

**OPINION 6**  
WHY MODI STILL STANDS TALL

**WORLD 8**  
26/11: EXTRADITION HEARING FOR TAHAWWUR RANA TO BE HELD ON FEB 12

**SPORT 12**  
WARNER OUT OF WHITE BALL SERIES

Published From  
DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR  
RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH  
DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

\*Late City Vol. 13 Issue 323  
\*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

RANCHI, TUESDAY DECEMBER 1, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3



# the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com



DEOLS  
ANNOUNCE  
THEIR NEW FILM  
10 VIVACITY

## It's decisive battle, heed our 'man ki baat': Farmers

Protesters refuse to budge, more farmers head to protest sites; Delhi Police places concrete barriers at all entry points to Delhi; heavy traffic jam in parts of Capital

SHEKHAR SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Refusing to listen to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's assertion that the farm laws are in farmers' favour, farmers on Monday said they have come to the national Capital for a "decisive battle" and urged Modi to listen to their "mann ki baat".

More protesters covered near the borders of the national Capital as the protest appeared to intensify, prompting the Delhi Police to enhance security and place concrete barriers at all entry points from Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. The protesting farmers refused to budge from their demands and stayed put at the border, leading to traffic snarls in parts of the national Capital as the Delhi Police kept the Singhu and Tikri borders closed and heightened checking at other places.

Addressing a Press conference at Singhu border, a representative of protesting farmers said they will continue their agitation until their demands are met.

"Our demands are non-negotiable. We have come here to fight a decisive battle," Jagmohan Singh, general secretary Bhartiya Kisan Union (Dakaunda), said and claimed the ruling party will have to pay a heavy price if it does not heed to their concerns.

"We will remain at Delhi borders and make our strategy from here. We have come to Delhi to ask the PM to listen to 'mann ki baat' of farmers, else the Government and the ruling party will have to pay a heavy price..." he said.

BKU Haryana president

### SUPPLY OF VEGETABLES, FRUITS FROM OTHER STATES IMPACTED

New Delhi: The supply of vegetables and fruits to the city from other States has been impacted and it has been halved at Azadpur Mandi, one of Delhi's largest wholesale market, owing to the protest by farmers at the Singhu and Tikri border points of Delhi for the last five days.

Gurnam Singh Chaduni said around 31 cases have so far been registered against protesters to "suppress" their agitation, adding that farmers will continue their stir until their demands are met.

The Delhi Police has filed an FIR in connection with the violence that broke out during the protest by farmers at Singhu border on November 27. "The case has been registered under sections of rioting, unlawful assembly, destruction of public property, assaulting public servants," said the senior police official.

Delhi Police Commissioner SN Shrivastava visited Singhu border to take stock of the security arrangements. "They (farmers) have been given an offer and the

arrangements are better at the Burari instead on the road. On the road, there are issues for commuting. Here, there is no toilet or water, whereas the arrangements in Burari are better. The police have made good arrangements and we are ready for any situation," he said.

Cemented barriers and multi-layered barricades have also been put up at Ghazipur border near UP gate where many farmers have been protesting since Saturday.

Former AAP leader Yogendra Yadav, who is also a member of Akhil Bhartiya Sangharsh Samanvay Samiti's national working group, alleged that five lies are being spread about the farmers' agitation including that only farmers from Punjab were protesting.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah had appealed to the farmers to shift to the Burari ground and had said the Centre is ready to hold discussions with them as soon as they move to the designated place.

A meeting of over 30 farmer groups on Sunday rejected Shah's offer for talks before the scheduled date of December 3 and demanded an unconditional dialogue.

Thousands of protesters are to spend another night in the cold at the Singhu and Tikri border points.

Meanwhile, traffic woes continue in Delhi amid farmers' protest. The closure of borders has also resulted in heavy traffic on other alternate routes between Delhi and Haryana.

## Modi: Opp misleading farmers, maligning our pious intention

Govt has fulfilled promises to raise farmers' income, asserts PM

RAMESH K SINGH ■ VARANASI

Defending farm reform laws, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday launched a scathing attack on the Opposition parties for misleading the farmers saying those who have a long history of doing wrongs with the people are now deliberately misleading the farmers though "our intention is pious like the sacred water of the Ganga".

Without naming any party or referring to the ongoing agitation of the farmers of Punjab, he said unlike our predecessors we believe in fulfilling our promises.

Addressing a public meeting at Khazuri on the outskirts of Varanasi, his Parliamentary constituency here, on Monday after inaugurating six-lane widening project of about 73-km-long route between Raja



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit to Kashi Vishwanath Mandir in Varanasi on Monday

Talab and Handia on Varanasi-Prayagraj route constructed with a cost of ₹2,447 crore, he said his Government has given alternatives and options to farmers through farm laws whereas earlier they were not allowed to make any deals outside the mandis (markets). "It is a truth that through our reforms we have not only given strength to the farmers but also taken steps for making mandis more modern," he said.

The PM also criticised those who are misleading the

farmers on the issues of MSP. "On the MSP the Opposition was misguiding the farmers whereas his Government has tried to give strength to all the farmers including small and marginal ones so that they can not only increase their crop production but also income. We have implemented the recommendations of Swaminathan Commission which has suggested increasing earnings to the farmers by one hand half times their total cost of production," he said.



Farmers gather at the Singhu border during their ongoing Delhi Chalo protest against Centre's farm laws in New Delhi on Monday

Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

## Withdraw farm laws at once or will have to rethink support to Centre, says RLD

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) ally Rashtriya Loktantrik Party (RLP) has asked the Centre to immediately withdraw the farm laws otherwise he will have to "reconsider party's support to the Centre".

RLP convener and Nagaur MP Hanuman Beniwal tweeted, "RLP is a partner of the NDA, but its strength lies in youth and farmers, and if prompt action is not taken in this matter in the interest of farmers, I will have to reconsider on being part of the NDA. At the same time, all recommendations of the Swaminathan Commission should be implemented!"

## NRIs raise voice, fund stir

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Funds and support are pouring in from the non-resident Indians (NRIs) for protesting farmers from Canada, Italy, the US, the UK, Philippines and France.

An NRI from Canada donated 50,000 Canadian dollars (₹25 lakh) while a United Kingdom-based NRI donated ₹10 lakh for providing langar to protesting farmers. Three NRIs residing in Manila have sent ₹1 lakh to Bharatiya Kisan Union (Ekta Dakaunda) in support of the protest.

Besides getting funds from NRIs, farmers have also got support from prominent celebrities belonging to Punjab. English cricketer Monty Panesar and Canada Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan supported the farmers' stir. Panesar questioned what protections are available for the farmer as a result of the new



to uphold this fundamental right."

Raja Dhaliwal of Canada's "World Financial Group" has donated 50,000 Canadian dollars (₹25 lakh) for providing langar to the farmers. Dhaliwal, while releasing the video message through video conferencing, said it had been decided to do this work dedicated to the doctrine of Guru Nanak Sahib. He said he stood by the farmers and would also raise his voice for economic, community and political support.

NDP leader in Canada Jagmeet Singh tweeted, "The violence perpetrated by the Indian govt against farmers peacefully protesting is appalling. I stand in solidarity with the farmers from Punjab and across India - and, I call on the Indian govt to engage in peaceful dialogue rather than violence."

## Covid-19: Active cases drop close to 2,000

One casualty in Dhanbad

PNS ■ RANCHI

The count of active cases of Covid-19 infection in Jharkhand dropped close to 2000 on Monday as at least 288 Covid patients recovered from the infection in the past 24 hours against 167 fresh cases of infection surfacing during the same period, figures compiled by the state health department highlighted.

At least four districts did not report even a single case of Covid-19 on the day, while 14 districts reported a single-digit spike in the Covid caseload, a bulletin released by the National Health Mission (NHM) on Monday evening stated.

As many as 59 people were found infected in Ranchi on Sunday, while 106 patients recovered from the infection here, bringing the number of active cases down at 734. East Singhbhum, on the other hand, reported 22 fresh cases against 23 recoveries. The number of active cases in East Singhbhum was 306 on Monday night.

Meanwhile, one more Covid-19 patient, a resident of Dhanbad, died during treatment on the day, taking the



A health worker collects swab samples from a man for COVID test at a COVID testing centre in Ranchi on Monday

Covid toll in the state up at 964, the NHM bulletin stated. So far, Dhanbad has reported 91 Covid casualties, while East Singhbhum and Ranchi have reported 351 and 195 fatalities respectively.

Among other districts, Bokaro reported eight fresh cases, while Dhanbad reported nine cases. At least 17 fresh cases surfaced in West Singhbhum and 12 people were found infected in Saraikela, revealed government data.

The government on Monday tested swab samples of 30,813 people and around 0.50 per cent of them were found infected. So far, health workers have collected swab samples of

41.93 lakh people and tested 41.78 lakh of them. Of the nearly 42 lakh people tested, at least 1,09,151 were found Covid positive and 1,06,171 of them have recovered.

On Monday, as many as 2016 people were battling the virus in Jharkhand. As per government data, more than half of the active cases in Jharkhand were from East Singhbhum and Ranchi - two of the worst-affected districts in Jharkhand in terms of Covid cases and fatalities.

