Purulia at 03.10 hrs, Tatanagar at 05.18 hrs, Kharagpur at 07.25 hrs and

reach Shalimar at 09.30 hrs. The 05021 Shalimar-Gorakhpur weekly special has been extended till March 30. As per the revised timing and stoppages from January 1 the train will every Tuesday leave Shalimar at 20.20 hrs, Kharagpur at 22.10 hrs, Tatanagar on second day at 00.05 hrs, Purulia at 01.47 hrs, Gomo at 04.25 hrs, Koderma at 05.38 hrs, Gaya at 07.07 hrs, Sasaram at 08.24 hrs, Pt Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn at 10.30 hrs, Varanasi at 11.55 hrs, Aunrihar Jn at 12.33 hrs, Mau at 13.40 hrs, Bhatni at 14.50 hrs, Deoria Sadar at 15.20 hrs and reach Gorakhpur at 17.20 hrs.

M A N D U W A D I H - RAMESHWARAM SPL: The 05120 Manduadih-Rameshwaram weekly puja special train has been extended till March 28. As per the revised timing and stoppages, from January 1 it will leave Manduadih every Sunday at 20.00 hrs, Gyanpur road at 20.47 hrs, and after stopping at Prayagraj, Satna, Katni, Jabalpur, Itarsi, Nagpur, Sewagram, Chandrapur, Balharshah, Sirpur Kagaznagar, Ramagundam, Warangal, third day from Vijayawada. Tenali to Angole, Nellore, Gudur, Chennai Egmore, Chengalpattu Villupuram, Cuddalore port Chidambaram, Sirkazhi, Mayiladuturai, Kumbakonam, Thanjavur, 16.40 hrs from Tiruchirappalli, Pudukottai, Karaikudi, Sivaganga, Manamadurai, Pirmakudi, Ramnathapuram and reach Rameshwaram at 23.00 hrs. Besides the 05119 Rameshwaram-Manduadih weekly puja special has been extended till March 31.

'Parivartan Central' to welcome people coming to Kanpur

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Divisional Commissioner Raj Shekhar will be inaugurating a huge replica of Kanpur Central Station at the entry point from Ganga Barrage on Thursday.

People who enter into the city will find 'Kanpur Central' waiting to welcome them but it has been christened as 'Parivartan Central'.

This is in fact an endeavour of Parivartan, which has majorly contributed in not only cleaning the city but also in giving cosmetic touches in such a way that it is a marvel to admire at prominent parts of the city.

Parivartan had at one point of time introduced the door-to-door garbage collection and as an NGO it had pumped in massive money in infrastructure to keep the city clean. During the period the city was ranked as one of the most clean cities of the country.



However, the Kanpur Nagar Nigam scrapped the pact with Parivartan and itself started managing the solid waste of the city. Since then, the city has been in a mess with piles of garbage lying across the length and breadth of the city till date.

Capt SC Tripathi, one of the prominent members, informed that Parivartan had one objective in mind — to make Kanpur clean and look beautiful.

He said Parivartan not only removed garbage but also beautified more than 100 ugly spots of the city which were now famous as Selfie Points.

He said Parivartan Central was one such move where a replica of Kanpur Central Station had been created at Ganga Barrage to make it look as if one had reached Kanpur Central Station.

Replica of Kanpur Central Station created at Ganga Barrage to be inaugurated by DC on Thursday.

Health camp organised at police station

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A health check-up camp was organised at Anwarganj police station on Wednesday.

It aimed at examining the health of cops who, due to their busy work schedule, are unable to pay attention to their health.

The camp was organised by Tulsi Hospital and it was inaugurated by Anwarganj Circle Officer Mohd Akmal Khan.

A team of specialists in the fields of orthopaedics, eye, general medicine, diabetes, etc. examined the cops.

This was the 11th camp organised at different police stations of the district to examine the health of the cops.

Similar camps would be organised in the remaining police stations in the near future. Doctors present at the camp included Dr Pushpendra Yadav, Dr Dhyani Gupta, Dr Naman Kanodia, Dr Rizvi and Dr Shekhar Gupta.

CONCERN OVER TRANSFERRED DOCS RETAINING HOUSES ALLOTTED BY MC

GSVM Medical College Principal Prof RB Kamal said that it was a matter of concern that retired and transferred medical officers of the medical college had failed to vacate the houses allotted to them.

He said the refusal to vacate the houses was causing immense housing problems to the other medical officers who had been transferred to



Health check up camp organised at Anwarganj Police Station on Wednesday.

Pioneer.

GSVMHC from different medical colleges.

He said many such bungalows which had been allotted to the medical officers 2009 had yet not been vacated.

The state medical colleges have been issued notices by the government to ensure that the official accommodation should be vacated on priority so that the new officers posted could be provided accommodation.

The medical college has Rs 1.50 crore outstanding towards

medical officers who have failed to vacate the official bungalows and thus they have to pay the outstanding dues at the earliest. Recently, the house which had been allotted to ex-DGME Dr VN Tripathi was vacated after 10 years. Similarly, many other medical officers have refused to vacate their officials houses which has created a problem for the medical college to accommodate residential accommodation to the doctors posted in the medical

college. Similarly, many paramedics have also forcibly occupied the officials accommodation and are fighting a legal battle on occupancy. In some cases, some occupants, before vacating a house, give possession of the accommodation to the giving them money. Most of the accommodations have been grabbed by such persons. The government has decided to get all the illegally encroached houses freed by March 2021.

COINCIDING WITH NETAJI’S BIRTH ANNIV

Modi to visit poll-bound West Bengal on Jan 23



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A head of the high-stake West Bengal Assembly polls, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to visit West Bengal on January 23, which is celebrated as Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose’s birth anniversary.

The Centre has constituted a high-level committee to commemorate Bose’s 125th birth anniversary as a mark of his contribution to India’s freedom struggle.

Headed by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, the committee also includes experts, historians, authors, family members of Bose as well as eminent persons associated with Azad Hind Fauj.

This panel will decide on

the activities for the one-year commemoration starting January 23, 2021.

Sensing the major traction that the memory of Bose has with people of Bengal, BJP has already roped in Chandra Kumar Bose in the party. He is the grand nephew of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and grandson of Sarat Chandra Bose, elder brother of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose.

He was at the head of a campaign for the complete declassification of Bose-related documents.

After coming to power at the Centre in 2014, the Modi government had promised to declassify all the secret documents on the possible last days of Bose, still shrouded in mystery.

Some documents were made public but they hardly threw much light on the circumstances leading to the death of Netaji.

The BJP Government,

however, undertook new initiatives towards preserving Bose’s legacy, including setting up a museum at Red Fort and In 2018.

Three islands in Andaman and Nicobar- the Ross Island, the Neil Island and the Havelock Island were renamed as Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Dweep, Shaheed Dweep and Swaraj Dweep.

Modi’s expected visit to West Bengal assumes significance and set the pitch for the BJP campaign ahead of the state Assembly elections due in April-May 2021.

BJP is looking to make major inroads in the WB polls buoyed by its win in 18 out of 42 Lok Sabha constituencies in the 2019 General Election.

Both Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP president JP Nadda have expressed confidence in the party winning more than 200 seats in the coming Assembly polls.

Nagaland declared ‘disturbed area’ for six more months

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The entire Nagaland was on Wednesday declared a “disturbed area” for six more months by the Central Government, enabling the continuation of the controversial AFSPA which empowers security forces to conduct operations anywhere and arrest anyone without any prior warrant.

The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) has been in force in Nagaland for several decades. The Union Home Ministry said in a notification that the Central Government is of the opinion that the area comprising the whole of Nagaland is in such a “disturbed and dangerous condition” that the use of armed forces in aid of the civil power is necessary. “Now, therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred by Section 3 of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (No. 28 of 1958), the Central Government hereby declares that whole of the State of Nagaland to be ‘disturbed area’ for a period of six months with effect from 30th December 2020 for the purpose of the said Act,” the notification

said.

There have been demands from various organisations in the Northeast as well as in Jammu and Kashmir for repealing the AFSPA, which, they allege, gives “sweeping powers” to security forces. The AFSPA has not been withdrawn even after a framework agreement was signed on August 3, 2015, by Naga insurgent group NSCN-IM general secretary Thuingaleng Muivah and government interlocutor R N Ravi in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The framework agreement came after over 80 rounds of negotiations spanning 18 years, with the first breakthrough in 1997 when the ceasefire agreement was sealed after decades of insurgency in Nagaland. However, the peace process has been stuck for some time as the NSCN-IM has been pressing for a separate flag and Constitution, a demand rejected by the Central Government.

Previous week NSCN-K also declared their intention for a ceasefire and engage in peace talks.

₹29.65 crore booster for khadi institutions of J&K

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) lent special focus on Khadi artisans in Jammu & Kashmir during the Covid-19 period. It disbursed ₹29.65 crore to Khadi Institutions in the hilly terrains of J&K alone, which has been the focus area of the Central Government.

KVIC Chairman Vinai Kumar Saxena said through this special drive, the payment of Rs 29.65 crore released to 84 Khadi institutions has directly benefited 10,800 artisan families in J&K. This goes on to strengthen the Prime Minister’s dream of making every weaker section “Aatmanirbhar”, he said.

This amount was disbursed from May 2020 to September 2020 to 84 Khadi institutions in J&K under Modified Marketing Development Assistance (MMDA) scheme of KVIC, which is directly linked

with the production activities. Under this scheme, money is directly transferred into the bank accounts of artisans through DBT.

During the Covid-19 lockdown period, a special drive was also launched by KVIC to settle 951 old MMDA claims of J&K Khadi institutions that were related to 2016-17 to 2018-19, pending due to various technical reasons.

“Apart from ensuring financial assistance through MMDA Scheme to Khadi Institutions and artisans, KVIC also roped in thousands of women artisans working in self-help groups in Jammu, Udhampur, Pulwama, Kupwara and Anantnag in stitching of Khadi face masks. Almost 7 lakh Khadi face masks were stitched by these women artisans and supplied to the J&K Government,” Saxena said.

At present, 103 Khadi institutions are working in J&K.

SC notice to AP on plea against condition of 3-yr practice as lawyer to appear in civil judge exam

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Wednesday sought response from the Andhra Pradesh Government on a plea challenging the condition which mandates three years of practice as an advocate to be eligible for appearing in exam for appointment as civil judge in the state.

A vacation bench of Justices Indira Banerjee and Aniruddha Bose also issued notice to the Registrar (recruitment) of the Andhra Pradesh High Court seeking reply on the petition which has also challenged the December 3 notification inviting applications for appointment to the post of civil judge (junior division) in the Andhra Pradesh State Judicial Service.

The apex court was

hearing a petition filed by R Venkatesh who has challenged the December 3 notification and questioned the eligibility requirement of three-year practice as an advocate.

The petitioner has also challenged Rule 5(2)(a)(i) of the Andhra Pradesh State Judicial Service Rules 2007, which was notified/amended by the state government on July 28, 2017 and mandates three years of practice as an advocate to be eligible for appointment to the category of civil judge.

“The petitioner has, in the writ petition, also challenged Rule 5(2)(a)(i) of Andhra Pradesh State Judicial Service Rules, 2007 notified/amended by the respondent No. 1 (state of Andhra Pradesh) on July 28, 2017.

There is no such

urgency to entertain this writ petition in the vacation.

Notice be issued to the respondents in the meanwhile. Let the writ petition be listed for hearing on Tuesday, the 5th January, 2021,” the bench said in its order.

The December 3 notification, which has invited application for general recruitment to the post of civil judge (junior division), has said that recruitment process shall be governed by Andhra Pradesh State Judicial (Service and Cadre) Rules 2007.

During the hearing conducted through video-conferencing, the petitioner’s counsel told the court that as per the December 3 notification, the last date for submission of online application was January 2.

NTCA steps in to keep feral dogs out of tigers’ home, issues SOPs

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

With men’s best friend—the dog—proving threat to the wildlife in and around the country’s tiger reserves, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has formulated guidelines to keep them at bay by treating them as ‘street dogs’ which needs to be sterilised and vaccinated.

But unlike those in the urban cities, the dogs found in the tiger reserves should not be released back in the big cats’ habitat, indicates the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), released by Minister of State for Environment, Babul Supriyo recently.

“All dogs within tiger reserves will be dealt with in keeping with the Animal Birth Control (Dogs) Rules, 2001, but the clause that after sterilization and vaccination they be released where they were picked up from, will not be applied in tiger reserves,” points out the SOP.

“Feral/stray dogs captured from within tiger reserves should under no circumstance be released back and a suitable alternate site be selected for their rehabilitation,” it said aiming to immunize the canine against contagious diseases like canine distemper virus and controlling their numbers which are on the rise.

The dogs survive on garbage thrown by villagers located inside the reserves as well on the fringes. AS they multiply rapidly they lose their fear of humans and turn feral or free-ranging dogs, accord-



ing to experts. There have been instances of feral dogs mauling chinkaras and big predators like tigers as well.

In fact, in August, the latest tiger survey had found more dogs than tigers in 17 reserves across the country. There are total 50 tigers in the country. The wildlife experts warned that when tigers prey on them or consume the meat of animals dogs may have killed, the virus can be transmitted to the big cats.

After sterilisation and vaccination, the dogs have to be rehabilitated at a suitable alternate site outside the tiger reserves say the guidelines. The SOP has also asked all the reserves to create immunization buffers around tiger reserves to keep wild animals safe from being hunted by feral dogs and to avoid transmission of diseases between them and wild animals.

“The aim is to ensure that feral or stray dogs are handled inan appropriate manner to avoid disease spread and physical injury to the tigers and other wild animals. Due to many villages inside the tiger reserves, the menace is grave not only at the fringers but also within the reserves,” said NTCA head SP Yadav.

As per the SOP, respective field directors will have to set

LS Speaker seeks high-level probe into K’taka Legislative Council Dy Chairman’s death

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The 64-year-old Deputy Speaker was found dead on rail tracks

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Wednesday called for a high-level probe by an independent agency into the death of Karnataka Legislative Council Deputy Chairman S L Dharme Gowda.

The 64-year-old Deputy Speaker was found dead on rail tracks in the Chikkamagaluru district of Karnataka in the early hours of Tuesday, with police sources claiming that it was a case of suicide. He was a JD(S) MLC.

He was at the centre of a high drama on December 15 in the legislative council, which saw BJP, JD(S), and Congress members hurling abuses and pushing each other over a row on a no-confidence motion against Chairman K Pratapachandra Shetty. During the ruckus, Gowda was pulled

down from the Chair by some Congress legislators, who accused him of occupying it as Deputy Chairman against rules, as part of the BJP’s plan to unseat Shetty, who is from the Congress.

Referring to the incident, Birla said, “The unfortunate incident in the House, when he was in Chair, is a serious attack on democracy. It is necessary to have a high-level probe through an independent agency into his death.” According to an official statement, the Lok Sabha Speaker said, “It is the duty of all of us to safeguard the prestige of legislative bodies and dignity and freedom of presiding officers.”

CISF takes over security of Rajasthan thermal power plant

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

An armed contingent of Aover 190 CISF personnel has taken over the security of Rajasthan’s largest thermal power plant located in the border district of Sri Ganganagar, officials said on Wednesday.

The plant’s chief engineer, B Kumar, handed over a ceremonial key of the facility to CISF Deputy Inspector General Prabodh Chandra

He added that the plant has been provided with an armed cover of the force “in the light of the increased threat

perception to coal-based supercritical thermal power plants situated across the country”.

Hence, the power plant at Suratgarh is “inherently vulnerable to threats from anti-nationals and saboteurs”.

A contingent of 191 Central Industrial Security Force personnel led by a deputy commandant-rank officer will guard the facility, he said.

The power plant is the largest in the state in terms of capacity and is located in the Sri Ganganagar district that shares its border with Pakistan along the Thar desert.

up a seven-member panel comprising local veterinarians and NGOs, animal welfare activists belonging to SPCA, panchayat representatives for technical guidance and implementation of interventions, especially for planning and management of dog control programme.

It also asks to delineate areas of feral dog movement and areas vulnerable to stays and map them on the GIS domain and coordinate with the local animal husbandry department.

Vaccination of dogs is expected to reduce the threat of transmission to wild animals.

Abi Tamim Vanak, a conservation scientist at the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (Atree), Bengaluru noted that, the free-ranging dogs posed the biggest threat to wildlife, in Rajasthan and across the country.

“Our data from Spiti, Himachal Pradesh, and Kutch, Gujarat, shows dogs hunting a range of wild species—from black-naped hare (herbivore) to red fox (carnivore). Feral dogs are even known to attack critically endangered bird species such as the Great Indian Bustard and Bengal florican,” he said, as per a report.

Snow Leopard Conservancy India Trust, a wildlife conservation NGO based in Leh too has flagged the issue of the feral dog problem, saying that it is acute across Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir, too.