As per government data, the growth rate of the virus in Jharkhand was 0.16 per cent against the national average of 0.39 per cent.

## State moving in positive direction: CM

Soren greets people on Kartik Purnima, Prakash Parv

PNS ■ RANCHI/BERMO

Extending good wishes to the people of the State on the occasion of Kartik Purnima and Guru Parv on Monday Chief Minister Hemant Soren said that with the help of common masses and social organisations during COVID-19 times the State is moving in a positive direction. The situation of the State in terms of safety from Coronavirus infection is better in Jharkhand in comparison to other states, he said.

Soren said, "On the auspicious occasion of Guru Parv, I extend many congratulations and best wishes to the Sikh community on my behalf and on behalf of the State government. All of us have faced a challenging year with the Corona infection. In the challenging year of pandemic, we are working to advance by saving our faith, religion and tradition." The CM was addressing people at the Prakash Parv programme organized on the occasion of Guru Parv, He had come to the place. "The movement that used to take place earlier, the environment used to be lived can never be forgotten. Despite the earlier initiatives due to Corona infec-



Chief Minister Hemant Soren offers his prayer at Lugu Buru Ghanta Badi Mandir in Bokaro district on Monday

tion, our face and mind are not depressed because we all understand the current situation. The people of Sikh community in particular have played an important role in this Coronavirus period. Today, even in the war of this infection, this campus is open 24 hours for human service, facing every challenge. With the help of each other, we will work to advance this State in every field," he said, requesting the attendees to celebrate Shri Guru Nanak Jayanti with respect and to be always ready for human service.

On this occasion, members of Jharkhand Pradesh Gurdwara Committee and people of Sikh community were



Chief Minister Hemant Soren speaks on the occasion of Guru Nanak Dev Ji's Prakash Parv in Ranchi on Monday

present in large numbers. On the occasion of Kartik Purnima, The CM also attended a special ritual organized at Lugu Buru Ghanta Bari Dhorom Garh at Lalpaniya in Bokaro district. He worshipped Lugu Baba in full rituals and traditional manner. The CM said that today is a very special day for many religions. Special puja rituals have been organized in this holy place of santhals with Guru Purnima and Guru Nanak Jayanti. It gives us the message of religious tolerance, he said.

The CM said that this is a symbol of the unwavering faith of holy religious heritage schools. "Here the glorious past of the santhals is con-

nected. People from various countries from all over the world have been attending the International Santhal Conference to be held here on the occasion of Karthik Purnima, but this year it is not being held due to the Corona epidemic. The traditional system of Santhal Conference held here every year remains intact, due to which I have come here to participate in the worship rituals in a symbolic way," he said.

The Chief Minister said that the risk of corona infection is not over yet, so there is a need to take precautions and caution. "With your help, we will be able to win the battle of Corona," he said.

**The CM said that earlier on the occasion of Guru Parv, He had come to the place. "The movement that used to take place earlier, the environment used to be lived can never be forgotten"**

# CII-IWN organises session on 'Will to Win'



PNS ■ JAMSHEDPUR

Confederation of Indian Industry-Indian Women Network (CII-IWN) Jharkhand Chapter in association with India@75 organised a session with women professionals and entrepreneurs who began their professional and entrepreneurial journey surpassing all the challenges thrown their way and emerging victorious.

The session showcased the journeys of some of the dynamic Indian women leaders, who have set benchmarks in their chosen fields. The session deliberated on women professionals and entrepreneurs of today who are chartering unknown territories unabashedly and fearlessly to achieve their goals.

Addressing the session Atrayee Sarkar Sanyal, Vice President-Human Resource Management (Designate), Tata Steel Limited said that the fire within an individual should never get extinguished and with great enthusiasm one should be focused towards one's goal irrespective of what comes until

one achieves their desired goal with proper planning and execution, she also said to always make a difference to the lives of people and do good to people and advised participants to always be curious and ask questions.

Addressing the Session Dr Rupali Basu, Director & CEO, Woodlands Hospital said that the things that matter to succeed and win are superior technical intelligence, uninfluenced integrity, unhindered focus, execution with highest possible standards, passion to deliver and resilience to overcome bad times; what doesn't matter is one's gender, geography or genes.

Addressing the session Dr Saumya Singh, Head, Department of Management Studies and Centre of Innovation & Associate Dean, Incubation and Entrepreneurship, Indian Institute of Technology (Indian School of Mines) said that Even though things have changed, yet the glass ceiling is still there to venture out for an

independent career. But if I try to recapitulate my experience things are certainly improving. With the moral conditioning we have been brought up with, we often are found to be asking questions to ourselves about who we are, how strong we are, what have we been able to achieve, what could we have achieved more had the situations been more favorable, can we make situations more favorable to our daughters who are going to take the lead further and so on.

Swastika Basu, chairwoman, CII-IWN Jharkhand Chapter & Chief-Enterprise Risk Management, Tata Steel Limited moderated the session and stated that "these women of substance have forayed paths not only for themselves but also portrayed success stories for their peers. Their stories are the stories of grit, determination and positivity and the courage that is inherent in a woman to face the challenges of life, the courage to break stereotypes and the courage of not limiting their ambitions".

# Tribal woman was murdered in Giridih

PNS ■ GIRIDIH

A tribal woman was killed with a sharp weapon at Bhaluvahi village of Alagunda panchayat under Mufassil police station area here on Sunday night. Mufassil police station in-charge Ratnesh Mohan Thakur confirmed the incident.

After receiving the information, the Mufassil police station reached the spot and took Mathura Soren, husband of the deceased in their custody, for questioning.

According to reports the Muffasil police reached the spot late on Sunday night after receiving information about the murder of the deceased Manodi Devi.

On late night on Sunday, police officer R.R. Pandey reached Bhaluvahi village and brought the dead body of the deceased to the police station. While the deceased's husband is being questioned by the police in this case.

The deceased woman's husband Mathura Soren told police that on Sunday he had gone to work during the day time and when he returned home at around three-four in the afternoon, he saw his wife lying in the courtyard. His wife was killed by stabbing her neck.

After this, he informed the local village mukhiya Bhagirath Mandal and mukhiya alerted the Muffasil police.

# Day-night sleep cycle, scientific curiosity and Nobel crown!



Dr Rajendra Kumar Jha

Why do we go to sleep in the night and get up in the morning ready for the next day? Or why do we suffer jet lags following inter-continental travels or are very uncomfortable and jittery following frequent work shift changes?

All animals and even most basic plants like algae, fungi and even unicellular amoeba have their own day-night cycles which have evolved since earth was made out of gases and organisms evolved and grew for over 400 million years on this earth.

This diurnal biological cycle is known as 'Circadian cycle' or 'Circadian rhythm'.

This curiosity as to why and how such a phenomenon occur, has always been there but it was Astronomer Jean Jacques de Mairan in the 18th century who studied the plant "mimosa" which opens its leaves with the rising sun and droops at dusk. He wondered what would happen if it was placed in constant darkness? And to his utter surprise he noted that the plant leaves continued to open and close in its own cycle independent of solar diurnal cycles.

Thus, he concluded that plants have their very own biological clock. Later it was discovered by various scientists that just as plants, animals too have their own intrinsic day-night cycle called 'Circadian cycles'.

Modern scientific research started by Seymour Benzer and Ronald Konopka of the USA in the 70s who looked into the genetic composition of the fruit fly to find the answer. They demonstrated that mutation in an unknown gene within the fruit fly genome changed the circadian rhythm of the flies and it brought a huge step towards understanding the genetic basis of the circadian cycle.

In 1984, Jeffrey Hall and Michael Young of the USA succeeded in isolating that unknown gene and named it the "period" gene for the first time.

They together went on to discover the PER protein encoded by "period" gene which accumulates during every night and gets degraded during the following daytime. Therefore, it was concluded that it's the PER protein levels which oscillate over 24 hours in day and night cycles to create circadian rhythm. However, it raised two questions and needed to be answered. What made it to restart every 24 hr and what regulates its oscillations?

Jeffrey Hall now with Michael Rosbash hypothesised that it's the 'PER' protein oscillating levels by inhibitory feedback loop (gene spontaneously keep working and produce proteins until stopped by some other factors and the moment such factors are removed it restart its protein production) which blocks the "period" gene and continue the circadian cycle.

But there was a catch! "Period" gene produces mRNA in the nucleus which prepares PER protein in the cytoplasm which has to come back in to the nucleus to block the "period" gene which is not possible without certain factors assisting the entry of the PER protein back into the nucleus. In 1994 Michael Young dis-

covered a second clock gene and named it "timeless" gene encoding "TIM" protein. In his brilliant research he could show that when TIM protein was bound to PER protein within the cytoplasm it was able to enter the nucleus and block the "period" gene so that it spontaneously restarts the cycle of mRNA of production to produce PER protein in the cytoplasm. This completes the inhibitory loop mechanism of "period" gene PER protein cycle.