IMD warns of severe cold sweeping across north and northwest India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has said that severe cold wave conditions sweeping across north and northwest India pushed mercury to sub-zero levels at many places in Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh, Delhi and NCR on Wednesday.

The severe cold wave conditions have intensified over the region as icy winds with moderate speed have been blowing sharpening the wind chill factor and therefore drop in the feel like temperature.

The IMD also warned of continuing cold wave conditions across the Indo-Gangetic plains, Bihar, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and parts of Gujarat till January 1.

Under the influence of the cold wave, some parts in Gujarat and Odisha have been reporting a significant drop in the night temperatures.

Pahalgam (-9 degrees Celsius), Churu (-1.5 degrees Celsius), Kullu (-0.2 degrees Celsius), Amritsar (1.8 degrees Celsius) and Jammu city (2.9 degrees Celsius) remained among the coldest places in north India.

Wednesday was the coldest December day for Churu since 2008. Similarly, Jammu city recorded one of its coldest December days

Wednesday. The plains of Jammu previously experienced such conditions in 2014 (2.4 degrees), and the city holds an all time record of 0.9 degrees in 1998. Pahalgam last reported such a cold December in 2013, when the night temperature recorded was -9.6 degrees Celsius.

New vistadome coaches will make train travel more memorable: PM

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday praised the newly designed vistadome coaches developed by the Integral Coach Factory and said the comfort they will provide will make journeys more memorable.

The Vistadome tourist coaches, which have larger viewing area including roof top glass and 44 seats for passengers that can rotate up to 180 degrees, completed the 180 kmph trial run on Tuesday.

“Comfort and cutting edge technology! Will make train journeys more memorable,” the PM said in a tweet respond-

ing to Railway Minister Piyush Goyal’s post on the microblogging site introducing the new coaches.

“It is rightly said, ‘Journey is best measured in terms of memories rather than miles’. Take a look at the new Vistadome coaches of Indian Railways that will give an unforgettable travel experience to passengers and will ensure that they truly have a journey to remember,” tweeted Goyal.

The coach also has a Wi-Fi-based passenger information system and for the first time the vistadome coach has been built on the LHB platform, which is safer.

Among other stand-out

features of the new vistadome coaches are that they are equipped with air-spring suspension in secondary stage for better ride comfort, large glass windows and glass roof that boast electrically controlled opalescence, transparent roof for the passengers to get a panoramic view of their journey, and observatory lounge with a larger window at one end.

In the newly built coaches, a mobile charging socket has been provided

for each passenger below the seat armrest, an entertainment system integrated with digital display screens and speakers for music lovers.



“Content on Demand” Wi-fi facility has been provided on personal gadgets of passengers, wider entrance doors for persons with disabilities on wheelchairs and automatic sliding doors at the compartment’s entry on both sides.

The coaches are connected with GPS-based Public Address-cum Passenger Information System (PAPIS), sunk-in type LED destination board, stainless steel multi-tier luggage racks outside the passenger area, mini pantry to provide refreshments to the passengers, service area consisting of hot cake, microwave oven, coffee maker, bottle cooler, refrigerator and washbasin.

The new coaches are also equipped with a CCTV system for onboard surveillance and have aesthetically designed interiors and FRP panelling, FRP modular toilets with pressurized flushing system and bio tanks and automatic fire detection with an alarm system for safe travel.

The ICF will be manufacturing 10 such coaches at present. Two coaches have been rolled out and the remaining will be finished before March 31 next year.

The two coaches which were rolled out have gone to the Central Railway, one of which had cleared the speed trials.

Farmers hold ground

By keeping it pointed and apolitical, the farmers' movement has got to be the scene stealer of the year



If there's any civil movement that scored this year, it has got to be the farmers' sustained campaign against the three farm Acts and their fierce commitment to protect their rights, refusing any sort of compromise. They shut out politicians, shunned activists, did not seek help from any quarter, blocked roads and camped at Delhi's borders to be heard. And not only forced senior Union Ministers to engage with them but have their *langar* food. They made cogent arguments about how the new laws would weaken their kind in the wake of the corporatisation implicit in them. They carefully avoided any politicisation of

their cause or hijacking of agenda by vested interests. And they had concrete examples of how the Government's earlier attempts at revamping the agriculture sector had not had the desired effect. For example, at yesterday's meeting with the Government, representatives of protesting farmers showed how corporates had defrauded farmers in Madhya Pradesh, promising to pick up crops but not doing so in the end, leaving scores of farmers in Hoshangabad and Guna in the lurch. Some traders, they argued, bought crops from farmers and then bolted without paying them in full.

The farmers are not against market economics but simply want a level-playing field. Experts may argue that the protest is being led by cultivators from Punjab and Haryana, who have benefited because of the Government's guaranteed pickup of volumes and fixed rates, namely the Minimum Support Price (MSP), and are stuck on cash-rich prospects of wheat and rice. Of course, this assurance has meant an over-dependence on water-intensive crops like paddy and wheat, which is depleting the aquifers and crop diversity. However, farmers argue that they would be incentivised to grow other crops provided the MSP was guaranteed for all and not selectively and new laws alone would not even out the imbalance. In the end, the Government has to give a price guarantee of sorts as the MSP has itself become unremunerative given rising input costs, with farmers forced to sell at lower rates. In such a scenario, the Government has to probably do some direct cash transfers to farmers, grading their capacities, as a transitional measure to a new system. The small and marginal farmers, the lot of whom the Acts intend to improve, would not gain that much either given their limited resources to transport their goods to local mandis, leave alone bigger markets outside. Besides, given their low volumes of output and without proper warehousing and processing, they would, therefore, be dependent on food majors. With most of them not literate enough about exercising their rights, dispute resolution could also end up being loaded against them. Although the farmer can now enter into a contract with a corporate entity at a mutually agreed price, the mechanism for price fixation is not codified and farmers fear that corporations could use their might to manipulate or browbeat them into accepting their terms. A licence won't be required to trade in farm produce and anyone with a PAN card can now buy directly from the farmers. Farmers want they be registered too, considering they have a trusted bond with their existing commission agents, as their licence is proof enough of their credibility and delivery abilities. Farmers are not entirely without reason, battling as they are bad loans and non-payment of sugarcane dues in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. The opposition to farm laws could have been avoided had the Government preferred Standing Committee scrutiny over pushing the law unceremoniously with a voice vote in the Upper House. But care should be taken to ensure that the farmers are legally protected in what is still an unequal deal. If only the Acts came with the caveat that "notwithstanding anything contained in the aforesaid sections, no trade transactions should take place below the notified MSP", the farmers could have been easily pacified. In the end, they make 60 per cent of the country's population, a voter base that no political party can ignore. And as the local body polls in Haryana show, the ruling BJP has already suffered a blow.

Age of tech

Undoubtedly, the pandemic has accelerated tech-aided living. The question is, will human behaviour be guided too?



If there is anything positive about the pandemic, it is the fact that it led to the super-spread of digitisation and technology. Of course, we were aware of the concepts of remote learning, work from home, tele-consults, retail and online banking, tracking supply and logistics, but we had not thought that they would become the new normal in a world of house-bound protocols. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the global economy. If a McKinsey Global Survey of executives is to be believed, their companies have accelerated the digitisation of their customer and supply chain interactions and of their internal operations by three to four years. Furthermore, the study claims that the share of digital or digitally-enabled products

in company portfolios has accelerated by a shocking seven years. It's not just a jump or a leap then; it is flying on a jetpack. The biggest technology strides we have made have been largely in the education and health sectors. In what is otherwise a lost year, our school-going children have managed to get by with online classes and project modules. Agreed this was largely confined to cities and there is a digital divide but it has forced us to address our infrastructural gaps. India may be among one of the largest consumers of smartphones worldwide and may have the second largest internet penetration but we still don't have a reliable and strong broadband connection throughout the country. Till we can ensure this, it will remain one of the major reasons for lack of access to online learning. Even in the cities, where we have a comprehensive 4G network set-up, there are major disruption issues being faced by parents, students and teachers alike, so how can we expect things to be better in rural India? But we have at least woken up to the possibility of widening the bouquet of direct to home (DTH) educational channels, all of which cover content from pre-school to doctoral studies, and beam them over local cable networks. A "smarter education system" has been upgraded on the policy priority list. The same goes for digital services in healthcare, which have taken off at warp speed. With India lagging seriously behind in developing its physical infrastructure in the health sector; the deep penetration of tele-medicine, consults, advisories and data-interpretation for every primary and secondary health centre would at least lead to early detection and follow-ups in a nation that has a high disease burden. Even on the aspirational index, digitisation on retail and food delivery platforms has revived the traditional mom and pop stores or the neighbourhood restaurant as the lockdown and the subsequent breakdown of the logistic chain led to a confluence of the real with the virtual and made the neighbourhood accessible at the click of a button. Even traditional institutions within the Government sped up processes with computational codes as corporates readily adopted AI-aided services and efficiencies. Contactless living has brought the robot into our daily lives, be it in hospitals, restaurants and homes.

Of course, there is a flip side to all this. There is a huge amount of our data that is available for surveillance and manipulation by power players and creating predictive scenarios that may unwittingly guide our future choices. The question is, will human behaviour reign supreme over statistical interventions?

Cavalier leadership

Trump and Bolsonaro are the quintessential examples of heads of State who are simply unconcerned about their peoples amid the COVID crisis



BHOPINDER SINGH

The World Health Organisation (WHO) calls out a parallel and equally serious challenge that accompanies any medical crisis by calling the same "Infodemic" and describes it as an "overabundance of information — some of it accurate and some not". From political leaders, opinion makers and quasi-medical practitioners to even yoga gurus, the urge to partake the 'moment' for personal, financial or even political glory has been irresistible. Such a medical crisis always tests the patience of society towards the seemingly drab advisories that are fact-based, science-based and empirically proven as opposed to getting drawn towards ostensible cures that are rooted in personal belief-systems, word of mouth or under the pretext of "age-old *nuskhas*" that have a cure-all solution. However, the COVID pandemic has exposed the sham of assorted televangelists, godmen and religio-cultural personalities who, in the initial days of the crisis, had claimed miraculous panacea against COVID in complete defiance of medical science and all the necessary rigour that ought to have accompanied its testing.

However, one category of people who are still contributing to the persistence of the "Infodemic" have been the publicly elected lawmakers and leading politicians who ought to have demonstrated the highest levels of adherence, compliance and insurances towards safety protocols — yet, many chose to be cavalier, reckless and simply unconcerned about the personal examples they were setting. The brazen trivialisation of all medical advisories — like social distancing, shunning congregations or simply wearing protective masks — in their personal conduct contradicted the daily blast and beaming of public messages that repeatedly advised uncompromised use of the face mask (and other safety/hygiene protocols) as the literal vaccine, till a proven vaccine actually came out. Some, like the outgoing United States President Donald Trump, not only refused to wear a mask but went on to ridicule his rival, Joe Biden, by saying that "every time you see him, he's got a mask (on)". He could be speaking 200 feet away from them, and he shows up with the biggest mask I've ever seen", almost likening the mask to a political statement. But Trump went many steps further with his irresponsibility and had dangerously equated COVID to the season-



al influenza, promoted unproven treatments like hydroxychloroquine (even injecting disinfectants!), politicised the vaccine development narrative and openly disagreed from the sage advice given by his own public health experts. Today, the United States is reeling as the worst impacted nation by the COVID outbreak with approximately 18 million cases and nearly 3,20,000 deaths — that Donald Trump got himself too infected while Joe Biden remained safe was made worse by the fact that Trump lost the presidential race as well to Biden.

Another leader who has constantly remained blasé about COVID is Brazil's strongman and President Jair Bolsonaro. Like Trump, Bolsonaro too had dangerously downplayed the COVID threat by calling it a "little cold" and pushed for early opening up with a standard "so what?" every time he was shown the spiralling health numbers and the country's worsening crisis. The denialist attitude of Bolsonaro has ensured that Brazil has approximately 7.3 million cases and 1,87,000 deaths and is now widely castigated as the latest global epicentre of the current resurgence. Unfortunately, this devastation was in the making with shockingly irresponsible leadership of Bolsonaro, who had disbelievably stated: "All of us are going to die one day." With typical machismo, he said another time: "There is no point running away from it, from reality."

AFTER MOCKING THE SAFETY AND HYGIENE PROTOCOLS PUBLICLY AND REPEATEDLY, BOTH DONALD TRUMP & JAIR BOLSONARO CONTRACTED THE COVID-19 VIRUS

We have to stop being a country of sissies." The imagined political muscularity of Bolsonaro was sooner or later going to make Brazil pay dearly — and, like Trump, he too made a

mockery of the required safety sensitivities like wearing the face mask and punted on the unproven hydroxychloroquine. Soon enough, Bolsonaro too was infected! Continuing his unscientific tirade with pandemic management of calling the use of mask as the "last taboo to fall", he had gone to the extent of saying that Brazilians shouldn't be required to take a vaccine when it finally becomes available.

Now, Bolsonaro has scaled newer heights of irresponsibility by casting aspersions on the efficacy of the COVID vaccine, just when there seemed a glimmer of science-based hope to combat the virus. In his bizarre and unsubstantiated rant, he claimed: "In the Pfizer contract, it's written very clearly: 'We are not responsible for any side effects.' If you turn into a crocodile, that's your problem." He also invoked his sexist and chauvinistic side when he went on to add: "If you become superhuman, if a woman starts to grow a beard or if a man starts to speak with an effeminate voice, they [Pfizer] won't have anything to do with it." His boorish aversion to the vaccine has a distinct political logic, besides sheer ignorance — it feeds his rakish anti-establishment and devil-may-care image, allows him to focus on more populist moves like cash transfers as opposed to propagating the social distancing sobriety and, above all, deny the credit of a potential pandemic savior to a political rival who is espousing a specific vac-

cine. Bolsonaro is clearly maximising the truism that bad economics and bad scientific approach often make for very good politics in a polarised and struggling society. Tragically, his approval ratings stay at the highest levels, his irresponsible behaviour notwithstanding.

It had taken a brave and conscientious judge to call the bluff of Jair Bolsonaro by entertaining a plea which sought to criticise the "irresponsible conduct of the President" and later decreed that if the President did not wear a mask in a public place, he was liable to a fine. Despite facing accusations like "lethal incompetence", "homicidally negligent" and suchlike, Bolsonaro has yet to get into the nitty-gritties of a detailed and robust national vaccination plan. A leading Brazilian newspaper was left fuming in its editorial: "It's time for him to abandon this criminal recklessness and at least pretend to have the ability and maturity to lead a nation of 212 million at such a dramatic moment in its collective history. Enough tomfoolery with the vaccine!" This global pandemic has regrettably exposed the risks of negligent and nonchalant leadership — as also of the ignorant masses who still support such a political leadership despite paying the incalculably painful and high personal price.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal.)

SOUNDBITE

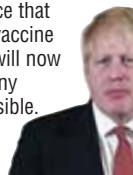
We must leverage technology and ICT-driven innovative solutions to aid economic inclusiveness and social transformation even in the remotest corners of India.

President
—Ram Nath Kovind



It is truly fantastic news and a triumph for British science that the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine has been approved. We will now move to vaccinate as many people as quickly as possible.

UK Prime Minister
—Boris Johnson



Strength sometimes is just uncaring yourself up from that ball of tears and lost confusion, cleaning yourself up, and stepping out into the world again.

Actor
—Ileana D'Cruz



Our focus is on the present. Absolutely, we want to play the World Test Championship final, and we saw it in the final session today, when there was that carrot in mind.

New Zealand captain
—Kane Williamson



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Curtains down for Rajin

Sir — Now when actor Rajinikanth has decided against floating a new political party and contest the elections, it is clear that the real fight in the next Tamil Nadu Assembly elections is going to be only between the two Dravidian majors, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK). While the DMK alliance that won the last Parliamentary elections stands intact, fissures in the AIADMK alliance are apparent.

BJP was of the belief that it could align with the Rajinikanth's party in case AIADMK refused it in the number of seats it wants to contest.

Now the BJP has no other way but to join the AIADMK alliance and accept the seats that are going to be conceded to it by the AIADMK. It will also have to accept E Palanisami as the chief ministerial candidate of the alliance.

Tharcus S. Fernando
Chennai

Co-operative Banks in a dismal state

Co-operative Banks presents a dismal picture. They have huge non-performing assets, are poorly managed, have untrained staff and shallow supervision. Moreover, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and co-operatives have to pump more capital periodically to keep these Banks running.

The Central Bank has a big team headed by a top functionary to monitor and to look after the affairs of co-operative banks. Despite this, there are instances of frauds, high non-performing assets and biases in lending.

It seems that these banks do not have a codified rule book to follow which explains many procedural and legal deviations. These problematic banks cannot be shut-down by issuing a circular. Also, good loan accounts of co-operative banks cannot be transferred to nearby commercial banks because both follow different lending norms. Lending by co-operative banks and commercial banks is on a different footing.