## WHAT CONTROLLED THE FREQUENCY OF OSCILLATIONS?

This puzzle was resolved once again by Michael Young who identified yet another gene christened as "Double Time" gene which encodes the "DBT" protein. This protein was found to delay and control the accumulation of 'PER' protein and this added to the insight of how the oscillation could match a 24-hour cycle giving it a cyclic pattern known as Circadian rhythm.

These seminal discoveries stretching over fifty years or more to unravel the mystery of the nature and life that it supports, have been some of the most important basic science research in recent years and deservedly brought these three brilliant USA based scientists' professors Jeffrey Hall, Michael Young and Rosbash their coveted NOBEL PRIZE for the year 2017 for Physiology or Medicine.

This has discovered an entirely new field of medicine to assist mankind in making life cope with the stress of Jet age life allowing comfortable sleep and much more!

(The author is Professor and Head, Department of Medicine, Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences, Ranchi)

# Theft incidents on the rise in Bokaro

PNS ■ BOKARO

Thieves escaped with the valuable goods, cash and gadgets worth several lakh rupees from a house at Chas under Chas Police Station on Sunday night. On Saturday ornaments and other valuables worth Rs 6 lakhs were stolen from a house at Bhojpur Colony under the same police station.

In another incident, ornaments and valuables worth Rs 75,000 along with cash Rs 33,000 were stolen from CCLs Govindpur based B Type colony, House No B/33 under Bermo Police Station.

Last night thieves also escaped with ornaments, valuables and ₹12,000 cash under Sector 12 police station. FIRs have been lodged under their respective police stations and we are investigating into the

matter, said police.

According to the police, last midnight thieves broke into the house belonging to Vikram Kumar Singh at Prabhat Colony under the Chas police station and stole cash and goods worth of ₹10 lakhs, said OC of Chas police station.

Besides these, several other theft incidents occurred across the city in the last fortnight.

More than 10 theft incidents were reported in the last fortnight under different police stations in Bokaro.

"I have directed officers to keep strict vigil and conduct special drives. An order has also been executed to prepare the profile of the criminals along with a list of their bailers and associates," said Chandan Kumar Jha, Superintendent of Police Bokaro.

# Sikhs celebrate Prakash Utsav under the shadow of Covid-19



PNS ■ JAMSHEDPUR

Amidst the fear of pandemic Covid-19, the Sikh community in Jamshepur celebrated Guru Nanak's 551th Prakash Utsav with devotion on Monday. Sikh families attended prayers at various gurudwaras. This time, the Central Gurudwara

Prabandhak Committee did not organise their lavish nagar kirtan (religious procession) due to the spread of coronavirus.

Devotees participating in the gurudwaras recited Japji Sahib, shabad "Sat Guru Nanak pargatya" and "Ucha dar babe Nanak da".

"We did not organise langar nor took out nagar kirtan. Due to Covid-19 we made sure that the devotees maintain social distancing and follow the guidelines. We did not allow devotees to enter the premises without mask. Moreover, sanitizers were given to those entering," said a member of Jugsalai Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee.

Various social and religious organisations served fruits and "langar" of milk, tea and snacks to the devotees. Moreover, almost all the 33 Gurudwaras in the district were decked up for the occasion. They organised religious functions as a part of the celebrations.

President Central Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee Mahendra Singh said, "The auspicious Guru Nanak Dev's birthday teaches us to live in brotherhood, amity and work together to fight ignorance, poverty and other

**Various social and religious organisations served fruits and "langar" of milk, tea and snacks to the devotees. Moreover, almost all the 33 Gurudwaras in the district were decked up for the occasion. They organised religious functions as a part of the celebrations**

problems of people."

He said that Guru Nanak Dev was born at Nankana Sahab near Lahore in Pakistan in 1469 and the anniversaries of Sikh Gurus are known as Gurburabs (festivals), and celebrated by Sikhs with devotion.

"I convey my greetings and good wishes to the people of our country on the auspicious occasion of Guru Nanak's Birthday. Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the founder of Sikhism, showed us the path of peace, harmony and righteousness. His message of devotion to God, excellence of conduct and tolerance has timeless relevance and can help in transforming our society," said Amarpriti Singh Kale, senior leader.

# Villagers clash with police outside ACC cement plant

PNS ■ DHANBAD

Villagers on Monday clashed with police outside cement plant of ACC located at Sindri leading to injuries to Sub-divisional manager (SDM) and police personnel in stone pelting incident.

Police resorted to open fire in the air to control the violent mob. SDM Satyendar

Kumar said, hooligans would be booked after identification and appropriate legal action would be taken against them.

He said, villagers of the surrounding locality of this plant had started a protest outside the plant gate demanding employment for locals.

The talks with management in presence of police and administrative officials but

some villagers who were not satisfied with the talks started heated debate with officials holding talks. Amidst the exchange of heated words all of a sudden the mob started pelting stone on the police and administrative party.

Three persons have been arrested after the clash and police have been deployed for maintaining law and order, said the SDM.

# 'Haryana Govt fully prepared for COVID-19 vaccination programme'

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana Chief Secretary Vijai Vardhan on Monday said that the State Government is fully prepared for the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

"A state level steering committee, district task force and block task force have been constituted in the state as per the directions of Central Government. A test-run of co-win software developed by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare will be conducted first in Haryana and two other states due to their preparedness for the vaccination programme," Vijai Vardhan said while attending a video conference regarding COVID-19 Status and Vaccine Programme chaired by Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba.

The Chief Secretaries of all states and union territories also attended the video conference.

While issuing directions during the meeting, Rajiv Gauba said that now, the situation has come to resume all the activities across the country.

He further instructed that the State Governments should meticulously ensure the implementation of new Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) at the ground level.

Gauba also instructed to promote COVID-19 appropriate behaviour campaign.

**Vijai Vardhan assured the Cabinet Secretary that the Haryana Government has been following and implementing guidelines of the Central Government as issued from time to time. He further assured that all the work will be done as per the new guidelines**

Besides this, the Director General of Police of the states were directed to strictly implement the norms of wearing masks. He further instructed to impose a penalty on those who violate the norms of wearing face masks.

Vijai Vardhan assured the Cabinet Secretary that the Haryana Government has been following and implementing guidelines of the Central Government as issued from time to time. He further assured that all the work will be done as per the new guidelines.

He said that Haryana has submitted 96 percent data of the staff working in government health sector like doctors, para medical staff etc whereas about 51 percent data of the staff in private health sector has been submitted to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for prioritizing population groups for COVID-19 vaccination programme.

He informed that 100 percent data will be uploaded within a week.

The state's Chief Secretary

further said that adequate resources are being made available for COVID-19 vaccine across the state. The situation is being monitored by holding regular meetings.

He assured that there will be no shortage of cold storage chains and other logistic facilities during COVID-19 vaccination in the state.

A presentation related to COVID-19 pandemic was also given by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

It was also informed that the State Level Steering Committee will regularly organize meetings to ensure cold chain storage and other logistics facilities during COVID-19 vaccination. Apart from this, additional arrangements for cold storage points etc. should be ensured in urban areas.

The data related to prioritized population groups for COVID-19 vaccination has been uploaded on co-win software and test-run of this software will be performed in Haryana, Rajasthan and Telangana.

# Amitabh Jain takes charge as new Chief Secretary of Chhatisgarh

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Amitabh Jain (IAS, 1989) on Monday took charge as the 12th Chief Secretary in the Chhattisgarh government at a simple function. He belongs to Chhattisgarh and is largely known as a low-profile person.

Jain, who succeeds Rajendra Prasad Mandal on his superannuation, will be the third Chief Secretary from the home state.

After taking charge, Jain issued a statement thanking all the people for greeting him on his new assignment.

"I am thankful to the Chief Minister for handing over an important responsibility. It gives me a sense of happiness that from now onwards with the best of my capacity I can serve my soil. My elders with their competence have set new heights, which will always inspire me."

Jain was serving as Additional Chief Secretary (ACS), Finance Department, and held additional charge of ACS, Water Resources. Earlier, Jain also worked in the Indian High Commission in London where he handled the assignment pertaining to promotion of trade and investment between India and the UK.

He earlier served as Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in New Delhi. At the state level, he has worked with the governments of Madhya Pradesh and in Chhattisgarh in different capacities.

He worked as Collector for eight years in several districts including Raipur and Bilaspur.

A Mechanical Engineer and holds a Master's degree in Systems and Management from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), New Delhi, Jain will retire in 2025.

# Anganwadi workers to plan protest if Govt fails to clear dues

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The president of State Anganwadi Workers Association, Rekha Negi stated that if the State Government does not clear the pending allowances of the Anganwadi workers in all the districts by December 1, the association would commence planning its protest against the Government.

According to Negi, she does not have confirmed reports yet on whether the government has started to issue the pending allowances in all the districts. "I have heard that the government has probably started issuing allowances to

**According to Negi, she does not have confirmed reports yet on whether the government has started to issue the pending allowances in all the districts**

the officials at district level for Anganwadi workers but I will get the final reports on Tuesday as the allowances have not reached the workers yet. If the government wouldn't have initiated the issuance of pending allowances of the last several months, we will start the protest against it within a few days," added Negi.