In my view, the problem with co-operative banks is chronic in nature and needs to be addressed without delay. The super controller of banks may consider stopping fresh commercial and term lending by these ailing co-opera-

New Railway coaches

Sir — It is really delightful to know that the Railways have come up with a new design Vistadome tourist coaches to give a breathtaking experience to the tourists. The recent trial run of these coaches at 180 km per hour was successful and was completed without any technical snags.

New Vistadome coaches, having a plethora of tourist-friendly amenities, will be introduced on specific routes that are good for sightseeing. As these coaches provide a panoramic viewing experience through large windows and transparent roofs, passengers will get an exhilarating travel experience.

The Vistadome coach will

also have an observation lounge, glass window and adjustable seats for a more comfortable and enjoyable journey for passengers.

Operating trains having Vistadome coaches on more such routes will definitely boost tourism and benefit the economy.

M Pradyu
Kannur



tive banks and instead the lending may be done by regional rural banks or by commercial banks as fresh commercial loans. Meanwhile, the co-operatives banks may continue to accept deposits and lend only short term loans repayable within a year.

Fresh agriculture or commercial long-term lending may be done only and only by regional rural banks and commercial banks while these Cooperative banks focus only on debt recovery.

Sarv Jit Singh Chatrath
Chandigarh

Women in politics

Sir — Winning the civic elections by handsome margins, women have broken through the glass ceiling to grab top jobs in many corporations, municipalities and panchayats in Kerala.

21-year-old Arya Rajendran is the new Mayor of Thiruvananthapuram which is known as the city of Lord Ananda, alluding to the Shree Padmanabhaswamy temple located in the city. Arya, who was elected on Monday, made headlines for being the youngest in the country to hold the post. Another young leader, 22-year-old Saruthi is all set to assume the office of panchayat president of Olavanna, a big panchayat in Kozhikode. The list is quite long.

It is important for these young women politicians to imbibe traditional leadership traits and also remain open-minded and innovative. Of course, the inherent gentle nature that women have will help them in establishing better rapport in society.

Haridasan Rajan
Kozhikode

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

The EU is free of the UK at last

As Britain leaves the EU, the goal of an 'ever closer union' hated by English exceptionalists, is back on the agenda



GWYNNE DYER

Blaming the victims is never a good strategy. As Britain finally leaves the European Union (EU), we should try to remember that 48 per cent of the turkeys didn't vote for Christmas. Brexit was not exactly a national act of self-harm. It was really an attack by the nostalgic and nationalist old on the young. This is because 60 per cent of British over-65s voted to leave the EU but 61 per cent of the under-35s voted to remain. Having had four years to think it over, most British people now think it was a mistake — by a 48-39 majority, according to a YouGov poll in October. However, it is too late for all of them. Boris Johnson is Prime Minister and he dare not anger the English ultra-nationalists on the right of his own Conservative party. After months of amateur dramatics that accompany any Johnson decision, on Christmas Day the United Kingdom (UK) concluded a pathetically thin "free trade" deal that reflects the real balance of power between the EU and the UK. The new agreement which was unanimously approved by the EU nations will come into effect from January 1. Even so, the deal is not yet a law and needs to be ratified by the parliaments of the UK and EU, a process which will likely take a few more weeks. Until the agreement is formally approved and signed, it will be applicable on a provisional basis.

It looks pretty good for manufactured goods and commodities, which make up 20 per cent of Britain's Gross Domestic Product (GDP): No tariffs, no quotas. But the EU sells far more stuff to the UK than the other way around and it has a \$45 billion trade surplus in goods. Of course it made a deal on that! By contrast, there is no trade deal at all in services, which account for 80 per cent of the UK's economy and used to produce a \$112 billion surplus for it. Hence, the UK is now entirely vulnerable to whatever restrictions the EU may choose to apply to its banks, insurance companies and providers of other professional services. In his usual style, Johnson will smear lipstick all over this pig of a deal and declare it a triumph. Those who want to believe it will do so. The only early evidence of the huge defeat that it really is will be some delays at the ports as customs officers learn their new jobs. The real bill will come in later and almost invisibly, in lost trade, investment and opportunities.

The last official British Government estimate was that 15 years from now, the British economy will be between five per cent and seven per cent smaller than it would have been as an EU member (but still a bit bigger than it is now). That's not the raw material for a counter-revolution. Besides, any projection about the economic situation in 2035 is really pure "guesstimate." One COVID-19 outbreak more or less could make just as much a difference as Brexit. All one can say is that the British economy will not "prosper mightily" outside the EU, as Johnson promised. But it won't collapse either. And then, in due course, the younger, pro-EU Brits will become the majority thanks to the magic of generational turnover. But until then, if Britain comes knocking at the EU's door, asking to be allowed back in, Brussels should say "no." What will really happen on Thursday is that the EU will be finally free to develop in the way that its other major members clearly want. The goal of an ever closer union, hated by English exceptionalists is back on the agenda. There is ambivalence in every member country about the idea of creating a semi-federal European super-state. But in a world where democracy and the rule of law are under siege most people can see the need to strengthen the EU. Last July the EU's leaders took a huge step in that direction: For the first time they agreed to borrow collectively on the financial markets.

France and Germany were all for it and Italy and Spain needed the money to finance a trillion-Euro aid programme to help them through the Coronavirus crisis. Those four countries now contain more than half the EU's population and they outvoted the "frugal four" (the Netherlands, Austria, Sweden and Denmark) that opposed taking on debt to support "feckless" Mediterranean members. If Britain had still been a member, it would have vetoed the measure because it infringed on the UK's sacred sovereignty. French President Charles de Gaulle, who vetoed British membership applications twice in the 1960s, was right: England does not have a "European vocation" and it should not be allowed in. The financial precedent that was set in July opens the door to a future EU that acts much more like a State. Even a common defence budget is now within reach — not something vital in military terms. However, a European army would be a hugely important symbol of unity. The US may be back soon in its position as a world leader but the world could certainly use a second powerful advocate for democracy and the rule of law. This is vital, given China's expansionist ambitions and the dangerous nexus it has been creating through the debt economy. Brexit may be giving us just that by freeing the EU to move on and we should be grateful.

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

LOOK AT JAMMU AND KASHMIR, WITHIN A SHORT SPAN OF BECOMING A UNION TERRITORY THEY HAVE HELD DDC POLLS AS AN EXAMPLE OF DEMOCRACY.

—PRIME MINISTER
NARENDRA MODI

POINT COUNTERPOINT



ON THE ONE HAND, THE PRIME MINISTER CLAIMS THAT DEMOCRACY HAS WON. BUT ON THE OTHER HAND, DEMOCRACY IS BEING DISCREDITED IN J&K.

—NC VICE-PRESIDENT
OMAR ABDULLAH

Vital lessons learnt

Never before has the need for healthcare reforms that ensure universal access to affordable care for all been more apparent than this year



SURAVI SHARMA

For the healthcare sector, 2020 was all about battling the Coronavirus. However, this year also taught us a lot of lessons as the pandemic brought into sharp focus the need for reforms that promote universal access to healthcare at an affordable price. The Indian healthcare sector faced incredible challenges this year and will continue to do so well into 2021.

Given the piecemeal way in which our healthcare system is governed and the way the citizens, particularly the poor pay for care, it was no surprise that the sector unravelled in this time of crisis. To begin with, the highest number of people insured under Government-sponsored health insurance schemes as well as under individual insurance plans, stood at a meagre 35 per cent in 2018. A very low percentage of Indians receive health coverage through their employers and, with a record number of people paying for treatment out of their pocket, millions found themselves without affordable and accessible healthcare in the midst of the largest pandemic in living memory. To address the paucity of issues brought into the spotlight by the outbreak this year, the Government should pass futuristic legislations in order to address the need for healthcare reforms in the country. There should be appropriate laws to provide critical assistance in clinical treatment, additional policies to ensure that people can access affordable care as the crisis continues.

Most of the health policy critiques and recommendations this year primarily targeted the Centre, even though as per the Constitution, State Governments are mainly responsible for healthcare delivery. However, as the management of the epidemic was delegated to the States, for the first time the State Governments took a leadership role in managing the healthcare sector, making this year a landmark one in that sense.

The responses of the Centre and States to the contagion exposed the fault lines in our public health governance system. The Disaster Management Act, under which most executive actions have been undertaken this year, is a central legislation though public health is a State subject. The exact delineation of responsibilities between the Centre and the States has always remained a work in progress and over the last few months that resulted in confusion (around quarantine rules, lockdown measures and so on) in the pandemic's management. This is despite the fact that we have been independent for over seven decades and at the time of the framing of the Constitution, parliamentarianism HV Kamath had expressed that health should be the top priority of all governments in Independent India.

The loss of jobs, income and health insurance issues associated with the pandemic greatly exacerbate existing cost challenges for many. The out-of-pocket healthcare expenses incurred by people impacted their decision to seek care in the middle of an outbreak and will continue to do so as the pandemic rages on. Failure to go for testing and receive treatment because of the cost associated with it, harms not only the person concerned but society as a whole by prolonging the pandemic, increasing its morbidity and mortality and exacerbating its economic impact.



THE OUTBREAK HAS HIGHLIGHTED THE ROLE PUBLIC HOSPITALS PLAY IN TIMES OF A CRISIS, DRAWING THE ATTENTION OF POLICYMAKERS AND POLITICIANS. THE EPIDEMIC HAS LED STATES TO CREATE SEVERAL MIDDLE MANAGERIAL POSITIONS. THESE NEW ROLES, ACTIVITIES AND PROCESSES WILL PROBABLY PERSIST AND STRENGTHEN THE DELIVERY OF PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES IN YEARS TO COME



We need to bear in mind that this is a collective fight and the whole of humanity is pitched against the novel microbe.

Except for a few States like Delhi, most of the other State Governments did not try to regulate hospital charges or treatment/procedure pricing in the private sector before the pandemic struck the nation. In India, the private sector is the care provider for the majority of the population. It accounts for 82 per cent of outpatient care, 58 per cent inpatient care and 40 per cent of institutional births. This year saw some historical changes taking place in the healthcare sector of the country. Many State Governments took strict measures to control private sector hospitals. Out of 28 States, 16 brought out regulations for capping COVID treatment charges and testing at private hospitals. Despite the Central Government promulgating health sector regulations, the onus of regulating private hospitals has always been on State Governments. However, this is a responsibility that many States had been evading, till the outbreak forced their hand this year.

In the past three months, West Bengal alone brought out 11 different rules to regulate the prices of COVID-19 treatment in private hospitals. Depending on the severity of the infection and type of facilities, private hospitals can charge between ₹8,000 to ₹18,000 per day in Delhi and Uttarakhand and ₹5,000 to ₹15,000 in Tamil Nadu. Similarly, COVID testing is capped at ₹1,500 in Nagaland and ₹3,000 in Tamil Nadu. However, the sad reality is that even now 80 per cent of

families would be financially crippled if they had to pay the COVID treatment charges for even one family member. According to the National Statistical Office's household expenditure report (2017-18) in Delhi, the average per person monthly expenditure for 80 per cent of the population is around ₹5,000. In contrast, the lowest price of an isolation bed is around ₹80,000 for 10 days. To make matters worse, the capped cost for a COVID-19 ICU bed would still come to several lakhs as the treatment usually stretches over two to three weeks or more.

Continuing with their agenda of reforms in the private sector, many States issued strict directives for hospitals refusing COVID patients and many other actively punished violators of these regulations, which was never observed earlier. The present experience of price regulation in the private sector may provide impetus and experience for the regulation of other services important for public health, such as tuberculosis. In the current scenario, States are actively managing public hospitals, ensuring smooth functioning of supply chains, coordinating as well as regulating the private sector. Recognition of the important role a State Government plays in steering the healthcare sector will lead to the reorientation of health policy research and capacity building in the coming years.

The outbreak has highlighted the role public hospitals play in times of a crisis, drawing the attention of policymakers and politicians. The epidemic has led States to create several middle managerial positions. These new roles,

activities and processes will probably persist and strengthen the delivery of public health services in years to come.

The year has also drawn attention to healthcare planning, organisation and management of supply chains. It brought attention to the importance of coordination between public and private sector facilities like never before. Extensive coordination is being observed between the public and private sector hospitals for testing and reporting of Corona cases, bed availability and treatment. Many States have established committees or appointed officers to facilitate this coordination.

Data sharing, too, increased significantly between the public and private sectors this year, which is a welcome change. Before the epidemic, apart from some basic data, there was little sharing of information and coordination between the public and private sector, which negatively affected health planning at the grass root level. Never before has the interdependence of our health, finances and social fabric been so starkly visible. Never before has the need for healthcare reforms that ensure universal access to affordable care for all been more apparent than this year. Our policies on health and healthcare, both during this pandemic and in the future, should reflect this reality and we should not forget the lessons we learnt this year. We must use them to frame the healthcare policies and legislation of the future.

(The writer is an author and a doctor by profession. The views expressed are personal.)

View the Central Vista project objectively

While there is a case for having a landmark project ready in time for India's 75th Independence Day, initiating it when we are fighting the virus makes it ill-timed



RAJEEV AHUJA

Recently, Kamal Haasan, chief of the Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM), questioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi regarding the construction of the new Parliament building. He asked Modi to explain the rationale behind the project worth hundreds of crores at a time when millions are going hungry and the nation is reeling under the socio-economic impact of the Coronavirus pandemic.

The actor-turned-politician is not the first public figure to question the Central Vista Redevelopment project. Earlier this year, Congress president Sonia Gandhi, too, wrote a letter to Modi urging him to suspend it. However, this is not the only pet project of the Prime Minister (PM) which has been questioned. Modi's ambitious

bullet train project between Mumbai and Ahmedabad had faced resistance, too. Many Opposition leaders and parties had criticised it. Some experts like E Sreedharan — the man behind the Delhi Metro — slammed the project for being highly expensive and designed to cater only to the elite. In his view, what India needs is a modern, clean, safe and fast rail system that caters to the masses and not just to the privileged.

The same happened when the world's tallest statue, the Statue of Unity, was built and inaugurated. Some critics argued that the ₹3,000 crore spent on building the statue could have been put to more productive use. This makes one think, has the Modi Government been so inefficient in its use of public resources? Is it so insensitive to the criticism coming from not just political leaders but also experts? Or is there something that these politicians and experts are missing in Modi's larger vision and purpose behind these pet projects?

The Modi Government's track record on infrastructure projects doesn't seem to suggest that it has been inefficient in the use of public money. For example, the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal Expressway project

that was stalled for years was completed under the NDA Government's watch. Similarly, the Modi Government brought many other stalled projects to fruition. Indeed, some of its own projects have been completed before time and with less than allocated budgets.

The nearly \$17 billion bullet train project is one of Modi's pet projects. There is no doubt that it is expensive and will not benefit the people from the lower income group, initially. But if one thinks of it objectively, the bullet train project is not such a bad idea. The majority of the project's funding (nearly 90 per cent) is coming as a soft loan from the Government of Japan. The loan is to be repaid over a 50-year period with a moratorium of 15 years. Not only are the loan terms quite attractive but the project will also have huge spillover benefits for the Indian Railways, which badly needs modernisation.

Most of these benefits will take the form of the transfer of knowledge and technology. With high-speed connectivity, the project is supposed to connect the bustling economic corridors of Gujarat and Maharashtra and facilitate economic growth. It is also expected to cre-

ate job opportunities on a large scale. Those who are critical of this project need to examine it in a larger context.

What holds true for the Indian Railways, also holds true for city metros. Given the speed at which Indian towns and cities are expanding, the country will probably need several new metros. Recently, the PM inaugurated the Agra Metro Project in Uttar Pradesh (UP). The benefits of having a rapid mass urban transit system that is also environment friendly can't be overemphasised.

Similarly, the Statue of Unity built in the honour of Sardar Patel, India's first Deputy Prime Minister and a statesman, is a landmark created to attract both domestic and international tourists. It is expected to have a huge spillover benefit for the local economy. Likewise, many tourist spots across the country are being developed and promoted. The revenue potential of the Statue of Unity project must be looked at against this backdrop. Indeed, the promotion of travel and tourism has been high on Modi's agenda to take India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to the \$5 trillion mark by 2025. These pet pro-

jects of Modi will contribute towards fulfilling this aspiration.

Unfortunately, travel and tourism is one of the worst hit sectors because of the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic. But this is only a temporary setback and the sector will bounce back soon enough as "revenge tourism" has already started in the country and globally, too. The cost of these projects needs to be evaluated against their benefits, in totality, to get a full account of their worth.

However, as far as the Central Vista project is concerned there is a little difference. The redevelopment project envisages a new triangular Parliament building, a common central secretariat and revamping of the three-km-long Rajpath from Rashtrapati Bhavan to India Gate.

However, in the current scenario when the health of citizens has assumed top priority and the economic fallout of the pandemic needs urgent attention, the Central Vista project may look a little flamboyant. Further, some experts have raised red flags on its environmental impact. For these and related reasons, multiple petitions have been filed in the Supreme Court. Pending

the apex court's decision, no new construction or demolition activity can take place on this project. According to some experts, the project spells disaster for the environment and indigenous bird and plant species that stand to be dislocated and destroyed.

The Supreme Court has rebuked the Centre and ordered the Government to halt all construction activities until it decides on a bunch of petitions challenging the mega redevelopment plan. On the other hand, having world-class facilities for the efficient functioning of the administration of the country, merits a project like this.

Further, having an architectural icon may be consistent with the image of a rising India and its "atmanirbharta" (self-reliance). But the timing of the project is both good and bad. While there is a case for having the project ready when India commemorates its 75th year of Independence, initiating the project when the world is fighting the Coronavirus pandemic makes it ill-timed.

Needless to say, the Government has accorded top priority to fighting the pandemic. Those who have been closely follow-

ing the NDA Government's response to the pandemic would know the kind of attention, energy, and effort the NDA Government has put into it. Even so, it has not let other development activities come to a halt. Every other day, the Centre has been launching several new development projects. It is trying to convert the current crisis into an opportunity to put India on a high growth trajectory. It has been agile to usher in reforms to promote growth and development and to make India "atmanirbhar" in many aspects. Nevertheless, the Modi Government would do well to invite greater discussion and debate on the Central Vista project as several Delhiites feel it will take away their wide, open spaces and alter the look of their beloved city.

Kamal Haasan is too smart to be ignorant of the larger picture. By being critical of Modi and questioning him, the star seems to be trying to gain some publicity. But the truth remains that the Central Vista project should be made into a people's project. The Government must take the citizens along with it.

(The writer is a development economist and author. The views expressed are personal.)

Current a/c surplus moderates to \$15.5 bn in Q2, says RBI

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India's current account surplus moderated to USD 15.5 billion or 2.4 per cent of the GDP in the July-September quarter of the current fiscal.

The same was at USD 19.2 billion or 3.8 per cent of the GDP in the preceding three months on account of a rise in the merchandise trade deficit, the RBI said on Wednesday.

A current account deficit of USD 7.6 billion or 1.1 per cent of the GDP was recorded in the second quarter of 2019-20.

India recorded a current account surplus of 3.1 per cent of the GDP in the first half of



the fiscal as against a deficit of 1.6 per cent in the corresponding period of 2019-20. This was mainly on account of a sharp contraction in the trade deficit.

The narrowing of the cur-

rent account surplus in the second quarter of 2020-21 was due to a rise in the merchandise trade deficit to USD 14.8 billion from USD 10.8 billion in the preceding quarter, the central bank said.

Self-reliance to be new mantra to sail through Covid crisis: Niti Aayog member

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Niti Aayog member VK Saraswat On Wednesday said that self-reliance will be the new mantra of the Government to sail through the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Speaking at a webinar organised by Merchants' Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Saraswat said that most economists are expecting U-shaped recovery pattern for the GDP which will be in the form of low short-term growth rate.

"In the current scenario, where an extended first wave of the pandemic could stifle eco-

nom ic recovery, self-reliance will be the new mantra to sail through the crisis," he said.

Saraswat said that the government is looking at flattening the recession curve.

"Market functioning has restored.

But economic recovery will be incremental. Both discretionary and non-discretionary spending are now taking place," he added.

He said that due to the impact of the pandemic, real GDP has fallen to its lowest in six years, while the lockdown has brought economic activity to a standstill, the Niti Aayog member said.

Maharashtra businessman held in ₹185 cr GST scam probe

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Maharashtra Goods and Services Tax Department (GST), which exposed a massive tax evasion racket in November, has made its second major arrest in the case, of a prominent businessman owning at least four companies, an official said here on Wednesday.

Carrying out a raid at the home of businessman Yogesh J. Kanodia, the GST Department sleuths seized various incriminating documents pertaining to the ₹185 crore scam being probed.

ITR filing deadline for individuals till Jan 10, Feb 15 for businesses

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government on Wednesday extended the deadline to file income tax return (ITR) for individuals by 10 days to January 10, 2021. The deadline for filing tax returns by businesses too has been extended till February 15, the finance ministry said in a statement.

This is the third time that the government has extended the deadline to file ITR -- first from the normal deadline of July 31 to November 30, 2020, and then to December 31, 2020.

Also, the due date for filing declaration under the direct tax dispute resolution scheme Vivad Se Vishwas has been extended by a month till January 31.

Besides, the date for filing GST annual return for 2019-20 fiscal has been extended by two months till February 28, 2021.

The extension of the deadline till January 10 is for

filing ITR for 2019-20 fiscal year (2020-21 assessment year) and is for those individuals whose accounts are not required to be audited and who usually file their income tax return using ITR-1 or ITR-4 forms, as applicable, the statement said.

The deadline for other taxpayers whose accounts are required to be audited (including partners of a firm) and/or those who have to submit report in respect to international financial transactions has been extended to February 15, 2021.

Amid a blip in the number of ITRs filed by individuals vis-a-vis last year, the finance ministry said the extension in various deadline was given in view of the continued challenges faced by taxpayers in meeting statutory compliances due to the outbreak of COVID-19.

For companies, the date was extended from October 31 to November 30 and then to January 31, 2021.

₹ rises by 11 paise to end at over 2-month high

Mumbai: Rising for the fifth straight session, the rupee on Wednesday appreciated by 11 paise to close at more than two-month high of 73.31 against the US dollar on the back of foreign fund inflows and a weak greenback in the global markets.At the interbank forex market, the domestic unit opened at 73.35 against the US dollar and witnessed an intra-day high of 73.26 and a low of 73.36.

NIFTY 50						
SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE	
NIFTY 50	13,980.90	13,997.00	13,864.95	13,981.95	49.35	
ULTRACEMCO	5,157.05	5,400.00	5,120.05	5,374.00	227.25	
GRASIM	911.1	938.95	897.3	937.1	27.6	
SHREECEM	23,872.30	24,701.60	23,750.00	24,549.85	710.2	
RAINFANCE	5,200.50	5,348.00	5,174.00	5,335.00	134.5	
EICHERMOT	2,479.00	2,525.00	2,454.35	2,521.00	60.45	
UPL	464	472.4	461.25	465.8	11.1	
MARUTI	7,497.00	7,635.00	7,430.00	7,610.00	157.65	
M&M	710	724.3	704.35	719	11.95	
TECHM	970	985	967.8	980.95	15.3	
ASIANPAINT	26,940.00	27,485	26,880.35	27,350.00	38.5	
TATASTEEL	63,295	64,935	62,045	64,105	88.5	
KOTAKBANK	2,003.20	2,027.00	1,999.00	2,018.45	19.15	
NESTLEIND	18,399.50	18,468.00	18,230.00	18,427.05	164.4	
JSWSTEEL	382.8	387.9	378.65	385.2	3.4	
HEROMOTOCO	3,080.00	3,107.95	3,065.60	3,100.00	26	
HINDUNILVR	2,390.00	2,414.65	2,376.00	2,403.00	18.7	
TATAMOTORS	183.1	185.4	180.4	184.85	1.4	
TITAN	1,548.00	1,557.70	1,533.30	1,550.20	10.1	
HCLTECH	938	950	931	941.55	5.25	
SBILIFE	902	911	890.8	909.95	4.65	
NTPC	99	99.65	98.2	99.05	0.45	
IT	1,288.20	1,296.35	1,271.00	1,290.45	5.6	
COALINDIA	136.75	136.75	134.2	135.65	0.55	
BAJAJ-AUTO	3,437.20	3,472.85	3,405.25	3,445.10	13.55	
HINDALCO	236.4	239.15	232.65	236.45	0.85	
HDFCBANK	1,439.90	1,439.90	1,413.00	1,432.05	4.85	
DIVISLAB	3,790.00	3,820.00	3,760.85	3,795.10	10.9	
ADANIPOWER	484	487.6	478.15	484.75	1.35	
RELIANCE	1,995.25	2,006.55	1,975.55	1,994.35	4.3	
ONGC	93.5	94.5	92.75	93.3	0.15	
POWERGRID	190	190.65	186.8	190	0.3	
HDFCLIFE	679	679	667	674.15	0.95	
BPCL	382	384.2	378.8	382	0.5	
HDPC	2,518.95	2,525.00	2,483.00	2,521.70	2.75	
REDREDDY	5,191.45	5,191.45	5,142.50	5,165.00	-0.6	
WIPRO	385	386.6	382.8	384.6	-0.4	
BRITANNIA	3,602.25	3,605.85	3,564.00	3,588.65	-4.65	
ICICIBANK	531.65	533	524.55	527.6	-1.2	
BAJAJFINSV	9,000.00	9,020.95	8,921.00	8,954.00	-22.05	
ITC	212.7	213.5	209.55	211	-0.55	
IOC	91.35	91.7	90	90.9	-0.3	
INFY	1,253.00	1,253.30	1,238.15	1,244.00	-6.3	
CIPLA	830	830	816.05	823.4	-4.55	
GAIL	1,239	1,242	1,21.6	1,229	-0.85	
TCS	2,934.40	2,947.70	2,902.00	2,910.00	-20.5	
BHARTIARTL	523.4	523.4	513.3	516	-4.25	
SBIN	278	278.7	272.5	275.5	-2.4	
ASIANBANK	632.25	634.6	618.2	622.6	-4.65	
SUNPHARMA	595	595	581.5	584.1	-6.5	
INDUSINDBK	919.05	922.7	888	899.45	-13.45	

NIFTY NEXT 50						
SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE	
NIFTY NEXT 50	32,446.10	32,508.55	32,166.50	32,464.40	132.9	
AMBUJACEM	245.5	253	241.7	252.5	8.1	
NMDC	114.7	116.9	112.7	116.55	2.75	
ACC	1,619.90	1,652.55	1,600.00	1,651.00	34.25	
PGHL	11,199.80	11,344.00	11,011.00	11,295.00	230.8	
ADANITRANS	432.65	447.4	425	437	7.85	
DABUR	530	540.5	524.35	538.6	9.65	
DMART	2,666.20	2,725.00	2,642.35	2,711.00	45.3	
DAF	232.5	237	228.5	235.3	3.85	
NAUKRI	4,717.00	4,792.00	4,673.70	4,780.00	76.75	
ADANIPOWER	1,039.90	1,062.00	1,028.00	1,054.00	15.3	
BERGEPAINT	744	755.55	738.5	753.1	9.05	
GODFREY	745	756.9	738.3	750	8.85	
MCDOWELL-N	574.5	580.5	571.6	576.95	6.75	
SBICARD	846	835.5	841.15	850.5	9.8	
BAJAJHLING	3,086.45	3,125.00	3,047.80	3,102.00	35.7	
UTI	3,609.95	3,674.90	3,565.80	3,652.00	42.05	
LBI	1,157.00	1,168.80	1,143.10	1,159.00	11.8	
MOTHERSUNI	159.05	164.4	155.3	159.4	1.4	
PEL	1,426.20	1,410.00	1,402.90	1,434.00	7.8	
HINDPETRO	215.2	216.9	214.05	216.5	1.1	
AUROPHARMA	906	909	892.15	907.85	2.8	
OFSS	3,228.75	3,238.50	3,202.00	3,220.20	7.8	
CONCOR	399.1	401.5	392.15	398.2	0.75	
ALKEM	2,952.00	2,958.00	2,905.05	2,930.40	4.7	
CADILAH	482.9	482.9	475.8	479.8	0.45	
HDPCAMC	2,924.80	2,927.00	2,876.10	2,908.05	0.2	
TORNTPHARM	2,759.80	2,800.00	2,736.00	2,759.00	0.2	
PIDILITIND	1,754.50	1,769.95	1,740.60	1,753.00	-1	
COLPAL	1,576.30	1,582.00	1,563.10	1,573.30	-1.3	
MUTHOOTFIN	1,216.00	1,218.85	1,201.00	1,208.30	-1.45	
LUPIN	982	984.5	976	976	-1.25	
HINDZINC	239.85	240.4	238	239.3	-0.35	
SIEMENS	1,577.20	1,582.00	1,560.50	1,573.50	-2.3	
PETRONET	247.9	251.3	246.1	246.45	-0.55	
ICICIGI	1,520.00	1,540.30	1,496.25	1,505.75	-4.55	
INDOTIG	1,695.00	1,740.05	1,677.25	1,686.80	-5.4	
ABRANGINDIA	15,800.00	15,800.05	15,600.00	15,644.00	-57.9	
BANKBARODA	63	63.25	60.75	62.05	-0.3	
ICICIRPULD	500	502.4	491.4	500.95	-2.9	
GICRE	140.95	141.35	138.7	139.35	-0.85	
BOSCHLTD	12,875.00	12,950.00	12,667.00	12,750.00	-84.05	
HAVELLS	908	910.3	897.3	901.9	-6.85	
TATACONSUM	598.8	604	590.05	593.65	-4.95	
BIOCIN	462	463.65	453.25	456.6	-3.9	
MARICO	409	410.5	401	403.3	-4.05	
IGL	516.5	519.5	502.4	505.2	-5.9	
PNB	33.7	33.7	32.35	32.7	-0.5	
INDUSTOWER	236.05	237.4	229.05	231.25	-3.75	
BANDHANBNK	416.5	416.5	402.5	406.5	-6.7	
PFC	116	116.45	113.6	114.25	-2	

BSE 500

Script	Open	High	Low	LTP
COROMANDEL	818	818	794.7	802.7
SUNPHARMA	594	594	581.7	584.1
CANBK	127	130.5	123.65	129.45
IDEA	10.31	10.35	10.07	10.22
PNB	33.4	33.65	32.3	32.75
BAJFINANCE	5209	5346	5176.65	5334.5
INDUSINDBK	921	923	888.55	898.8
INDIACEM	145.7	174.1	142.8	174.1
TCS	2937	2947	2904	2908.85
UPL	463	472.35	461.2	467.1
ICICIBANK	532.6	532.85	524.6	528.45
ADANIANT	488.95	496	478.55	485.95
RELIANCE	1992.55	2006.85	1975.9	1995.5
SBIN	277.85	278.5	272.6	276.85
VEDL	157	162.45	156.1	162.05
MARUTI	7500	7630	7430	7611.15
ITC	213	213.35	209.6	211.1
HDPCBANK	1439.7	1439.7	1413.45	1432.85
IBULHSGFIN	218	219	211.5	214.85
TATASTEEL	633.1	643.95	624.5	641.05
HCLTECH	938.8	950	931.2	941
ASIANBANK	632	634	618.15	624.95
TANISLA	766.5	766.5	693.5	717.8
SAIL	64.9	70.9	63.7	69.65
GRASIM	915	938.5	898.55	935.45
TATAMOTORS	183.3	185.3	180.45	184
WIPRO	387.5	387.5	382.8	384.4
WOCKPHARMA	510.25	558	501.3	550.65
BHARTIARTL	523	523	513.35	519.5
TECHM	968.15	984.85	968.15	982.9
KOTAKBANK	2002	2026.55	1998.3	2019.45
ULTRACEMCO	5166	5397.95	5123.1	5355.3
ASTRAZEN	4550	4770	4462.8	4645.1
JKCEMENT	1913.1	1961	1905	1942.4
IGL	517	519.15	502.4	505.5
HDPC	2521	2524	2483.15	2516.95
EICHERMOT	2490	2525	2455	2518
INFY	1252.9	1253.9	1238.55	1246.2
WHIRLPOOL	2500	2641	2452	2588.95

Won't allow Daniel Pearl's killer to evade justice: US

Ready to try Omar Sheikh

Washington: The US has said it is ready to take custody of British-born al-Qaeda leader Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh, accused of kidnapping and murdering American journalist Daniel Pearl, asserting that Washington will not allow him to evade justice.

Acting US Attorney General Jeffrey A Rosen's remarks comes days after a Pakistani court ordered release of Sheikh and his three aides, convicted and later acquitted in the kidnapping and murder case of Pearl.

"We cannot allow him to evade justice for his role in Daniel Pearl's abduction and murder," Rosen said on Tuesday.

Pearl, the 38-year-old South Asia bureau chief for The Wall Street Journal, was

abducted and beheaded while he was in Pakistan investigating a story in 2002 on the links between the country's powerful spy agency ISI and al-Qaeda.

"We understand that Pakistani authorities are taking steps to ensure that Omar Sheikh remains in custody while the Supreme Court appeal seeking to reinstate his conviction continues," Rosen said in a statement released by the US State Department.

"The separate judicial rulings reversing his conviction and ordering his release are an affront to terrorism victims everywhere," he said.

"We remain grateful for the Pakistani Government's actions to appeal such rulings to ensure that he and his co-defendants are held accountable. If, however, those efforts do not succeed, the United States stands ready to take custody of Omar Sheikh to

stand trial here," he said.