# Edu Minister Jagarnath Mahto likely to return in Jan

**Starts breathing without assistance**

PNS ■ RANCHI

After being bedridden for nearly two months following a Covid-19 infection and subsequent lung transplant, State Education Minister Jagarnath Mahto is likely to be fit for attending Vidhan Sabha sessions and leading a normal life January onwards, doctors treating him at Mahatma Gandhi Memorial (MGM) Healthcare in Chennai



Education Minister Jagarnath Mahto  
File photo

said on Sunday. Doctors said that Mahto was now able to sit on his own and also stand with support. He is responding to physio-

therapy and is likely to start walking in a couple of weeks, doctors added.

Co-director of Institute of Heart and Lung Transplantation & Mechanical Circulatory Assist Device at MGM, Dr. Suresh Rao said that Mahto has started breathing without any artificial respiratory assistance from machines, and all her organs were functioning normally.

"His lungs are fine. The oxygen saturation is also healthy. Right now, he is undergoing physiotherapy and should be able to walk soon," said Rao, adding that the minister will be able to lead a nor-

mal life from the beginning of 2021 if everything goes well from here.

"He can lead a normal life, but he has to be careful and avoid any infection in his lungs," said Rao.

Meanwhile, JMM, the largest party in the Jharkhand assembly, has already started preparing for a grand welcome ceremony for Mahto, a son of the soil. The first-time minister in the Hemant Soren Cabinet, Mahto is a popular figure among JMM supporters. Before getting infected by the Covid-19 virus, he was in the news for taking admission in intermediate (class 11 and 12),

and gifting cars to the toppers of class 10 and class 12 board exams in Jharkhand.

The 54-year-old Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) legislator from Dumri constituency in Jharkhand underwent a lung transplant surgery at MGM on November 10. While he was still in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of the hospital, he was recovering fast and conscious since the surgery, doctors said.

Mahto tested positive for Covid-19 on September 28 and was admitted to state-run Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) in Ranchi. He was shifted to the ICU of

Bhagwan Mahavir Medical Superspecialty Hospital in the state capital on October 1 and put on non-invasive ventilation. The minister was flown to Chennai on October 19 after his lungs showed no signs of improvement and was put on life support.

Doctors from the hospital said that Mahto's lung transplant surgery has cost the Jharkhand government around Rs.30 lakh and his treatment altogether will cost roughly Rs.80 lakh. However, there was no official confirmation on the amount quoted by the hospital for the minister's treatment.

## IN BRIEF

### VETERAN SCRIBE SS RUBY PASSES AWAY

Veteran journalist S S Ruby passed away at his house at Nawa Toli, Daltonganj on Sunday night, said his son Lucky. He was 74. He was ill over the last many months said the family. Ruby worked for a Hindi daily of Varanasi and remained Bureau Chief of the then most saleable Hindi daily of Ranchi as well. Over the last many years he was the editor in chief of a Hindi evening, which is now a household name in the district Palamu. Elites of the town and bureaucrats who knew him have expressed their condolences over his passing away. Ruby is survived by two sons one of them working for the Doordarshan and Akashvani. His wife had predeceased him a few years ago. Ardhas would be done at Belwatiker Gurudwara.



### PUJA SPECIAL TRAINS GET EXTENSION

For the convenience of passengers, it has been decided to extend the period of special trains running till 31 December 2020. All coaches in these trains will be of reserved category and passengers traveling in it will have to follow the standards of Covid-19. The trains include Darbhanga-Jalandhar City, Jalandhar City-Darbhanga, Saharsa-Amritsar, Amritsar-Saharsa, Saharsa-Anand Vihar Terminus, Anand Vihar Terminus-Saharsa, Pune-Darbhanga, Darbhanga-Pune, Pune-Barauni and Barauni-Pune.

### TOWNHALL MEET BY UCO BANK



UCO Bank organised a Townhall Meet at Bokaro Branch on November 28. The meet was chaired by Zonal Head cum DGM, Ranchi Zone, Gautam Patra. During the meeting customers were apprised of different facilities and products of the bank and efforts were made to solve their issues on the spot. Apart from the customers, Ranchi Zone Deputy Regional Head Shwet Kachhap, Bokaro BM Shalini, other officials and employees of the branch and circle office were present on the occasion.

### CRPF JAWAN SHOOTS SELF IN W SINGHBHUM

A CRPF jawan shot himself dead with a rifle at the paramilitary forces Karampada camp under Naxal infested Kiriburu police station area of the adjoining West Singhbhum district. The 50-year-old jawan Umeed Singh, who belonged to CRPF's 197th battalion, was a resident of Churu district of Rajasthan. A CRPF official said that as per our initial investigation it is a case of suicide and family dispute may be the reason behind the tragic end of the jawan. He used his service rifle to end his life. "Prima facie it was a case of suicide. Singh was not keeping well for mental ailment and depression. This might have led to the suicide. His family members have been informed they will take a call over the last rites to be performed," said an official.

## Agriculture Dept to help 12 K farmers for mushroom cultivation



PNS ■ RANCHI

In a bid to increase farmers' income in the State, Directorate of Horticulture, Government of Jharkhand will facilitate 12,000 farmers for mushroom cultivation across the State.

The Directorate of Horticulture has prepared the plan to ensure success of mushroom cultivation in all 24 districts of the State.

Director Horticulture, Varun Ranjan informed that the Directorate will very soon start selection of farmers in all 24 districts of the State for mushroom cultivation across the State. In the first stage, the directorate will provide them with three days of training, so that they could know basic information and preparation about mushroom cultivation.

Ranjan said that after completion of the training the Directorate will give them 30 packets of spawn and compost to each farmer which are important ingredients in mushroom cultivation. The project which includes training and compost packets will cost Rs five thousand for each farmer which will be fully subsidised, he added.

The packets of compost and spawn will consist of 10 kilo gram of compost and 100 to 120 gram of spawn. Each packet will cost around Rs 130. Each farmer can earn a minimum of Rs five thousand from this project. One crop will take 70 to 75 days in getting mature. After the maturity of the crop they could sell it in the open market," said Ranjan.

The Horticulture Director further informed that the Directorate mainly started the project on trial basis in the entire state so that the framers of the State could get awareness of mushroom cultivation. "It is envisaged mainly for those farmers who could start

**RANAJAN SAID THAT AFTER COMPLETION OF THE TRAINING THE DIRECTORATE WILL GIVE THEM 30 PACKETS OF SPAWN AND COMPOST TO EACH FARMER WHICH ARE IMPORTANT INGREDIENTS IN MUSHROOM CULTIVATION. THE PROJECT WHICH INCLUDES TRAINING AND COMPOST PACKETS WILL COST RS FIVE THOUSAND FOR EACH FARMER WHICH WILL BE FULLY SUBSIDISED, HE ADDED**

the project by doing main work. Basically it is started for women who could start mushroom cultivation in their home by doing their daily routine work," he added.

In other states like Bihar, Haryana, Punjab and others a large number of farmers are cultivating mushrooms and getting huge benefits from it. It is completely a cash crop so that just after maturity the farmers can sell it on their own. Low in calories, fat and cholesterol free, mushrooms contain a modest amount of fibre and over a dozen minerals and vitamins, including copper, potassium, magnesium, zinc and a number of vitamin B such as folate.

## Cong supports farmers' agitation through social media campaign



Jharkhand Pradesh Congress Committee President cum Food and Civic Supplies department and Finance Minister Rameshwar Oraon, State Congress Committee Spokespersons Alok Kumar Dubey, Lal Kishore Nath Shahdev and Rajesh Gupta Chitlu during a meeting in Ranchi on Monday.  
Pioneer Photo

PNS ■ RANCHI

Jharkhand Pradesh Congress Committee (JPCC) organised a speak up for farmers campaign on social media with a view to stop the violence and atrocities against the farmers and to withdraw the agrarian law immediately.

JPCC Spokesperson, Alok Kumar Dubey, said that from 10 am, crores of Congress leaders reiterated their com-

mitment on social media that they will raise the voice of farmers. The campaign was launched by Congress President Sonia Gandhi, former President Rahul Gandhi, former Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh by uploading their video on social media platforms including Whatsapp, Twitter and Facebook.

Uploading the video, Oraon said that the Modi Government at the Center had

promised to double the income of farmers, but it increased the income of Adani and Ambani manifolds. "The Central Government and the Prime Minister, who have completely destroyed the Country's economy, have no right to ruin the farmers of the Country. The Pradesh Congress Committee stands with the farmers and supports their every demand," he added. Congress Legislature Party

leader Alamgir Alam said that the way the force is being used on the farmers of the country is unfortunate, the party will continue to fight against it.

In his message, Health Minister Banna Gupta said that the Modi Government at the Center has pushed the Indian economy completely into a sea to protect the interests of the big business houses.