In a surprise move, a two-judge bench of the Sindh High Court last week directed security agencies not to keep Sheikh and other accused under "any sort of detention" and declared all notifications of the Sindh government related to their detention "null and void". The court observed that the four men's detention was "illegal".

Days later the Sindh province government said it has decided not to release Sheikh and his three aides in view of a Supreme Court's September 28 order.

A three-judge apex court bench headed by Justice Mushir Alam, which is hearing the appeal by the Sindh government and the family of the slain journalist against the acquittal of Sheikh by the Sindh High Court in April, on September 28 noted that till the next date of hearing, the accused shall not be released. **PTI**

Trump lashes out at GOP after override vote on defence bill

Washington: President Donald Trump lashed out at congressional Republicans a day after the House easily voted to override his veto of a defence policy bill.

A total of 109 Republicans, including Wyoming Rep. Liz Cheney, a member of GOP leadership, joined with Democrats on Monday to approve the override, which would be the first of Trumps presidency. The Senate is expected to consider the measure later this week.

Trump on Tuesday slammed GOP lawmakers on Twitter, charging that "Weak and tired Republican leadership will allow the bad Defence Bill to pass."

Trump called the override vote a "disgraceful act of cowardice and total submission by weak people to Big Tech. Negotiate a better Bill, or get better leaders, NOW! Senate



should not approve NDAA until fixed!!!!

The 322-87 vote in the House sends the override effort to the Senate, where the exact timing of a vote is uncertain.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell wants a vote as soon as Wednesday, but Vermont Sen Bernie Sanders objected to moving ahead until McConnell allows a vote on a Trump-backed plan to increase Covid-19 relief payments to \$2,000. **AP**

Kamala receives first dose of Moderna vaccine

Washington: US Vice President-elect Kamala Harris has received the first dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine live on television as part of efforts to build public trust in the inoculation and urged Americans to get vaccinated for the virus.

Harris and her husband Doug Emhoff were administered the vaccine at United Medical Center in Washington, DC."Let's do it," Harris said before she received her shot on Tuesday. She took the vaccine one week after President-elect Joe Biden received his.

Describing the process as 'relatively painless', Harris urged all Americans to get vaccinated. 'It's about saving your life, the life of your family members, and the life of your community,' she said."I trust scientists. And it is the scientists who created and approved this vaccine. So I urge everyone, when it is your turn, get vaccinated." **PTI**

10 killed in Yemen airport blasts after arrival of new Govt

AdenYemen: At least 10 people were killed Wednesday as explosions rocked Yemen's Aden airport moments after a new unity government flew in, in what officials charged was a "cowardly" attack by Iran-backed Huthi rebels.

"Dozens" more people were wounded, a medical source told AFP, although all government ministers were reported to be unharmed.

Plumes of smoke billowed from the airport building in the southern city as debris lay strewn across the area, with people rushing to tend to the wounded, footage broadcast by Saudi television channel Al-Hadath showed.

"At least two explosions were heard as the cabinet members were leaving the aircraft," an AFP correspondent at the scene said.Crowds who had gathered on the airport apron



waiting to greet the new government fled, terrified.Sporadic gunfire was heard soon after.

It was not immediately clear what had caused the explosions.

Yemen's internationally recognised government and southern separatists formed a power-sharing cabinet on December 18, forging a joint front against the Huthi rebels who have seized the capital Sanaa and much of the north.

Argentine Senate approves bill legalising abortion



Abortion-rights activists react after lawmakers approved a bill that legalises abortion, outside Congress in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on Wednesday

Buenos Aires: Argentina's Senate has passed a law legalising abortion, a victory for the women's movement that has been fighting for the right for decades.

Under Wednesday's majority vote, abortion is legalised up to the 14th week of pregnancy, and is also legal after that time in cases of rape or danger to the mother's life.The vote was passed with 38 votes in favor, 29 against and one abstention, after a marathon 12-hour session that began late Tuesday.

It was already approved by Argentinas Chamber of Deputies and has the support of President Alberto Fernández, meaning the Senate vote is its final hurdle.

Argentine senators debated for hour after hour over legalising abortion, wrangling into the early hours of Wednesday before a vote that marked the culmination of a decades-long fight by women's groups in Pope Francis' homeland and have repercussions across a continent where the procedure is largely illegal.

China sentences 10 seeking to flee Hong Kong to prison terms

Beijing: A Chinese court on Wednesday sentenced 10 pro-democracy activists who sought to flee Hong Kong by speedboat to between seven months and three years in prison, in a case with major political overtones for the territory.

The Yantian District Court in the southern city of Shenzhen gave the harshest sentence to one of the two accused organisers of the ill-fated Aug 23 attempt to reach self-ruled Taiwan. Relatives said all defendants pleaded guilty, a move apparently aimed at receiving lighter sentences.

The defendants are believed to have feared they would be prosecuted for their activities in support of Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement. 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.

The court said it had held a private hearing for two under-aged suspects and would not charge the them for illegally crossing the border even though they pleaded guilty.

Another organiser was given two years while other participants were given seven months in prison.

Relatives of the accused said they were prevented from hiring their own lawyers and that the charges are politically motivated.

The defendants could have been sentenced to up to a year in prison for crossing the border and seven years for organising the trip.

They were picked up after entering mainland Chinese waters for crossing the maritime border without permission.

While Hong Kong is part of China, travelers must still pass through immigration when going to and from the mainland, which surrounds Hong Kong by land and sea. **AP**

Migrants from Bosnia camp kept in buses as relocation halted

Bihac(Bosnia-Herzegovina): Hundreds of migrants from a burned-out tent camp in northwest Bosnia have spent the night in buses after an attempt to relocate them failed, reflecting confusion in the Balkan country's dealing with the crisis.

Bosnian authorities sent buses on Tuesday to transfer the migrants from the much-criticised Lipa camp to an army barracks in central Bosnia but this was canceled after locals there organised protests to prevent the relocation. On Wednesday morning, migrants were still inside the buses, local media reported.

The Lipa camp near Bosnia's border with European Union member state Croatia was demolished in a fire last week and lacked basic facilities such as running water or heating. Some 1,000 migrants were stranded there for days during a spate of snowy winter weather that followed the fire. **AP**

UK puts millions more under tight restrictions as cases soar

London: The British government on Wednesday extended its toughest coronavirus restrictions to three-quarters of England's population, saying a fast-spreading new variant of the virus has reached most of the country.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said the government's top infection-warning level, Tier 4, would be expanded beyond London and the south-east to cover large swaths of central, northern and south-west England.

Under Tier 4, people are advised to stay home, mixing of households is prohibited,

nonessential shops are shut and restaurants and bars can only offer takeout.

Hancock said Wednesday's authorization of a second vaccine for use in the UK was good news, but 'sharply rising cases and the hospitalizations that follow demonstrate the need to act where the virus is spreading."

"It brings forward the day on which we can lift the restrictions, he told lawmakers in the House of Commons. "But we must act to suppress the virus now, especially as the new variant makes the time between now and then even more difficult.

Hospitals in the worst-hit areas of London and southern England are becoming increasingly overstretched, with ambulances unable to unload patients at some hospitals where all the beds are occupied. There are more people in hospitals with COVID-19 now than at the first peak of the outbreak in April.

Britain has recorded more than 71,000 confirmed coronavirus deaths, the second-highest death toll in Europe after Italy. The country reported a record number of new confirmed cases on Tuesday.

US spy Pollard arrives in Israel after 30-yr jail

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Jonathan Pollard, who spent 30 years in US prison for spying for Israel, arrived in Israel early Wednesday with his wife, triumphantly kissing the ground as he exited the aircraft in the culmination of a

decades-long affair that had long strained relations between the two close allies.

Pollard was welcomed at Israel's international airport by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who presented him and his wife Esther with Israeli ID cards granting them citizenship.

"Welcome back. How good you've come home," Netanyahu said, according to a statement issued by his office. He said they could start new lives in Israel, "in freedom and happiness." "We are ecstatic to be home at last," said Pollard.

FROM PAGE 1

MAIN FARM CONCERNS UNRESOLVED, 2 SORTED OUT

"Talks were positive. The Government has been saying that we should end agitation and form a committee. But we didn't listen to them. We won't take back our movement. We won't form any committee. We'll discuss MSP in the next meeting," Balkaran Singh Brar, Punjab president, All India Kisan Sabha said.

The Government is still adamant about not repealing the farm laws, said the farmers' unions. It is also not ready for a legally enforced support prices for produce and said the committee can look into it, they said.

Farmers raised the issue of frauds committed by traders against farmers in Madhya Pradesh. The alleged fraud involved promised purchase of crops that never took place, leaving scores of farmers in Hoshangabad and Guna in the lurch. They also demanded justice and compensation to the families of those farmers who died during the protests since November 26.

At the time when the talks were going on in Vigyan Bhawan, the Shiromani Akali Dal and the Congress appealed to farmers to hold direct talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, otherwise the dialogue would not yield any results.

2-YR-OLD UK RETURNEE +VE FOR STRAIN, RAISES TOTAL TO 16

All the patients have been kept in single room isolation in designated health care facilities. These were the first cases to be reported by the country that has the second-highest number of cases after the US.

From November 25 to December 23 midnight, about 33,000 passengers disembarked at various Indian airports from the UK. All these passengers are being tracked and subjected by States and UTs to RT-PCR tests.

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

Meanwhile, the Ministry said daily recoveries have outnumbered the daily new cases since the last 33 days successively. In the last 24 hours, 20,549 persons were found to be Covid positive in the country. During the same period, 26,572 new recoveries were registered.

India's cumulative recoveries stand at 98,34,141 on Wednesday, the highest globally. The recovery rate has also reached nearly 96 per cent. The gap between recoveries and active cases is consistently widening (95,71,869), said the Ministry.

4 HELD FOR DEFRAUDING RAM TEMPLE TRUST OF ₹6L, KINGPIN AT LARGE

The transaction was stopped immediately after Rai confirmed that he did not approve of any withdrawal and the account was seized. An FIR was lodged at the Ayodhya police station on September 10.

Those arrested have been identified as Prashant Mahaval Shetty (40), resident of Bombay, Vimal Lalla (40), Shankar Sitaram Gopale (54) and Sanjay Tejraj (35) all from Thane district of Maharashtra. However, the mastermind of this scam hailing from Varanasi is still absconding. The Ayodhya DIG said that the involvement of bank employees in this fraud cannot be ruled out. All the held accused will be now taken on police custody remand to grill them and extract details of others involved in the crime.

GOVT TO RAISE DEFENCE EXPORT TO \$5BN IN 5 YRS, OK'S AKASH SALE

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh in a tweet said "The export version of Akash will be different from the system currently deployed with Indian armed forces."

Highlighting the significance of the decision about exports, he said so far, Indian defence exports included parts and components but the export of big platforms was minimal.

"This decision by the Cabinet would help the country to improve its defence products and make them globally competitive," the Minister said.

The Akash missile, now deployed in some sectors of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) during the ongoing standoff with China, saw many countries expressing interest in it during international defence exhibitions.

Akash has a range of 25 kms and can simultaneously engage multiple targets in all-weather conditions. It has a large operational envelope from a low altitude of 30 metres to a maximum of up to 20 km. The missile was inducted in 2014 in Air Force and in 2015 in Indian Army. "Akash is the country's important missile with over 96 per cent indigenisation," Rajnath said.

In August, the Defence Ministry issued a draft 'Defence Production & Export Promotion Policy (DPEPP) 2020' for public feedback with the aim to achieve a manufacturing turnover of \$25 billion or Rs 1,75,000 crore including exports of \$5 billion in aerospace and defence goods and services by 2025.

7 kg heroin, 3 Chinese pistols seized along Pak border

Chandigarh: In a joint operation, the BSF and Punjab Police seized 7.31 kg heroin and three Chinese. 30 bore Norinco pistols in the Dera Baba Nanak sector of the India-Pakistan border in Punjab's Gurdaspur district on Wednesday, officials

said. As per initial inputs, the consignment had been pushed into Indian territory by Pakistan-based smuggler Jagdish Singh, who is presently settled in Belgium.

He is an active terrorist and a proclaimed offender in three

terrorism-related cases.

Further intelligence inputs established the key role of policeman-turned-drug smuggler Ranjit Singh of Amritsar, who is currently lodged in a Ludhiana jail.

Recruited as constable in

the 80th Battalion of the Punjab Police in 1989, Ranjit Singh rose up to the rank of ASI in 2011.

But in 2011, he was booked for his involvement in an NDPS Act case where 23 kg heroin was recovered, and dis-

missed from service in 2012.

Ranjit Singh has five criminal cases registered against him for smuggling of drugs and arms, where commercial quantities of heroin and sophisticated firearms were recovered. **IANIS**

Traffic restrictions on New Year eve in Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Like the previous year, this year also the Delhi Police is girding up for the New Year. This year's traffic advisory for New Year's eve is to come into effect from Thursday 8 pm in the national Capital for all private and public vehicles.

Special arrangements have been made for the areas in the vicinity of Connaught Place in the national Capital.

While alcometers (device to measure alcohol content in a breath sample) are not being used in the city due to the Covid-19 outbreak, action will be taken if anybody is found driving in an inebriated state.

According to the advisory, no vehicle will be allowed to proceed towards Connaught Place from the Mandi House roundabout, Bengali Market roundabout, north foot of Ranjit Singh Flyover (Barakhamba Road-Tolstoy Marg crossing), Minto Road-

Deen Dayal Upadhaya Marg crossing and Chelmsford Road near Munje Chowk (New Delhi Railway Station).

It said vehicular movement towards CP will not be allowed from RK Ashram Marg-Chitragupta Marg crossing, Gole Market roundabout, Gol Dakhana roundabout, Patel Chowk, Kasturba Gandhi Road-Feroz Shah Road crossing, Jai Singh Road-Bangla Sahib Lane, Pachkuian Road-Bangla Sahib Lane, Windsor Place roundabout, Buta Singh Marg roundabout and State Entry Road-New Delhi Railway Station.

No vehicular traffic will be allowed in the inner, middle and the outer circle of Connaught Place without valid passes, the traffic police advisory added.

It said vehicles can be parked near Gole Dak Khana, Patel Chowk on Rakab Ganj Road behind AIR, Mandi House on Copernicus Marg up

to Baroda House, Minto Road on D D Upadhaya Marg and Press Road area, Panchkuian Road on R K Ashram Marg, Chitragupta Road and Basant Road

towards Paharganj.

Parking will also be allowed near K G Marg-Feroz Shah Road crossing on Copernicus Lane as well as on K G Marg towards C Hexagon, near Bengali market roundabout on Babar Road and Tansen Marg, Windsor Place and Gol Market on Peshwa Road and on the service road along Bhairu Singh Marg and R K Ashram Road, Joint Commissioner of Police

(Traffic) Manish Kumar Agrawal said in the advisory.

Limited parking space for vehicles with valid passes will be available in Connaught Place on first come-first serve basis. Unauthorised or wrongly parked vehicles shall be towed away and prosecuted, it stated.

Agarwal said alternative routes have been arranged for commuters travelling to New Delhi railway station. However, routes to the Old Delhi railway station will not be affected, he added.

Traffic arrangements have also been made at areas having high footfall like Saket, Greater Kailash, Lajpat Nagar, New Friends Colony, Hauz

Khas, Defence Colony, Vasant Vihar, R K Puram, Nehru Place, Dwarka, Palam airport, Rajouri Garden, Ashok Vihar, Model Town and Mayur Vihar, the advisory stated. Motorists should use alternative routes for north-south movement which include Ring Road from ISBT to Ashram or via Delhi Gate, Bahadur

Shah Zafar Marg, Mathura Road to reach Ashram and vice-versa or via ISBT, Rani Jhansi Marg, Panchkuyan Road, Mandir Marg, Park Street,

Mother Teresa Crescent Road and beyond or via Rani Jhansi Marg, Panchkuyan Road, Hanuman Murti and Ring Road, it said.

Ring Road, Bhairon Road, Mathura Road, Subramaniam Bharti Marg, Rajesh Pilot Marg, Mother Teresa Crescent, roundabout near R M L,

Sheikh Mujibur Rehman Road and Shankar Road have been suggested for commuters using east-west directions, the advisory stated.

Strict action shall be taken against drunken driving, stunt-biking, over speeding, reckless driving, zig-zag and dangerous driving, it said.

"We are not using alcometer due to the Covid-19, but if someone found in inebriate condition, then we will medically examine him and the action will be taken accordingly. We also want people to follow the Covid-19 guidelines," Agrawal said.

Doctors remove toothbrush from man's stomach in Aurangabad

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Hours after a 33-year-old Hman swallowed a toothbrush accidentally, the doctors at the Government Medical College & Hospital (GMCH) at Aurangabad performed a laparotomy on him and removed the toothbrush from his abdominal cavity.

The doctors at the GMCH conducted an unusual surgery on Rajesh Jadhav, a labourer, who had been rushed to the hospital with acute pain in

stomach on December 26.