Apart from JPCC Chief, Rameshwar Oraon, Congress Legislature Party Leader Alamgir Alam, Minister Badal, Banna Gupta, JPCC Spokesperson Alok Kumar Dubey, Lal Kishorenath Shahdeo, Rajesh Gupta, Shashi Bhushan Rai, Aditya Vikram Jaiswal, Niranjana Paswan, Sunny Toppo, Belas Tirkey and other MPs, MLAs, senior officials and Congress leaders also uploaded videos on their social media Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Instagram.

JPCC Spokesperson, Dubey said that the farmers have traveled to Delhi and now no power can stop them. He said that there is an atmosphere of anger against the BJP, he added.

JPCC Spokesperson Lal Kishorenath Shahdeo said that the agitation will continue till the three agricultural amendment laws passed by Parliament are withdrawn.

## Birsa Munda jail to revive organic farming project

PNS ■ RANCHI

Jharkhand prisons department has decided to revive its pet project to promote organic farming on the jail campus besides training the jail inmates for this new farming method.

Under the pilot project, the jail department rope-in Birsa Agricultural University (BAU) to explore organic farming and fertilizer at Birsa Munda Central Jail.

The jail superintendent of Birsa Munda Central Jail Hamid Akhtar had a series of meetings with experts of BAU, which has agreed to provide training to jail inmates besides to develop infrastructure for organic farming. The jail situated at Hotwar in the city capital spreads over 68 acres of land and this Central jail has a vast patch of vacant land around 15 acres where vegetables are grown for in-house consumption.

Few days back the chief executive officer of Business



Birsa Munda Central Jail in Ranchi  
File Photo

Planning and Development Society of BAU; Sidhrath Jaisawal visited the jail superintendent to start the process of training.

"We have advised the jail authority to select some prisoners for the training purposes. We will soon give a presentation before them so that they understand the subject. Quite a minimum infrastructure is required to develop organic or natural farming. Two years back also we had started organic farming here," said Jaisawal.

The idea behind organic

farming is to increase productivity, promote organic farming besides to provide vocational training to jail inmates.

The idea was first mooted in 2017 when Suman Gupta was IG Prisons. She discussed the idea of organic farming and preparation of organic fertilizer with experts of BAU.

While the BAU agreed to the proposal the BAU even organized a training camp on the jail premise to teach inmates about nutrition-based farming called Amrit farming.

Under Amrit farming inmates were taught how to prepare fertilizer and pesticide with help of cow urine and cow dung. BAU had even formed a team of experts namely Sidhrath Jaisawal, CS Singh and MS Yadav. They were supposed to visit the central jail to provide training to inmates at regular intervals. But, after Suman Gupta was transferred, Birsa Central jail officials lost interest in carrying on the project, said sources.

## Ranchi Admin goes tough against Covid-19 norms' violators



A policeman stops a motorcyclist for checking for not wearing a face mask amid the COVID-19 pandemic in Ranchi on Monday  
Vinay Murmu | Pioneer

PNS ■ RANCHI

Ranchi district administration has launched an intensive drive to fine people caught for violating Covid-19 protocol as health experts have warned second wave of Covid-19 of this pandemic can hit Jharkhand if necessary precautions are not followed including use of facemask, social distancing and avoiding spitting at public places.

But among these, using facemask is the most important that Ranchi district administration has specifically asked people.

In the last one week over 200 people have been caught for venturing on public space without masks and the fine over one lakh has been collected from them.

"In a situation like this people will have to follow guidelines for their own safety and security as well as others. If anybody is found violating the order actions are taken under provisions of National Pandemic Act and Disaster Management Act. The drive will continue. Traffic cops have been given responsibility to enforce facemask rule," Ranchi

SSP Surendra Kumar Jha. The Ranchi SSP further said that people caught driving without helmets are also fined. Those caught without facemask are sent Covid-19 tests and if found positive they are sent to a care centre. Ranchi district administration has increased the number of static Covid-19 testing centres by another two besides mobile vans equipped with testing facilities.

Now, Ranchi Municipal Corporation is also set to launch a drive from Tuesday to force people and shopkeepers to follow Covid-19 guidelines.

"We are going to start a public announcement throughout the thoroughfares of Ranchi to ask people to wear facemask. But, business installations like shops, marketing complexes and likes will also remain our focus area. If a shop owner is found allowing a customer with facemask at his shop then action will be taken under provisions of Jharkhand Municipal Corporation Act and even license of the shop can be suspended," said Ranchi Deputy Mayor Sanjeev Vijayvargiya.

## Virtual weddings become a hit during Covid times

DIVYA MODI ■ RANCHI

Weddings are no longer 'big fat' but have now become 'small and virtual' - all thanks to the pandemic. With the wedding season on full swing, Ranchites too are either busy participating in one or are planning on hosting virtual functions.

Instead of thousands of people who would gather from far and near for a minimum of four days of fun and frolic, weddings now only have the immediate family attending the ceremony while for the distant relatives Live streaming is the new option.

For Shruti, a resident of Kanke Road, the pandemic ruined her plans of going to the USA for the first time and that too for a cousin's wedding. "My maternal cousin's wedding was scheduled for the end of November and all



of us were super excited to get together after a long time. Because of the pandemic, since most of the people could

not travel, the hosts had organized a virtual sangeet which was a lot of fun. Dressed in Indian finery, we began the

function with a Ganesh Vandana sung by an aunt based in London. While the elders welcomed the new

bride, young ones performed on catchy Bollywood numbers. We also raised a toast for the new couple with some wine. Thanks to technology, though we were all far apart, we still managed to get together and have a blast.

"It was my best friend's wedding on November 22 and I was super excited to go to Goa with my wife. The excitement was of not just going for a holiday but also of attending a Christian ceremony for the first time. On the day, I got dressed in a black tuxedo - as rightly suited for the best man, but thanks to the pandemic I was in Ranchi and not Goa. I participated in the ceremony through a Zoom call and was present by friend's side in spirit if not in person. Through this medium I was also able to participate in the reception party following the Church ceremony," said

Rimanshu.

Vandana Chruiwala, is all set to get her daughter married on December 15 in an intimate affair with just her family and closest of friends present in person. "Both sides of the family - mine and my in-laws are big. As much as we would have liked everyone to be there for the ceremony and bless the newly married couple, it is not possible under the present circumstances.

Apart from sharing numerous pictures and videos, for all cousins and distant relatives, we will also be sharing a link on the family Whatsapp group and have asked them to join us through it for the occasion. In the present situation, we thought this was the best alternative and once things get better, we do plan to host a reception for our daughter and son-in-law."

# Anti-Covid SOPs for markets issued



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With markets buzzing with activity and people throwing caution to wind, the Centre on Monday issued fresh SOPs on preventive measures in market places aiming to check the spread of coronavirus in the country.

The Union Health Ministry issued fresh do's and don'ts stating that the markets in containment zones will remain shut until further orders. Civic enforcement agencies will have the discretion to open the market on alternate days in case of surge in infections or if people do not follow anti-Covid norms.

"Market places in containment zones shall remain closed. Only those outside containment zones will be allowed to operate," the notification from the Centre stated.

According to the new

guidelines from the Centre, markets outside containment zones will be allowed to function. However, the Centre has urged that those in vulnerable categories (persons above 65 years of age, persons with comorbidities, pregnant women, and children below the age of 10 years) stay at home and only step out for essential purposes.

The new guidelines comes in the wake of the increasing coronavirus cases touching to 94,31,691 with 38,772 new infections.

The Ministry also advised shop employees under high-risk categories to take extra precautions and stay away from any work involving direct contact with the public.

The Health Ministry said it will be contacting Market Owners Associations for the implementation of the advisory. The ministry also called for

# Drop in daily cases: 38,772 fresh +ves in last 24 hours

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India recorded a drop in its daily coronavirus (Covid-19) tally on Monday after 38,772 fresh cases registered in the last 24 hours taking the total caseload to 9,431,691 which include 446,952 active cases and nearly 89 lakh recoveries.

A total of 45,333 new Covid-19 recoveries were registered across the country, leading to a net reduction of 6,561 cases from the active caseload, the Union Health Ministry said on Monday. The total recoveries have surged to 88,47,600.

"The gap between Covid-19 recoveries and active cases, that is steadily increasing, presently stands at 84,00,648 i.e. 19.8 times the active cases," the Ministry said.

The adherence of Covid-appropriate behaviour including physical distancing, use of face masks and routine sanitation.

According to the new guidelines, market associations

The contraction of India's active Covid-19 caseload to 4,46,952 comprises just 4.74 per cent of the total coronavirus infections reported so far in the country.

"The difference in new recoveries outnumbering new cases of Covid-19 has also improved the national recovery rate to 93.81 per cent on date," the Ministry said, adding that India's coronavirus case fatality rate has further dipped to 1.45 per cent.

India is one of the countries with the lowest deaths per million population globally (99.4 at present), the ministry said. Karnataka, Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh have reported the highest decline in active cases in the past one month, while Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana and

will also have to form a sub-committee to facilitate and monitor the implementation of Covid-appropriate behaviour.

The guidelines also said that if self-regulation fails,

Rajasthan are reporting a rise in the active caseload, it added.

India has achieved a landmark milestone in its fight against COVID-19, with total tests having crossed the 14-crore mark with 8,76,173 tests being conducted in a day, the Ministry said.