Having learnt that he had swallowed a toothbrush, the doctors did a CT scan on Jadhav to determine the location of the brush in stomach.

"During the CT scan, we located the position of the toothbrush inside the stomach. Had the tooth brush remained there for some more time, it would have complicated matters and could have even proved fatal by way perforations in the stomach and intestine. Without losing time, we

conducted a surgery on him to remove the toothbrush," Dr. Junaid M. Shaikh said.

Dr Shaikh, who led the team that conducted the surgery, said: "We did a laparotomy on the patient's abdominal cavity. The surgical procedure lasted for 90 minutes. At the end of it, we not only removed the toothbrush from the abdominal cavity but we also cleaned up the internal portions to prevent any possible infection in future."

This was the second surgery of its kind conducted at GMCH during the last 15 years. Earlier, the doctors had performed a similar surgery when a patient had been rushed to the hospital after he had swallowed a steel spoon which was removed surgically. Dean of GMCH Dr. Kannan Yelikar, Medical Superintendent Dr. Suresh Harbade and Head of General Surgery Dr. Sarojini Jadhav had formed a team headed by Dr. Shaikh to carry out the

unusual operation.

The team that performed comprised Dr. Shaikh, Dr. Avinash Ghatge, Dr. Omar Khan, Dr. Sandeep Chavan, Dr. Sukanya Vinchurkar, Dr. Gaurav Bhavsar, Dr. Aniket Rakhude, Dr. Vishakha Walke and head nurse Santoshi Songatti. Though there have been instances when unsupervised infants or children have been rushed to this hospital after they swallowed coins, pins, beads, stones and small toys.

Trend Slazer

Ileana's definition of 'strength'

Actor **ILEANA D'CRUZ** has shared what she believes is the definition of strength.

"Strength isn't always just a big dramatic show of bravado. It isn't always a long monologue filled with inspirational words and hard hitting truths. Sometimes it's just uncurling yourself up from that ball of tears and lost confusion, cleaning yourself up, and stepping out into the world again," she shared on her Instagram account.

On the work front, Ileana is all set to star in *Unfair N Lovely*, a comic take on India's obsession with fair skin.



'I'm grateful that the work that I have done through 2020 will all be released in these coming

months. The last few months have truly taught us that patience is virtue and it always pays off. I'm excited to start the new year too with working on two other projects. I'm very excited about them and they will be announced very soon.'
—Mrunal Thakur

Veteran couturier **PIERRE CARDIN** passed away in a hospital in Neuilly in the west of Paris on Tuesday. He was 98.



The French designer was celebrated for being a forerunner in his field and for revolutionising the business of fashion. Cardin was the first designer in the 1950s to retail his collections in department stores. He was also the first to diversify his brand and capitalise on the brand name by selling perfumes, accessories, pens, cars and food.

He had said, "The clothes I prefer are the garments that I invent for a lifestyle that does not yet exist in tomorrow's world."

Hanks' all-new bald haircut

Hollywood star **TOM HANKS** has unveiled an all-new bald haircut, for his role of Colonel Tom Parker in the forthcoming untitled Elvis Presley film, and he says it is horrible.

The actor, who is shooting in Australia for the film, gave a glimpse of the new look when he joined Graham Norton for a New Year's Eve special.

"I am working on Baz Luhrmann's film about Elvis Presley, and Austin Butler is playing Elvis. Let me show you the horrible haircut I have to have in order to portray Colonel Tom Parker," Hanks said. He removed his cap and explained, "Can you see that? Look at that thing! I just scared the children!"



The world turns on lessons learnt

Three students from different streams and age groups tell TEAM VIVA about their key takeaways from a year as challenging as 2020

It's commonly said that when life gives you lemons, use them to make lemonade and cool it all down. Well, what if life gives you an eventful year like 2020? On the last day of this year, three students from different streams present their take on what they learnt from the year's unpredictability and its abundant challenges. Life, certainly, for them, had taken a new turn as students had to adapt to newer and digital ways of education, and no socialising.

SHREYA SHARMA

What is the life of a college student all about? Certainly, it's about a good college, a great group of friends to hang out and make memories with, attending and bunking lectures together, being part of extra-curricular activities, having good conversations about the future with family, meeting new people and what not. However, a question — what if one day you don't get to do all of that? Well, this thought sounded irrational and did not trouble me until the day it actually came true. And as it happened, over the last 10 months of the pandemic, I grew in many, unimaginable ways.

The very first lesson — life is highly unpredictable. We all know about this fact but do we actually consider it and live our life keeping in mind its unpredictability? I don't think so. All we do is rant about our supposedly boring lives being fully submerged in our work, not enjoying and savouring the moments we encounter. We hardly take out time to acknowledge our loved ones. This pandemic has taken many precious lives and now, when we look back, we regret not being able to spend time with the ones who mattered to us. This

unpredictability of life has been a driving force for me to savour every moment. I have learnt how I can only seize the current moment; nor the past neither the future.

Second — importance of healthy relationships. Not only we should focus on building healthy relationships with our family and friends but also watch out for the toxic ones, which heavily impact our mental health. This lockdown has been a blessing in disguise for me as it has helped me improve my relationships with the people I care about and form some new, valuable ones. This in turn has taught me to be understanding, apologetic, empathetic and supportive as a daughter, a friend and an apprentice. Also, ending toxic relationships did not just make me stronger but also made me realise my independence. I now know who I am, what I want and I strive for it.

The third takeaway was found in self-awareness, which I believe is the ultimate key to living a fulfilling life. Certain arguments with my friends and family made me realise how I need to change my sense of self. I have the power to change only myself and take a control of only my words, thoughts and actions. I can mould them in my way. I am accountable for my doings. I have the key to modify myself and become a better person.

The fourth lesson came with technology's necessity. In this new normal, it has helped us in more ways than one. I realised how I couldn't just complete my studies through it but also connect to the ones I haven't been able to catch up with in a long time. It has reached masses and helped millions of lonely people connect with each other. Hence,



I understood the important of conversations.

The concluding lesson is gratitude. We, as humans, need to be more grateful for what we have. 2020 is evidence of life's unpredictable nature. One moment you're breathing, the next you're not or you're struggling on a hospital bed. Hence, I have started to pay gratitude and every day, I thank the mystic forces of this universe for giving me such an amazing and fulfilling life. I now accept my flaws and aim to grow, become better and stronger everyday with whatever I have.

SRISH SRIVATSA

What can be said about life? That it happens. It is beautiful yet hard. It presumably has a sour tooth because it always seems to give everyone lemons. That's also

evident from Gabriel Garcia Marquez' opening words in *Love in the Time of Cholera* — "It was inevitable" — much like Thanos. Well, life happens in its own ways, whether we approve of them or not. Things will change irrespective of our convenience. And the same is happening in the current pandemic.

However, even if one feels like prisoner, being trapped inside homes, cut off from people, social routines and a world which at times acted as refuge from the everyday realities, behind those shut doors, we became creative. We, humans, did allow a virus to push us back but we will be doomed if we let it pull us down.

I felt stuck in my home with my family until I realised that they were as stuck as I was. So, what do we do? Well, we talked,

and beyond the usual "Hello" and "How are you?" I was surprised to see that it took a life-threatening pandemic to actually make me converse with my family. We invented new ways to talk to each other. We came across some new observations about each other. We learnt how even in the darkest times, we could find light and keep going.

During the lockdown, everything from my classes to my life had started to map out on my mobile phone. I was stuck in another state, away from my family, and in those times, I would be worried about them. At the same time, the pressure of missing out on notes and studies engulfed me as now everything had shifted to digital. Lectures were being conducted on Zoom, Google Meet, MS Teams and I was gradually losing all my interest. It became too boring and even more exhausting than attending college in person. We certainly had no other option than to endure.

Furthermore, amid the social distancing norms and constraints of not talking to whoever we want to, I could find out the people I cannot separate myself from and the ones important to me. I also saw how it made my fellow classmates and our teachers come together as if we had known each other since long. It made us have conversations with each other, which were not just related to work or studies but also about each other's wellbeing and whereabouts. I certainly learn the value of human interactions, even if they were over a screen.

We became the personification of the saying, "It ain't about how hard you hit. It's about how hard you can get hit and still, keep moving forward." We all united and cared for ourselves, our family, friends, the person living next door, even the stranger we pass by in the corridor.

ANURAG GUPTA

Everything was just fine when the world first knew that COVID-19 had been declared as

a pandemic. There were lockdowns and travel restrictions throughout the world. The airports were full of nurses in hazmat suits conducting tests — as if replicating a scene from *Resident Evil*. Apart from becoming a chapter in future history textbooks, this pandemic has taught many lessons to everyone and hit each person differently.

My key takeaway — staying at and working from home is not easy. There are many roles to play when the whole family is living in the home at the same time. On the other hand, when it comes to working, there are many people who struggle for devices at home because they might not be sufficient for everyone. We had to fight each morning to come at a consensus on device usage. Nobody was prepared for such a strict lockdown. I wondered how students in the rural landscape would have struggled to find good network and suitable gadgets to be able to attend school, online.

Second, I started to value friendships and relationships. The sudden paradigm shift from socialising after classes or hanging out with friends to staying put at home, hugely impacted relationships. However, it also made us realise the importance of human contact and interaction. Eventually, we started adapting to the new normal. We now got more to spend time with our loved ones at home as well as with others away from us, virtually.

Another lesson I learnt was that happiness comes from within. With devastating news coming from across the world, people losing their loved ones, struggling to earn a living or even a meal per day, it became difficult to stay positive and row against the flow of negativity. The pandemic proved that no matter how many material objects you may own or how many followers on social media you may have, during the darkest storms, only you can find the ray of hope and sail amid it.

STUDIO CHAT 30 MINUTES

An effortless transition

The video couldn't have been simpler — a woman in her apartment, lip-synching the audio of ex-US President Donald Trump as he expounded on possible Coronavirus treatments. "We hit the body with a tremendous — whether

"Wow, this happened fast." You know? Like, breakneck speed." There've been so many "pinch-me moments" for Cooper after her first TikTok that she's lost track. But she'll never forget the feeling of having made it when she saw Jerry

politics, race and other light topics in a sketch special packed with celebrity guests.

"I was just like, 'Who is this person? This is exactly articulating why everything is so insane,'" Lyonne said of the first time she saw *How to Medical*. "It

All that success may appear to have happened overnight for Cooper, but the 42-year-old has been working on her comedy for years, even during her career in tech (She worked at Yahoo! and Google before quitting in 2014).



From Tik Tok to Netflix, comedian **SARAH COOPER**'s journey to her show, *Everything's Fine*, on the OTT channel has been quite an unexpected one

it's ultraviolet or just very powerful light," Trump said at the time. "I see the disinfectant where it knocks it out in a minute. One minute. And is there a way we can do something like that by injection inside or almost a cleaning?"

Comedian Sarah Cooper lip-synched the President and demonstrated "injecting" herself with a cleaning spray, posting the 49-second video, *How to Medical*, on TikTok in April. A mere four months later, Cooper was filming her own hour-long Netflix special alongside anyone's dream guest stars — Helen Mirren, Marisa Tomei, Ben Stiller, Jon Hamm, Winona Ryder, Jane Lynch, Fred Armisen and Maya Rudolph.

"Six months ago, I was in my living room making a TikTok video," Cooper said. She has been named as one of the Breakthrough Entertainers of 2020. "And then I'm on a golf course with a dolly shot and a crew. And I'm lip-synching the same guy that I've been lip-synching, but I'm doing it in a whole different scale. And so at that time, I had that moment of,

Seinfeld talking about why her videos were funny in an interview.

"The reason this is funny is because she doesn't think she's being funny," Seinfeld said. "When you think you're being funny, that's less funny for us as the audience. When you're being dead serious, that's funnier. You don't see her enjoying what she's doing — she's doing it because she has to do it. That's what's funny!"

Rudolph said she first saw one of Cooper's videos after a friend sent it to her, "laughing hysterically, saying, 'Isn't this fantastic?' I was just so impressed with just the natural joy of it," Rudolph added. "I felt like she just clicked into this thing that was coming out of her so effortlessly that it was making all of us laugh."

Cooper's Netflix special, *Sarah Cooper: Everything's Fine*, was the first project for Animal Pictures, Rudolph's new production company that she started with actor Natasha Lyonne, known for her work in *Russian Doll* and *Orange Is the New Black*. In the series, she tackles

just resonated much harder."

Rudolph and Lyonne said green-lighting Cooper's special was a no-brainer. "Sarah really epitomises somebody whose voice and a sense of humour and talent we want to help bring to the world. She had so much material to work with. It was really just a matter of helping her edit and then helping figure out how to bring these things to life and using all the experience that we had," said Rudolph.

It was clear Cooper was "ready for her moment. She knew it was her moment and she was not going to blow it. Sarah just showed up and crushed," Lyonne said.

In addition to helping her land the Netflix special, Cooper's lip-synching videos renewed interest in the books she's written, *100 Tricks to Appear Smart in Meetings* and *How to Be Successful Without Hurting Men's Feelings*. The latter is being turned into a sitcom for CBS, which Cooper is currently writing with Cindy Chupack (*Sex and the City* and *Modern Family*).

"Those videos have turned into the thing that I wanted to do this whole time, which is write for TV and create characters and tell stories," Cooper said. "I'm actually getting to do the thing that I've been wanting to do this whole time since I quit Google."

Now that Trump is on his way out of the Oval Office and her career is taking off, Cooper says the lip-synching videos will be something she does "just for fun every once in a while." She said, Looking back in my career, I evolve. I want to do something different. And the second anything gets kind of stale, I don't really want to do it anymore."

As for her success, it's something she's still processing. "I've been keeping a journal just to write down, 'Well, this happened today. I talked to Ben Stiller.' You know, because it's just so hard to comprehend. I think it's something that in a few years, I'll be able to look back and be like, 'Wow, that all happened really fast,'" she said.

—AP



Home in the hills

ITC forays into Himachal Pradesh with its first property in the state

With domestic travel witnessing a steady growth and people's rediscovered love for local attractions, tourists now have the chance of experiencing the rural charm of a Himachali village surrounded by thick canopies of Cedar trees. It's the perfect spot for those looking for a break from the mundane city life, in the untouched wilderness, amidst nature. It can be your home in the hills. Welcomhotel — ITC Hotels has now spread its footprint in Himachal Pradesh, launching its first property in Shimla.

Tucked away in an unexplored village with experiential stays, lush green expanse and breathtaking views of the hills, Welcomhotel Shimla comes as the ideal getaway destination for those wanting to reconnect with nature. As one leaves behind the bustling streets of Shimla city centre and drives uphill, the tranquil town of Mashobra is only half an hour away and is a beautiful haven for hophobles.

With a 25-hour check-in and check-out, it gives you an additional hour to explore more. It offers a view of the green splendour from its 47 rooms and suites overlooking the picturesque Mashobra valley. The views are panoramic and unparalleled. The building is laid out to receive maximum natural light and all guest room windows are designed at very specific angles to receive incessant sunlight from dusk to dawn.

The modern design philosophy has elements that add the old-world charm. The hotel is committed to sustainable measures. Its design team was mindful about the authenticity of the land. Aligning with its 'Responsible Luxury Philosophy' of conservation of resources, all grey water is treated in-house and used for horticulture. Non-carcinogenic wooden materials are used around the property and intelligent controls have been built in the elevators to maximise movement efficiency.

Speaking on the launch, Nakul Anand, Executive Director, ITC Ltd,

said, "With domestic travel and wellness experiences regaining popularity, we believe it is the perfect time to launch our latest Welcomhotel outpost in 'devbhoomi' Himachal Pradesh. With stunning 360-degree mountain views and striking architectural and interior design, we aim to attract discerning leisure and business travellers with our heightened safety measures in place and the quintessential hospitality at the forefront."

WelcomCafe Cedar, the all-day dining restaurant, offers fresh seasonal specialties from the region along with a holistic menu with signature Indian and international dishes. Guests will be in for a culinary treat with WelcomShalika, an assortment of popular regional dishes that come on a single platter, strengthening the 'Vocal for Local' cause. The ingredients are seasonal and locally sourced, supporting the farming community of the neighbourhood.

With over 3,186 sq ft spacious, seamless, indoor banquet spaces and a huge 3,477 sq ft outdoor venue called the 'Sunset Garden', surrounded by the majestic Himalayan range, the hotel can host both social and corporate events with élan. For wellness, the hotel will soon be opening 'K by Kaya Kalp'. The spa will offer signature, holistic therapies & personalised wellness experiences like Yoga and Zumba.

Perfect for a leisurely family getaway in the lap of snowcapped mountains, the hotel has indoor and outdoor activities like chess, kids' play room and guided local tours. The outdoor golf area is opening soon. Adding to experiences is bird watching with a local expert, walk with a local historian, cycling within the Shimla Wildlife Sanctuary or picnics and camping in the greens. For the young adults, 'Ollies Club' offers a range of activities like archery, skittle, croquet, badminton, table tennis, pool, board games and darts. Enjoy walks to Craignano Trail, Mashobra to Kalyani Helipad and Mashobra Valley Trail.

The Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh, Bhupesh Baghel's monthly radio programme, *Lokvaani*, is gaining immense popularity across states. So far, 13 episodes have been aired from all the centres of Akashwani. The 14th episode will be aired on January 10, 2021.

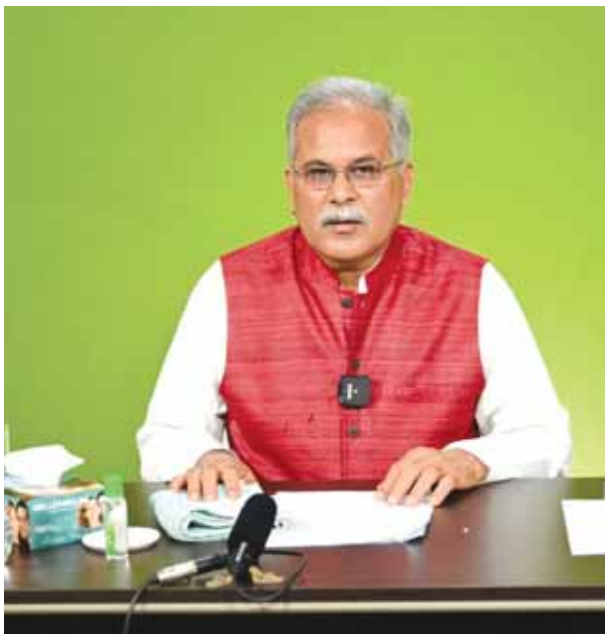
The programme is also simultaneously broadcasted on various FM channels and regional TV news channels. Through this programme, people of Chhattisgarh directly connect with the Chief Minister Baghel. Every episode is based on a different topic including agriculture, rural development, education, youth, health, maternal power, urban development, tribal development, women and equal opportunities, *Nyay Yojana* and sports.

The major part of Chhattisgarh's population lives in forest regions, where no mode of mass communication is available except radio. Under these circumstances, radio programme *Lokvaani* is the only source of information about government schemes and policies for people there. People not only receive information from the CM but also asks direct questions regarding his vision and action plan for future. The CM also gets the direct feedback of the government schemes from the common people. People in various cities eagerly wait for this programme to be aired as it is an important platform for them to directly connect with the Chief Minister.

Vishnu Paikra, a tribal farmer of the village Magarchaba in Balodabazar district, says that we listen to every episode of *Lokvaani*, sometimes at home and other times at the farm. He said that

FAR AND WIDE

Chhattisgarh CM BHUPESH BAGHEL's radio programme — *Lokvaani* — gains popularity across cities



it is heartening to know that the government cares for farmers and tribals. Megha, a Class 11th student of Janjgir, said that she received important information about the schemes being conducted for women's empowerment and economic prosperity from *Lokvaani*. The state government is doing a great job in educating women about their rights and giving them equal status and opportunities.

Ward Councilor Amit Das of Raipur, Mathpuraina, said that he got information about the steps being taken by state government towards providing high-level health facilities in government hospitals across the state. District President of Panchayat Saja, Omprakash Verma, said that *Lokvaani* has been started to communicate directly with the general public of the state.

Social activist Santosh Verma said that through the programme, Baghel patiently listens to the views and queries of the people. He gives detailed information about the work being done by the government for the betterment of agriculture sector and rural economy. All the episodes of the radio talk have been saved as a document on the website of Public Relations Department <http://dprcg.gov.in/>. Their audio files as well as transcript file are available on the website. The aired episodes can be read and heard anytime anywhere.

Jammu celebrates winter carnival



The Directorate of Tourism, Jammu, has organised a mega three days Winter Carnival 2020 at Patnitop to attract tourists. The three days Winter Carnival coincides with the New Year celebrations amid snowfall season, which is a major attraction for the tourists. The event was a confluence of local *dogri* art, ethnic cuisines, cultural performances and fun activities.

The Director of Tourism, Jammu, RK Katoch, KAS, along with IGP Jammu Mukesh Singh, IPS inaugurated the carnival. DIG Ramban Doda Kishtwar range Abdul Jabbar, IPS and SSP Ramban Haseeb-Ur-Rehman, KPS also graced the occasion with other dignitaries. The festival started with local *dogri kud* dance and *geetru* performances among other engaging performances by local artists. The main attraction of the inaugural day was the musical evening along with song, dance and live DJ performance which was appreciated by all the tourists.

The Directorate of Tourism, Jammu, in collaboration with Patnitop Development Authority intended to showcase local art,

culture, artifacts, ethnic food to the tourists visiting the snow-clad hills.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by CEO PDA Sachin Dev Singh Jamwal, KAS, Dy. Director Tourism (Jammu) Anil Kumar Chandail, KAS, ADT NHW-Batote Dr Umesh Shan, KAS among other officials of the Tourism Department, District Administration and Patnitop Development Authority.

Large number of tourists from all over India, especially UP, Gujarat, Kolkata, Punjab, Karnataka thronged the main meadow and enjoyed all the activities during the said event. The tourists appreciated the efforts of the Tourism Department for re-starting the tourism activities in the region and making elaborate arrangements for the celebration of snow festival on New Year's eve. There is a huge rush of tourists at Patnitop and the footfall has been increasing day by day. However, the said event is being managed by the Tourism Department while observing and following all the protocols which are in place regarding COVID-19.

DMF Sanjeevani establishes patient facilitation centre

There used to be a time when patients who were referred from Keonjhar to SCB, Medical College and Hospital (MCH), Cuttack, were completely on their own. When the patients, along with their attendants, reached SCB, they had to first understand the cumbersome task of admissions in the hospital and figure out different processes for availing various health services. If you were an illiterate belonging to the rural areas of Keonjhar, the entire process was daunting. There was no helping hand for the poor and the attendants of the patient had an additional burden to

understand the entire process of the hospital along with the pain and agony of their patients. People lost a lot of their valuable time and money in the entire process.

This scenario is common in almost all major hospitals across the country as many patients who are referred to such hospitals are generally unfamiliar with the place and surroundings, which adds to their misery. To address this problem, DMF Keonjhar came up with a unique and novel



project called 'DMF Sanjeevani', sanctioned for an amount of ₹1.45 crores. Karuna Trust was selected as a

partner agency to run the entire project and a team of coordinators were put in place.

Under the project, a Patient Facilitation Centre (PFC) was established at SCB to guide and provide logistical and hand-holding support to in-patients (IPDs) from Keonjhar and two of their attendants during their treatment at SCB. The dedicated team of patient facilitators provide necessary guidance to the patients 24 hours a day and throughout the year. Along with the PFC, an Attendant

Accommodation Centre (AAC) was also established to provide overnight accommodation and food (daily allowance) for a maximum of two attendants per patient.

After the launch of the project in March 2020, the entire referral process was reinvented. The coordinators track patients after being referred from DHH/DSHs till the time of arrival at Cuttack. Once the patients reach SCB, the coordinators receive the patients and guide them in the entire

admission process and ensure that they are admitted in appropriate in-patient (IPD) ward or department.

The referred patients are generally critical in nature and they require treatment for a longer duration. In such cases, the attendants go through a tough time with no proper facilities for them in the hospitals. The 'DMF Sanjeevani' project has provided great relief to the patients and the attendants; and the services have been widely appreciated by the people of Keonjhar. The project has facilitated more than 1,100 patients since its launch.

Shankar Dayal Singh's 83rd birthday celebrated

On the occasion of the 83rd birth anniversary of the noted Parliamentarian and Laureate Dr Shankar Dayal Singh, the Shankar Sanskriti Pratishthan hosted a webinar on the topic of *Education, Culture and Samskara* in his memory. The programme's chief guest, Manish Sisodia, Deputy Chief Minister of Delhi, recalled his first meeting with Dr Singh at the Rajbhasa Committee, when Dr Singh was a celebrated writer and a politician, while Sisodia was new to journalism. He remarked what a coincidence it was that today he was participating in a programme hosted in the memory of him, now as a politician himself. In his address, he stressed the need for policy measures that inculcate

emotional capabilities of students in the initial years and create an entrepreneurial mindset in high school.

The other panelists included Dr Pramath Raj Sinha, the chairman of Harappa Education, Dr Mahashweta Maharathi, the secretary of Rajgir Buddha Bihar Society, Dr Bal Ram Singh, professor, Institute of Advanced Sciences at Dartmouth, USA.

Dr Sinha noted that even though in-person education has a lot of advantages, there is a lack of qualified and trained teachers, especially in rural India and in government-run schools. The best way to ensure quality education in such circumstances might be to teach through technology. Digital is



the way forward, he believes. Dr Maharathi talked about recognising the value of traditional education in India that goes beyond just academics. From crafts, handlooms and sculptors to traditional artisans, India has a huge talent pool that currently remains untapped and must be made an essential element of when we talk about education. Dr Bal Ram Singh also noted the historic significance of India and its place in the world, stressing upon the need for more mainstreaming of traditional Indian knowledge such as ayurveda and yoga.

Shankar Sanskriti Pratishthan also congratulated Ranjit Singh Disale, the recent recipient of Global Teacher Award 2020 and noted his con-

tributions made to the field of education.

The programme was attended by over 500 people from India and across the world, garnering participants from USA, UK, Germany, France, Poland, Austria, Philippines and Australia. It was moderated by the son of Dr Shankar Dayal Singh, Ranjan Kumar Singh, an author. It was live streamed in Patna and across different villages in Bihar using digital medium. Women from self help groups congregated at Kamta Seva Kendra in Deo, Aurangabad, the birthplace of Dr Singh, to pay their regards and watch the programme live, a true demonstration of bridging urban divide through the use of technology.

Pause and reflect

The Minister of State for Tourism and Culture, PRAHLAD SINGH PATEL, takes a review meeting of *Adopt A Heritage: Apni Dharohar, Apni Pehchaan* project



The Minister of State for Tourism and Culture (I/C), Prahlad Singh Patel, took a review meeting of the *Adopt A Heritage: Apni Dharohar, Apni Pehchaan* project in New Delhi. Secretary Tourism Yogendra Tripathi, DG Tourism Meenakshi Sharma, JS Culture Sanjukta Mudgal, ADG Tourism Rupinder Brar and representatives of Archaeological Survey of India were present in the meeting.

A detailed presentation was given about the present status and progress at various monuments. Patel laid emphasis on timely completion of the projects and asked the officials to review the amenities proposed under the MoUs in discussion with the nodal departments from time to time.

He said that the project is a well-conceived initiative and hoped that by leveraging CSR, this would help in providing the basic amenities

such as cleanliness, safe drinking water, light and sounds in the lesser-known monuments.

The project, which runs under the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, is a collaborative effort by the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Culture, Archaeological Survey of India and State/ UTs Government. It aims to encourage companies from public sector, private sector, trusts, NGOs, individuals and other stakeholders to become *Monument Mitras* and take up the responsibility of developing and upgrading the basic and advanced tourist amenities at these sites as per their interest and viability in terms of a sustainable investment model under CSR.

With the year drawing to a close, while tourism is still strongly impacted by the travel restrictions around the world, Monaco Government Tourist Convention Authority is sending its best wishes to everyone who loves to travel, whether they are already familiar with the principality or are planning to visit once the crisis is over. Throughout this very special year, we have been keen to stay in touch with tourists around the world.

We hope more than ever to welcome tourists again. Monaco is a place for festivities and fun! The principality gets decked out in its most twinkling attire for New Year's eve. But keeping in mind the ongoing pandemic situation, Monaco is organising mini-islands of festive joy for small gatherings or in the open-air. The principality is determined not to let the health crisis ruin the New Year celebrations. That's why Monaco is looking to make advent a truly festive period this year. There will be illuminations and traditional nativity

Adventure is out there!

The Monaco Government Tourist Convention Authority sets the tone for hope with its *Wish You* campaign



scenes to admire from your car or from behind a mask. Nobody will be able to say that New Year has not been celebrated in style!

INTERACTIVE APPLICATIONS

True to its reputation as

a land of innovation, Monaco is always keen to explore new technologies and the results are often highly impressive. This is never truer than during the festive season. Two interactive applications are available to the public: Playmagic and

Playcolor Monaco. The first uses augmented reality to let users take selfies with Santa Claus against a glittering backdrop or play with different personalities. The second lets you become "master of lights" by changing the colours of certain illuminations.

LETTER TO SANTA

In Monaco, you can contact Santa Claus himself by email or letters sent via La Poste Monaco. Every letter will receive a reply!

ICE RINK AT PORT HERCULE

Don't worry, avid skaters will have their fill of fun this year! The ice rink remains open until March 7, 2021. In addition to the main ice rink, there is also a smaller ice rink for children to discover the joys of the ice, accompanied by their parents, with mini-skates to

place on their shoes.

SCALED DOWN CHRISTMAS VILLAGE

In view of the ongoing health situation and the resulting organisational restrictions, the principality will be unable to maintain the Christmas village in its traditional format. Instead, a much-reduced version has been set up at the Port of Monaco from December 4 to January 3 with four attractions for children — hook-a-duck, the traditional Carousel, a new merry-go-round named *Reindeer Ride*, and another in the shape of a Christmas tree.

Monaco is known for its glittering reputation, be it the shine of the supercars to the shimmer of the Mediterranean Sea via the many luminaries residing here. New Year will be smaller but as festive as ever!

IN SHORT



The Board of Directors of RITES Ltd, (NSE: RITES, BSE: 541556) an infrastructure consultancy and engineering company, at its meeting declared an interim dividend of ₹5 per share on face value of ₹10 each amounting to ₹120.15 crore (at the rate of 50 per cent of paid-up capital). The record date for the purpose of payment of dividend is January 11, 2021. Standalone revenue of the company for the first half of FY21 has been ₹488 crore and profit after tax has been ₹131 crore.

Dr Rajendra Prasad Singh, former CMD, Powergrid, ex-chairman BOG (IIT-Guwahati) and current chairman BOG (IIT-Bhubaneswar), has been appointed as a member of Nirman Samiti of Virat Ramayan Mandir to be built at Kesaria in Ram Janaki Marg connecting Ayodhya to Janakpur. Dr Singh is known for contributing to the society and has been a proponent of supporting cultural setups. He is known for his contributions in the Indian power sector, particularly the establishment of the national power transmission grid and modern load dispatch centers. He was responsible for restoration and normalisation of grid operation during natural calamities in India. Under his leadership as CMD Powergrid, during the Odisha cyclone, power supply was restored in record 11 days against projected six months. In Bhuj, Gujarat, the damaged electrical systems were fixed before the onset of monsoons as desired by the then Prime Minister.



Piyush Goyal, Minister of Railways, reviewed the progress of the ongoing USBRL (Udhampur Srinagar Baramulla Rail Link) National Project in Jammu and Kashmir. VK Yadav, CEO and chairman, Railway Board and Ashutosh Gangal, GM, Northern Railway were also present in the meeting held via video conferencing. Vijay Sharma, Chief Administrative Officer/ Construction USBRL Project apprised Goyal about the latest status of work on the last leg of the project between Katra-Banihal. Construction of the first three phases of the project has been completed and the line is in operational use for running of the trains between Baramulla-Banihal in Kashmir valley and Jammu-Udhampur-Katra in Jammu region. Work on the intervening 111 km section — Katra-Banihal — the most arduous and treacherous portion due to its geology and extensive riverine system replete with deep gorges is ongoing. Three agencies — IRCON, KRCL and Northern Railway — with extensive experience in construction of rail lines are involved in this project. Many international agencies and premier Indian institutes like IIT Roorkee, IIT Delhi, DRDO and Geographical Survey of India are providing expertise in planning and implementation.



issues and complainants of the investors, grievance redressal procedures. The final session was shared by B Karthik, Head of the Tamil Nadu region, Central Depository Service Limited. He enlightened the students by sharing about the securities depository and its purposes. He also emphasised the role of the depository institutions in India.

NDMC approves 37 proposals

New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) in its meeting considered 37 proposals under the chairmanship of Arvind Kejriwal, CM, Delhi. The council approved the following proposals:

NDMC has been adjudged as the National Cleanest Capital in *Swachh Survekshan 2020*. The council has passed a resolution for declaring NDMC as a 7-star rated urban local body.

The council has approved the proposal for payment of an amount of ₹200 to the students of class-10th and class-12th of NDMC/Navvyug Schools towards data package cost through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) for attending online teaching learning activities till the schools are closed. The council has approved the proposal for going ahead with redevelopment of Khan Market Community Centre (KMCC), New Delhi.

The council has approved for revision of renewal of Health License to five years from three years at present. This is in order to achieve ease of doing business for all trades and mentioned under Section-327 to 331 of NDMC Act 1994.