India has ramped up its per day testing capacity to 15 lakh, it said. The ministry said that 76.94 per cent of the new recoveries were from Delhi, Kerala, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Karnataka.

With 6,325 persons recovering from coronavirus infection, Delhi saw the highest number of recoveries. Kerala registered 5,861 daily recoveries while Maharashtra reported 4,362 new recoveries, it said.

enforcement agencies may impose measures such as the opening of markets on alternate days or even close markets in case a large number of cases are found linked to the area.

# Ensure proper fire safety in hospitals and nursing homes, States told

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In the wake of recent fire incidents in hospitals, Union Home Ministry on Monday asked all States to ensure proper fire safety in hospitals and nursing homes, saying utmost precautions must be taken at a time when the country is fighting the coronavirus pandemic.

Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla wrote a letter to Chief Secretaries of all states and Union territories to strictly implement the fire safety norms. Last week, fire incidents in two hospitals in Gujarat killed 14 people.

The Home Secretary said the occurrence of various fire incidents in hospitals and nursing homes in recent past and non-adherence of fire safety measures by authorities in their respective jurisdiction is a matter of concern. Bhalla said recently six precious lives of COVID-19 patients were lost in a fire incident at an ICU ward of a hospital in Rajkot and eight people died in a hospital in Ahmedabad.

"At such a crucial time, when the country is fighting against COVID-19 pandemic, utmost precaution needs to be taken to avoid such incidents in future," he said in the letter,



seeking implementation of fire safety norms in the States.

"I would urge you to ensure compliance of above advisory and direct all concerned to immediately re-inspect, re-check all hospitals and nursing homes from the point of view of fire protection and means of escape to prevent recurrence of such fire incidences in future," he added.

The Home Secretary said the Directorate General (fire services, civil defence and home guards) in the Ministry of Home Affairs has been issuing necessary advisories at regular intervals to the states and UTs so that suitable directions may be issued to ensure compliance of fire safety guidelines and various codes and standards, and to ensure that proper fire safety measures are in place in all

**Bhalla said in addition, guidelines have been issued by the National Disaster Management Authority for hospital safety**

the buildings, including hospitals and nursing homes.

Bhalla said in addition, guidelines have also been issued by the National Disaster Management Authority for hospital safety, laying down the provisions to establish the minimum requirements for a reasonable degree of safety from fire emergencies in hospitals.

# BJP attacks Kejriwal for supporting farmers' stir

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Monday targeted Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for supporting the protest of farmers on the outskirts of Delhi and linked it with 'Khalistani and Maoist' elements.

BJP leader Amit Malviya, who has recently been appointed co-in-charge of West Bengal, said that the Delhi government has implemented the new agricultural laws in the capital, "but now that there is a protest against this law, the Arvind Kejriwal government is looking for an opportunity to burn down Delhi".

Malviya, the head of the information technology department of the BJP, said that the Kejriwal government approved the new agricultural laws on 23 November itself and is also implementing this



law but is now backing the protest on Delhi's borders.

Malviya has used words like 'Khalistani' and 'Maoist' in his tweets while referring to the protestors.

"Arvind Kejriwal led Delhi government has already notified the new Farm Laws on 23Nov20 and had started implementing them. But now that the Khalistanis and

Maoists have stepped in to oppose, he sees an opportunity to burn down Delhi. It was never about farmers. Just politics," tweeted the BJP leader.

# Cong launches campaign to muster support for farmers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress on Monday launched a social media campaign to muster support for the farmers protesting against the Centre's new farm laws with party leader Rahul Gandhi saying, when farmers raise their voice, it resonates across the country. "The Modi Government has persecuted the farmer - first it brought black laws and then used lathi-charge against them, but it forgot that when the farmer raises his voice, it resonates throughout the country. You also raise your voice against the exploitation of farmers and join the #SpeakUpForFarmers campaign," Rahul Gandhi said in a tweet in Hindi.

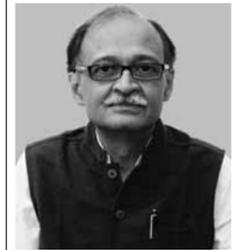
**The former Congress chief said wherever these farmers are protesting, the people and Congress workers should stand in their support and provide them food**

"The farmer of the country has come to Delhi in the cold, leaving his home and fields, to voice his protest against the black agriculture laws. In this battle of truth and untruth, with whom do you stand - the 'Annadata' (food-giving) farmer or the PM's capitalist friends," Rahul Gandhi said in another tweet.

The former Congress chief said wherever these farmers are protesting, the people and Congress workers should stand in their support and provide them food. "The question is why is the farmer out on the roads, travelling thousands of kilometers and is stalling traffic. PM Modi says the three farm laws are in favour of the farmer, but if these laws are in the farmer's favour, why is he not happy and why is he protesting," asked the Congress leader.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also joined the #SpeakUpForFarmers campaign and shared the same video highlighting the plight of the farmers.

# Utpal K Singh new Secretary General of Lok Sabha



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has appointed Utpal Kumar Singh as the new Secretary General of Lok Sabha. Singh is currently working as Secretary in the Lok Sabha Secretariat and belongs to the 1986 IAS batch of Uttarakhnad cadre.

Singh was Chief Secretary in Uttarakhand and also worked in many Central Government departments including Ministry of Agriculture, HRD and World Bank. He has been appointed as Secretary General on contract basis for a year from December 1. Singh, who hails from Jharkhand, retired from IAS in July this year. Secretary Generals of both Houses have the same rank of Cabinet Secretary.

# Audio feed of RS TV disrupted due to damage caused to microphones

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Public Works Department (CPWD) has told the Rajya Secretariat that the audio feed of Rajya Sabha TV was disrupted briefly during the passage of the farm bills on September 20 due to damages caused to microphones at the chairman's seat by some MPs.

The CPWD, which also posted the letter on its Twitter, said that loss of audio in RSTV feed is purely due to technical reasons. The CPWD response came amid allegations by opposition parties that the audio feed of Rajya Sabha TV (RSTV), which exclusively broadcasts proceedings from the Upper House of

Parliament, was deliberately muted to black out their point of view.

The farm bills were passed by the Rajya Sabha on September 20 amid a bedlam when Deputy Chairman Harivansh was in the Chair. As many as eight opposition members were suspended from the House for allegedly throwing the rule book at the presiding officer, heckling him over their demand for a division of vote and destroying the microphones located at the Chair.

In its letter, the CPWD said, "It is informed that abrupt interruption in the audio feed of the Rajya Sabha proceedings between 13.05 hours and 13.35 hours on September 20 during

consideration of two farmer's bills by Rajya Sabha was due to damage to the chairman's microphones by the Hon'ble MPs." It said that as directed by the Chair, no other microphone was on at that very time except that of the chairman.

"So when these mics were broken, there was no audio output from the system to RSTV. It took nearly half an hour to restore this after following necessary protocols," the CPWD said in the letter written to the Rajya Sabha Secretariat in response to a RTI application. Underlining that there was no technical issue causing the interruption in the audio feed, the CPWD said assigning any other motive to this is "mischievous".

# Covid-19 hampers fight against HIV

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Covid-19 pandemic has cast a shadow on the access and delivery of healthcare services in HIV across the region, whether in low or high-income countries, owing to travel restrictions and a change in high-risk behaviour as some of the main reasons for the disruption in treatment.

A first cross-country survey in Asia Pacific region has revealed that over 80 per cent of surveyed prescribers reported that there was a decrease in the frequency or delay of visits of people living with HIV (PLHIV) while about 46 per cent of at-risk population reported a decrease in frequency of taking HIV tests during the virus outbreak.

However, providing a ray of hope was the digital platforms like telehealth, becoming a mode of delivery for HIV care during the pandemic.

The survey, "Impact of Covid-19 on access and delivery of HIV care in Asia Pacific", was conducted online, from



October to mid-November 2020, in 10 countries/territories in Asia Pacific (Hong Kong, India, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam) by Gilead Sciences, a biotechnology company and the AIDS Society of India.

At least 1,265 respondents, comprising people living with HIV, at-risk population and HIV care prescribers, participated in the survey, including 96 from India. This region has more than 5.8 million PLHIV and in 2019, 300,000 were newly infected and about 160,000 deaths were AIDS-related, as per a report by UNAIDS 2020.

In India, over 82 per cent

and 37 per cent of those at-risk reported that they are concerned about getting antiretroviral medicines and preventive medication during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Digital platforms like telehealth became a mode of delivery for HIV care during the Covid-19 pandemic. Amongst HIV care prescribers, almost 97 per cent use telehealth to consult with patients via telephone (85 per cent) or video (50 per cent), or to provide refill prescriptions (67 per cent).

As the world observes AIDS Day on December 1, Dr I S Gilada, President, AIDS Society of India, said, "Despite proactive efforts by the Government to minimise the impact of disruption in medical services and delivery of ART, PLHIV and at-risk populations suffered a severe blow. Interruptions to access and delivery of care can negatively impact PLHIV and those at-risk of HIV, putting them at a higher risk of health complications."