The council has approved for sending a proposal to Ministry of Home Affairs for considering regularisation of 63 contractual doctors by amending the existing Recruitment Rules of the respective cadre of doctors (i.e. Allopathy, Ayurvedic Physician and Homoeopathy Physician).

The council has approved the revision of remuneration of salary and allowances to contractual doctors in NDMC as per 7th CPC pay scales.

The council has approved the proposal for construction of 160 Type-III Flats at Sector-VI, Pusp Vihar, Saket, New Delhi (Composite work).

Defining moments

The year 2020, perhaps, saw the least amount of competitive sport being played globally due to the unprecedented circumstances created by the coronavirus pandemic. The Olympics were cancelled and most major sporting events were rescheduled, curtailed or played in empty arenas. But even in an interrupted season, the theatre of sport continued to provide respite and drama, controversy and upliftment. Records were broken, new heights reached and fresh voices emerged in a year when the role of an athlete transcended the sport they played. PIONEER SPORT look at some of the memorable sporting moments of 2020

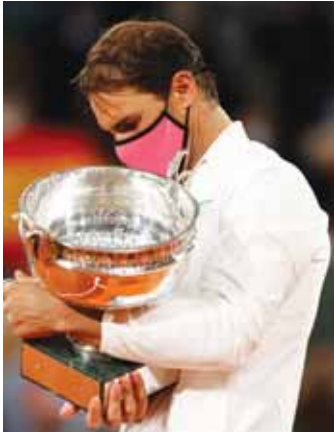
SEE YOU NEXT YEAR

In the biggest sporting causality of 2020, International Olympic Committee and Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee in a joint statement on March 24, postponed the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 by an year.

Originally scheduled to be held from 24 July-9 August 2020, the Games were moved to next year due to the developing global situation in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, they will retain the Tokyo 2020 name.

The announcement came 122 days before the planned Opening Ceremony at the newly-built National Stadium in the Japanese capital.

While the Olympic Games have previously been cancelled during wartime, this is the first postponement of a Games.



LUCKY 13 TAKES NADAL TO RECORD 20TH MAJOR

Rafael Nadal skipped the US Open but there was no way the Spaniard was going to miss his sig-



nature event, the French Open which took place at a blustery Roland Garros in a rearranged late September/early October slot.

Inevitably, and without dropping a set on the way, Nadal bulldozed his way to the final where he met Djokovic who was keen to atone for his mishap at Flushing Meadows. It was barely a contest with Nadal winning 6-0, 6-2, 7-5 to claim a 13th French Open title and match Federer's record of 20 major wins.

OSAKA SPEAKS OUT WITH HER MASKS

Naomi Osaka led the way for athlete activism in tennis in 2020 with her stand for the Black Lives Matter movement.

She attended a peaceful protest in Minneapolis in the wake of George Floyd's death, wrote an op-ed about racism and *Black Lives Matter* and later joined the US Sports boycott. Memorably, she wore facemasks with different names of black victims of police bru-



tility at the US Open. After her first match, she said she had prepared seven masks with the aim to reach the final; and got the chance to sport them all as she banished her demons to win a thrilling US Open final for her third Grand Slam title.

DJOKOVIC'S SENSATIONAL DISQUALIFICATION



World No 1 Novak Djokovic went into the US Open looking for an 18th Major triumph in the knowledge that Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal were absent. Going into his fourth-round match against 20th seed Pablo Carreno Busta, the Serb had not lost a singles match in 2020.

It all went wrong though when the 33-year-old vented his frustration after dropping his service by hitting a ball behind him, striking

a female line judge in the throat. Djokovic immediately apologised but after a lengthy discussion, he was disqualified, leaving the field open for Dominic Thiem.

SWIATEK TAKES POLE POSITION AT ROLAND GARROS

Iga Swiatek was ranked 54th in the world when she travelled to Roland Garros. Two weeks later, after seeing off Australian Open champ Sofia Kenin in the final, the 19-year-old had risen to No 17 and had become the first Pole to win a Grand Slam singles title.

It was a breathtaking fortnight for Swiatek who capitalised on the absence of world No 1 Ashleigh Barty and the early exit through injury of Serena Williams to become the youngest female singles winner since Monica Seles in 1992.



WIMBLEDON CANCELLED



Wimbledon organisers scrapped the oldest Grand Slam tennis tournament for the first time since World War II because of coronavirus pandemic impact.

The only grasscourt major at London's All England Club was due to run for two weeks from June 29, but tournament chiefs bowed to the inevitable, saying in a statement on April 1, that they had made the decision with "great regret".

Organisers had earlier ruled out playing the event behind closed doors while postponing it would also have created its own problems, with shorter days later in the English summer.

LIN DAN CALLS TIME



Lin Dan, arguably the greatest badminton player of the 21st century, announced his retirement from the sport. Lin, who won two Olympic Golds and five World titles, dominated men's singles badminton for about a decade along with Malaysians Lee Chong Wei.

Lin was at his best in the big matches and was the kind of player who saved his best for the biggest moments. In an eight year period between 2006 and 2014, he won almost every major final he played in, including five Worlds, two Olympics and two Asian Games Golds. He was particularly dominant against Lee Chong Wei and Chen Long, who were easily the best players of his generation besides him.

ATHLETICS FINDS A NEW STAR



When pole vaulter Armand Duplantis set a new world record of 6.18m in an indoor meet in Glasgow in February a week after clearing 6.17m, the sport of track and field had a new star. The US-based Swede with the teen movie looks then produced the highest outdoor vault of all time (6.15m) and finished the year undefeated in 16 competitions.

HAMILTON MATCHES SCHUMACHER'S RECORD



When Michael Schumacher bowed out of Formula One, few thought his record of 91 Grand Prix wins and seven world championships would ever be matched. In 2020, Lewis Hamilton did just that, winning 11 of the 17 races to take his tally beyond Schumacher's record to 95, and equalling the German's seven titles.

The 35-year-old Briton certainly benefitted from the outstanding Mercedes car at his disposal but there is little doubt he has etched his name firmly among the greatest of his sport.

LOCAL EVENTS

UP TIMBER LIFT TROPHY

UP Timber crushed Parth Cricket Academy by 82 runs to lift the 2nd Bansal Sports Trophy at Microliit Gymkhana ground on Wednesday. Batting first, UP Timber piled up 236 runs for the loss of six wickets in the allotted 40 overs with the help of an unbeaten ton by Mohit Yadav. In reply, Paarth Academy were bundled out for 154 runs in 33.1 overs. Mohd Shahbaz Khan claimed a five-wicket haul.

BRIEF SCORES:
UPT: 236 (Mohit 107, Vipraj 63; Manish Yadav 39/3)
PCA: 154 (Pawan 27, Amjad 25, Manish 22; Md Shahbaz 20/5, Abhishek 25/2)

TANISHQ EMERGES WINNER



Tanishq Gupta played a draw with Prithvi Singh to emerge winner in the 4th Shail Bala Memorial Open Chess tournament at Precision Chess Academy on Wednesday. Prithvi finished second while Shivam Pandey stood 3rd. Arjun Singh and Aman Agarwal split the point to finish 4th and 5th respectively with 3.5 points each.

VARUN SHINES

Varun Singh's allround performance helped Dhruv Sports Promotion beat Lucknow Hunterz by 38 runs in a 'D' division match of the 16th BBD League at Akhilesh Das Stadium on Wednesday. **BRIEF SCORES:**
DSP: 197 (Varun 81, Yash 35; Mohd Arif 26/3, Ritesh 40/2)
LH: 159 (Mohd Arif 41, Saif Khan 28, Ashutosh 20; Harshit 16/3, Varun 20/3).

LIFECARE ENTER POFS

Lifecare Cricket Club thrashed KVS Cricket Club by 166 runs in the 16th BBD League 'D' division match at AR Jaipuria ground on Wednesday. **BRIEF SCORES:**
LCC: 247 (Mukul 86, Arbaaz 59, Manish 30; Shivam 31/2)
KVSCC: 81 (Utkarsh 32; Tushar 1/3, Himanshu 17/2, Rohit 21/2).

Where will Rohit bat?

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The five-bowler strategy worked out perfectly for India in Melbourne but the Ajinkya Rahane-led side has some tough calls to make in the batting department, especially the opening slot, ahead of the third Test against Australia in Sydney with Rohit Sharma available for selection.

His elevation as a Test opener in the home series against South Africa last year was a huge success but lack of match practice and the circumstances in which he has arrived in Australia don't make Rohit a certain starter at the top of the order.

"We will have a chat with him to see where he is placed physically because he has been in quarantine for the last couple of weeks. Also got to see how he feels before we take the call," said head coach Ravi Shastri.

Rohit joined the squad in Melbourne on Wednesday.

With Shubman Gill showing calmness and maturity beyond his age in his debut Test, the team is likely to fit in Rohit either at the expense of Mayank Agarwal at the top or Hanuma Vihari in the middle-order.

Agarwal's form has been rather poor in the ongoing series and he has managed to touch double figures just once. He hasn't looked the solid batsman that

India discovered here in 2018. But it would nonetheless be a huge call if the team management decides to bench him.

The away series in New Zealand earlier this year would have been Rohit's first real test as an opener but he got injured in the middle of the tour.

Considering he is coming back from another injury and his last game was the IPL final on November 10, the challenge Down Under seems to be much tougher, irrespective of his batting position.

Former chief selector MSK Prasad feels dropping either Agarwal, who has struggled so far, and Vihari seems to be the only way to accommodate Rohit.

Though Rohit opened for the first time in his tenure, Prasad is not sure if the champion batsman would be wanting to open due to lack of match practice. "It will be a toss up between Mayank and Vihari. Dropping Mayank will be a tough call since he has scored hundreds and double hundreds over the last 18 months.

"I am still not sure about Rohit opening because he is coming after a long break. Will he prefer to open or bat in the middle order? That is another question," Prasad told PTI.

"And what kind of role the team management is expecting from Rohit. That is also a factor. Whether they want to Rohit to give the team a flying start or anchor the innings in the middle?" he added.



Warner, Pucovski return for 3rd Test, Burns out

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Australia on Wednesday A brought back David Warner and Will Pucovski to bolster their under-fire batting line-up for the remainder of the Test series against India and dropped struggling opener Joe Burns.

Burns just has a half-century to show in his four innings and has been struggling for form for some time now. He has managed scores of 8, 51 not out, 0 and 4 in Adelaide and Melbourne. The series is locked 1-1 after India won the second Test in Melbourne on Monday.

With Warner, who missed out a major chunk of the India assignment due to a groin injury, looking fit for the job, dropping Burns was an easy decision to make.

"Joe Burns has been released from the squad and will return to the Brisbane Heat. Unfortunately, Joe's returns haven't been what he or the selectors would like or what we consider he is capable of," National selector Trevor Hohns said in a statement.

"David Warner, Will Pucovski and Sean Abbott will rejoin the squad in Melbourne tomorrow evening in prepara-



tion for the Sydney Test," he added. Hohns said Warner would be given every chance to be back in the XI for the third Test starting January 7 in Sydney.

"David has made strong progress in his recovery from injury and will be given every chance to play in Sydney with another seven days until the match. Sean has fully recovered from a calf strain and is also available for selection."

Talking about Pucovski, who suffered a concussion during a practice game, Hohns said, "Will is in the final stages of the graduated return to play protocols and has been symptom free for some time. He will be fit to play in Sydney subject to completing the return to play protocols and an independent assessment."

New Zealand go top after thrilling win

AP ■ MOUNT MAUNGANUI

New Zealand beat Pakistan by 101 runs in the first cricket Test which ended very late on the fifth day Wednesday, achieving their third straight win in three home Tests this summer and taking a 1-0 lead in the two-test series.

At the same time New Zealand overtook Australia to claim the No. 1 world ranking in Tests for the first time in its history.

The victory wasn't the emphatic one New Zealand likely had envisaged when they came to the fifth day of a test match for the first time this season holding a sizeable advantage.

Having been set 373 to win, Pakistan was 71-3 - still 301 runs behind - and the New Zealand bowlers who had dismissed Pakistan for 239 in its first innings to give the home side a 192-run lead, still held the upper hand.

Pakistan finally was out for 271 at 6.36 p.m. Local time with



fewer than five overs left in the day's play and a draw beckoning.

Left-arm spinner Mitchell Santner dismissed No. 11 batsman Naseem Shah to clinch the win after Naseem and Shaheen Afridi had defied New Zealand for almost eight overs as the number of balls remaining in the day dwindled.

"For all money it was going to be a draw until late in the piece.

The final day didn't unfold in quite the way New Zealand had hoped or even begun to expect

when Trent Boult dismissed the overnight batsman Azhar Ali (38) in the second over of the day.

The early blow seemed to make a quick resolution more likely. But Fawad Alam and Mohammad Rizwan, who came together when Azhar was out, took the script New Zealand had conceived for the day and almost turned it on its head.

Far from capitulating quickly, the fifth wicket pair established a magnificent partnership under pressure and led one of the finest

acts of resistance a New Zealand test has produced on its last day.

In conditions which were never congenial for batting - the ball still occasionally reared from a length or jagged from a crack in the Bay Oval pitch in Mount Maunganui - they batted through all of the first two sessions and into the last to fuel Pakistan's hopes a draw. There were a minimum of 90 overs to be bowled when the day began, more than enough for New Zealand to achieve the seven wickets in needed for a draw. For the batting side, a long day stretched ahead and an effort an effort of enormous character would be required to survive the day.

A Pakistan win likely was off the table even at the start. With more than 300 runs needed for victory on a wearing day pitch, an attempt to reach the winning target likely would have been.

Instead, Fawad and Rizwan put on 165 for Pakistan's fifth wicket. More importantly, they defied

the New Zealand bowlers for 285 minutes - almost five hours - taking Pakistan into the final session with six overs still intact.

At that point the match seemed in the balance. New Zealand had taken only one wicket - Azhar's - in the first two sessions and that had become a remote memory when the last session began.

Fawad and Rizwan's stand had begun to seem impregnable. They had assembled a 50 partnership from 132 balls, their century stand from 270, 150 runs together from 328. Throughout the day there were moments of alarm or danger when the ball beat the edge or grazed the stumps. But the pair batted on and on and their endurance lifted Pakistan's spirits.

Fawad was still able to produce a full array of shots. He reached his half century from 149 balls early in the second session, then his century - richly deserved - his 102 coming from 236 balls with 14 boundaries.

SINGLES



To spread awareness and expand his work to support para-athletes as well, Arjun Pandey (founder of Kicking Gender Boundaries and winner of Prime Minister's National Child Award 2020) organized an online webinar and brought 5 para-athletes as well as the renowned Dr. Deepa Malik to educate teenagers and adults across the country

ROHIT JOINS UPBEAT INDIAN TEAM

MELBOURNE: Star batsman Rohit Sharma on Wednesday joined the Indian team here after completing his two-week quarantine in Sydney, bolstering the tourists who are on a high after scripting an incredible comeback in the ongoing four-match Test series against Australia. Days after recording their lowest Test total of 36 in the series-opener in Adelaide, the Indian team staged a remarkable turnaround to humble Australia by eight wickets and level the rubber at the MCG. Rohit's inclusion will strengthen the team that was going through one of its worst phases last week. "So how was your quarantine, my friend," chief coach Ravi Shastri was heard asking Rohit in a video posted by BCCI.

SREESANTH IN KERALA PROBABLES LIST

NEW DELHI: Former India pacer S Sreesanth is all set to play in domestic cricket as he was included in the Kerala list of players for the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 tournament scheduled for early next month, ending his long wait after completing a seven-year-ban on charges of match-fixing. Sreesanth, who was banned by the BCCI over his alleged involvement in spot fixing in the IPL, features in the list of players for the Kerala cricket team announced by the state cricket board for the T20 event in Mumbai scheduled from January 10. His seven year ban ended in September this year.

IND RETAIN SECOND SPOT IN RANKINGS

DUBAI: India kept themselves in contention of competing in the final of the ICC World Test Championship next year after winning the Melbourne Test that helped them retain their second spot in the updated points table, released on Wednesday. India bagged 30 points for their eight-wicket win. They are placed second with 390 points and a 72.2 percentage of points (PCT). Australia continues to occupy the top spot despite losing the Boxing Day Test and copping penalty for maintaining a slow over-rate against India. They now have 322 points with a 76.6 PCT. "New Zealand keep themselves in contention of making it to the final of the ICC World Test Championship

XTRALIVING ORGANISES NATIONAL LEVEL QUIZ

NEW DELHI: Xtraliving Pvt Ltd, a leading Health Wellness & Fitness company, is organising a pan India competition in association with Directorate of Sports, Maharashtra. eNERGIZE-National Level Quiz Competition is based on Nutrition, Fitness and Sports. The primary objective is to encourage 4-17 years old students to develop healthy habits around movement, nutrition and recovery. The competition will be conducted in 4 rounds in which quiz questions will be age-appropriate. The event will start on 2nd Jan 2021.

Agencies