About 80 per cent of HIV care prescribers reported a decline in preventive prescriptions for at-risk population while more than 1 in 3 amongst the at-risk population reported that they had either decreased or stopped taking HIV preventive medicine, said the survey.

The study found out that almost 47 per cent of PLHIV

# Online Int'l exhibition held on wealth of Buddhist art and antiquities

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A first of its kind online International exhibition deploying state of the art technologies like 3D scanning and virtual space utilisation to showcase a wealth of Buddhist art and antiquities displayed in various museums across Asia was opened by Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu during the 19th Meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of Government (SCO CHG) held here on Monday.

The exhibition is developed and curated by New Delhi-based National Museum in collaboration with SCO member countries and can be accessed at <https://nmvirtual.in/> for worldwide viewing from the comfort of the home. "The international exhibi-

tion gives a glimpse of the artistic wealth displayed in various museums across Asia, and represents the artistic excellence embedded within an eclectic historical timeline spanning across the development of different Schools of Buddhism, innovative curation and narration methodology etc," an official from the Union Culture Ministry said.

The participating institutions are National Museum (New Delhi), Indian Museum (Kolkata), National Museum of Kazakhstan, Dun Huang Academy (China), National Historical Museum of the Kyrgyz Republic, Museums of Pakistan, State Museum of Oriental Art, Moscow (Russia), National Museum and National Museum of Antiquities, Tajikistan and renowned archaeological sites

of Uzbekistan.

The visitors can explore the Indian Buddhist treasures from the Gandhara and Mathura Schools, Nalanda, Amaravati, Sarnath etc. in a 3D virtual format while the Pakistan hall depicts the life of Gautama Buddha and Buddhist art through a collection of impressive Gandhara art objects from Karachi, Lahore, Taxila, Islamabad, SWAT and Peshawar museums. These include fasting Siddhartha and footprint of Buddha from Sikri, meditating Buddha from Sahri Bahlo, miracle of Sravasti from Gandhara etc.

Over 100 objects from State Oriental Art Museum, Moscow, depict the Buddhist Buriyat Art of Russia through icons, ritual objects, monastery traditions etc.

# Tamil Nadu, Puducherry may experience heavy rainfall: IMD

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Barely four days after the very severe cyclonic storm Nivar made a landfall over the coast of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, a new low pressure area has formed in southeast Bay of Bengal, almost the same region where the powerful cyclone 'Nivar' had taken birth last week.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the new low pressure will cross the Sri Lanka coast on December 2 and will bring moderate to heavy and extremely heavy rainfall over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala and coastal Andhra Pradesh over the next four days. The IMD has issued a red-colour coded warning for the

southern areas of Tamil Nadu, Kerala in view of the brewing storm and said that these areas are expected to receive heavy to very heavy rainfall.

This system is predicted to move west-north-westwards and reach extreme North Sri Lanka and South Tamil Nadu coasts, involving back-to-back landfalls (Sri Lanka and South Tamil Nadu) by Wednesday, which would decide the strength with which it may hit the South Tamil Nadu coast. "Tamil Nadu is expected to receive heavy rainfall between December 1 and 4. South Kerala is expected to receive extremely heavy rainfall on December 3 and heavy to very heavy rainfall on December 1 and 4. Lakshadweep is expected to receive heavy rainfall on Dec 3

**Winds with a speed of 45-55 kmph gusting to 65 kmph are likely over the Comorin area, Gulf of Mannar and Tamil Nadu-Kerala coasts**

and 4," it said

"It is very likely to intensify further into a deep depression during the next 24 hours. It is also likely to intensify further into a cyclonic storm. It is very likely to move west-northwestwards and cross the Sri Lanka coast around the evening of December 2," the IMD said.

The IMD said squally

weather with wind speed would gradually increase becoming 55-65 kilometres per hour gusting to 75 kmph over southeast and adjoining southwest Bay of Bengal from the night of December 1 and 70-80 kmph gusting to 90 kmph over southwest Bay of Bengal, along and off Sri Lanka coast. Winds with a speed of 45-55 kmph gusting to 65 kmph are likely over the Comorin area, Gulf of Mannar and Tamil Nadu-Kerala coasts from December 2 forenoon for subsequent 24 hours, it said.

Last week, "very severe cyclonic storm" Nivar had hit Tamil Nadu. While there were no reports of loss of life, about 2.5 lakh people were housed in cyclone shelters in the state as part of safety measures.

# Navy intensifies rescue effort to trace naval pilot

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Navy has intensified its search and rescue effort to trace naval pilot Commander Nishant Singh. His MiG-29K fighter jet had crashed into the Arabian Sea on Thursday last week. However, the same day the rescue teams managed to rescue the other pilot who along with Singh managed to eject from the jet before it went down.

Giving the update on Monday, navy officials said here intensive aerial, coastal and surface search by the Indian Navy ships and aircraft was in progress to locate the pilot. Underwater search by divers and seabed mapping using specialised equipment in the vicinity of primary wreckage of MiG-29K was on.

The search teams had managed to locate the debris of the ill-fated jet over the weekend. It included landing gear, turbo charger, fuel tank engine and wing engine cowling.

In addition to nine warships and 14 aircraft engaged in the search efforts, the Navy's Fast Interceptor Craft is also deployed to search waters along the coast. Further, the Marine and Coastal police are on the lookout and nearby fishing villages have been sensitised.

The twin-seater MiG-29K fighter jet crashed during routine sortie.

These aircraft operate from the INS Vikramaditya aircraft carrier.

# 321 candidates in fray J&K DDC polls

**Srinagar/Jammu:** As many as 321 candidates are in the fray for the second phase of the District Development Council (DDC) polls in Jammu and Kashmir for which the voting will take place on Tuesday at over 2,100 polling booths, State Election Commissioner (SEC) K K Sharma said here on Monday.

In the second phase of the polls also, 43 constituencies are going to polls in the union territory - 25 in Kashmir and 18 in Jammu, the SEC said.

Sharma said 321 candidates are in the fray for the 43 DDC seats. Out of those, 196 are in the Kashmir valley and 125 in the Jammu region, he said.

The SEC said simultaneously with the DDC polls, the sarpanch elections will be conducted in 83 constituencies and total 223 candi-

dates are contesting in the phase two. Similarly, he said, panches bypolls going to be held in 331 constituencies and a total of 709 candidates are in the fray.

He also said 58 sarpanchs (29 men and 29 women) and 804 panches (548 men and 256 women) have been elected unopposed.

There are about 7.90 lakh voters eligible for voting for the second phase at 2,142 polling booths - 1,305 in Kashmir and 837 in Jammu, the SEC said.

"Almost all booths in Kashmir are sensitive from the security point of view. Additional security has been provided in the polling stations in the valley," he added.

He said all security arrangements have been put in place and the areas have been secured, while the polling parties and election material has

already reached the polling booths. "We are looking forward to good polling numbers," he said, and appealed voters to come to the booths wearing face masks.

Asked about the complaints that candidates were not being provided security or confined to secure accommodations, Sharma said while personal life of candidates was important, for an election to be successful, the candidates have to go out to the constituency and campaign.

"I reviewed this again today. Have we received any complaints? Not many. I have received one or two complaints and I have referred those to IGP Kashmir. However, the big leaders of political parties have not made any complaints about a specific candidate or a group of candidates that they have not been permitted to campaign," he said.

However, he said, candidates are told to inform police before going somewhere so that the visit is secured.

"Otherwise, wherever law and order is not suitable, candidates could come under risk. But, human safety, personal life of candidates are important and at the same time, there is of custom in democracy where the candidate goes to the constituency, campaigns there, then only can the election be called successful. For that, the police is providing escort, but they have to stick to a time-table," he said.

"If any candidate wants extension in the hours, let them come to us with it and we will enable the candidates," he added.

On a question about those candidates who have won the polls unopposed being confined to clus-

ter accommodations, Sharma said the goal of the government was not to keep anyone away from their homes.

"If there is a security problem in their areas for some days, it will be taken care off immediately and they will be able to go to their areas sooner," he said.

When asked about the alleged detention of PDP president Mehbooba Mufti on Friday, the SEC said the visit was not campaign-related.

When it was reported, I sought a report from IGP Kashmir. I discussed it and verified it. Mufti is an ex-chief minister of J-K. Whenever she moves out, she needs protection. For all the ex-chief ministers, there is SSG secures them and which has a standing protocol which they have to follow. **PTI**

# J&K people should get rid of Abdullah-Mufti gang: Tarun Chugh

**Jammu:** Hitting campaign trail in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district, BJP general secretary Tarun Chugh on Monday urged the people to get rid of 'Abdullah-Mufti duo' who have been 'looting J&K for the last 70 years' and deprived the region of development and progress.

Addressing a meeting in Bhalla village ahead of the second phase of District Development Council (DDC) polls, he alleged that former CMs Farooq Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti have been aware of the corruption of each other.

"But no leader from these parties ever went to jail because there has been an understanding between the two to take turns for fillings their

coffers," Chugh said.

He said these leaders deliberately brought laws to favour some people, while other sections of the society like women and Gujjars were deprived of any benefits.

Calling the people to vote for the BJP in the coming elections, he said it is time power should be taken away from the Abdullah-Mufti gang and given to the common man.

"The people should get rid of Abdullah-Mufti duo who have been looting Jammu and Kashmir for the last 70 years and deprived the people of development and progress," Chugh asserted.

The second phase of the DDC polls will be held on Tuesday. **PTI**

# Modi attends Dev Deepawali in Varanasi, addresses nation

**RAMESH K. SINGH ■ VARANASI**

Seeing the grandeur of Dev Deepawali when lakhs of diyas (earthen lamps) were lit at 84-odd ghats spread in seven kilometres long semicircle area here on the auspicious occasion of Dev Deepawali on Monday evening, the emotionally charged Prime Minister Narendra Modi promised the people that the country would prosper across the world as despite all the hurdles and obstructions, river Ganga flows continuously.

Wishing all the people for

the festival, he said that though due to the coronavirus pandemic he could not visit his parliamentary constituency for long but there were rarely any moments when he did not think about the people that how everyone can get food and proper treatment.

After offering prayer at Kashi Vishwanath temple, Modi inspected the progress being made in his 'dream project' Kashi Vishwanath Corridor.

Later, boarding on cruise he reached Rajghat where he lit the lamp to mark the inaugu-

ration of Dev Deepawali festival.

It was for the first time, when Modi took part in any such big programme at this ghat located in the north part of the city because earlier, most of the time he visited either at Dashaswamedh or Assi ghat.

Highlighting the glorious history of this city, Modi said that Kashi always shows direction to the people and narrated the story how the festival of Dev Deepawali was started by Adi Shankaracarya at Panchganga Ghat and later on, after several centuries it was

revived by Rani Ahilyabai Holkar, who also built the Kashi Vishwanath temple but in the course of time, its link with the river Ganga was broken.

"We've tried to link the temple premises with the river," he said, adding that when he had launched the project, many had opposed it but despite all constructions we're moving ahead with our plan as the construction work of Ram temple is going on in Ayodhya. "Now Ayodhya-Prayagraj-Kashi areas in the state are being developed as a major tourist site," he said,

adding that we're working for protesting the pride and heritage of the nation while many others for just for their family and the status of their members, indirectly attacking the Congress.

Earlier, the PM launched the Pawan Path website of the Tourism department. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath welcomed the PM and praised his efforts for bringing back the idol of Goddess Annapurna which was stolen in 1913.

He also greeted the Sikhs on the auspicious occasion of Prakash Utsav of Guru Nanak

# Pak fighter jet spotted close to LoC in Poonch sector

**Jammu:** Amid escalating tensions, a Pakistani fighter jet flew very close to the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch district early Monday morning prompting Indian troops to maintain extra degree of alertness to foil any nefarious designs of the Pakistan Army.

"The jet flew close to the LoC in Poonch sector in violation of international conventions which does not allow fighter jets to fly within a 10 km radius of the border," a defence spokesperson said.

The spokesperson said that a jet stream was clearly visible in the sky close to the LoC in Poonch.

After a gap of a few hours, Pakistan army initiated an 'unprovoked' ceasefire violation in the Shahpur sector of Poonch. Defence spokesman in Jammu said, "Pak army initiated unprovoked ceasefire violation by resorting to use of small arms and intense mortar shelling in the forward areas." He said the Indian army retaliated strongly. **PNS**

# TMC reacts sharply after BJP says Guv may call Didi for floor test

**SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA**

The Trinamool Congress has strongly reacted to a comment from BJP MP Soumitra Khan who claimed that Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar was closely watching the steady alienation of MLAs from the ruling outfit and could soon call Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for a floor test in the Assembly.

Senior Trinamool leader and MP Saugato Roy said the BJP leaders were behaving like naive politicians who have no idea of the Constitution.

"Some BJP leaders have no idea of how the Constitution works... The TMC has a support of 294... so how can the Governor be expected to make

such an unconstitutional move by calling for a floor test..." Roy said wondering "in the first place even if the Governor would like to do so how Soumitra Khan got the information of his likelihood of doing so? The people are watching all this and they will take the decision when time comes... Let them do it and face the consequence."

Senior Minister Partho Chatterjee said that the TMC had an overwhelming majority and even if the Governor wanted a floor test there was no constitutional way that he could do it... "his hands are tied by the diktats of constitution."

Another TMC leader and Minister JP Mullick said that by making comments on behalf of

the Governor and on such a big constitutional issue "naive MPs like Soumitra Khan" were only exposing the Governor's office.

"It is for the Governor to take an action on him and not the Trinamool Congress Government," he said wondering why the Governor who was known for making comments on every issue had not come out with a statement on Khan's comment.

Taking a jibe at the TMC whose "organizational adhesive is giving way," Khan said soon half of the TMC MLAs would leave that party and join the BJP. "At least 8 ministers are ready to quit the TMC immediately," Khan, who is also the state president of Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM), said.

"The way the MLAs have been dissenting and leaving Trinamool, the governor may all of a sudden ask the CM to prove majority... There is a possibility," Khan said.

Adhikari a formidable leader for his mass connect unlike most of his party colleagues has still not left the TMC but is almost on his way out sources close to him say. In fact Adhikari on Monday took out a huge apolitical procession with flags bearing Sanskrit language "OM" symbols.

Adhikari apart there are other MLAs like Mihir Goswami who on Saturday joined the BJP. MLAs from Coochbehar, Diamond Harbour and North 24

Parganaas too have unfurled their rebel flags and are reportedly in touch with the BJP leadership.

Supporting Khan, Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh said "December will see many things happening in the TMC... the party will become half-extinct and it will vanish in thin air after the elections."

Saying that Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee lacked the courage to expel Adhikari he said "if she does so the party will vanish here and now... so she is buying time."

Meanwhile in a separate development Ghosh on Monday slapped a lighel notice on Chief Minister's nephew Abhishek Banerjee for calling him a goonda.

# Mamata Govt to kickstart door-to-door drive today

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA**

In a bid to reach out to the people of the State ahead of the 2021 Assembly elections the Trinamool Congress Government will launch a "Duarey Duarey" (door-to-door) campaign from December 1 to January 30, during when the Government schemes like the "Swasthya Saathi" or health insurance-for-all scheme would be taken to all the families.

Chief Secretary Alapan Bandopadhyay on Monday said that consequent to a decision taken by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee digital cards

for health insurance would be reached to all the citizens of the State through 20,000 camps which would run from December 1 to January 30.

Consequent to this scheme the entire population of the State will get Rs 5 lakh worth health insurance facility in private hospitals.

The Chief Minister had announced the scheme a few days ago saying Centre's "Ayushman Bharat" scheme was being run in a 60:40 ratio with the states implementing it, while "Swasthya Sathi" was totally funded by the Bengal government.

"Earlier, we had decided to enroll at least 7.5 crore people under 'Swasthya Sathi'. I am announcing today that every family in West Bengal, every person, be it a child or an old man or woman, irrespective of their religious affinity will be covered under this scheme," Banerjee said.

"The Centre gives only 60% for Ayushman Bharat. Who will pay the rest 40 per cent? If the common people need to pay Rs 2.5 lakh for a Rs 5 lakh scheme, then why will people opt for that. Our Swasthya Sathi scheme is 100 per cent funded by the state government," she said adding she would welcome the central scheme if they provided the entire 100 per cent cost.

# First wife creates ruckus on second marriage of husband

**Aligarh:** A young man from the Jeevargarh area of the Kwarshi police station was going to make a second marriage without divorcing his first wife on which his first wife caused a ruckus during the marriage ceremony. At this, he gave her triple talaq at the spot. The woman was shocked after hearing this and has filed a case against two brothers-in-law, including her husband at the Kwarshi police station.

Chandni daughter of Inayat Ali resident of Railway Loco Colony, Khurja Junction, Bulandshahr said that she married Tasleem Khan son of Salim Khan resident of Jeevargarh Gali-1. Since marriage, her husband and his family started torturing her for dowry for which a case was already registered on April 2, 2018, at Khurja Nagar police station.

# 8-year-old girl raped, strangled in Rajasthan

**PTI ■ JAIPUR**

An eight-year-old girl was thrown into a dry well after being allegedly raped and strangled to death by unidentified men in Pratapgarh district of Rajasthan, police said on Monday.

Her body was recovered on Saturday night, SHO of Choti Sadri police station Ravindra Pratap Singh said.

The accused abducted the minor from her house on Friday night while she was sleeping with her mother. She was allegedly raped and strangled to death, the SHO said.

They later threw the girl's body into a dry well, which is 300 meters away from her home, he added.

Singh said a probe into the matter is underway and nearly half a dozen people have been rounded up for interrogation.

# 21 new cases take Tripura's tally to 32,695

**Agartala:** At least 21 more people tested positive for COVID-19 in Tripura on Monday, pushing the tally in the state to 32,695, a health department official said. The death toll remained at 367 as no new fatality due to the infection was reported, he said. West Tripura district, of which state capital Agartala is a part, has accounted for 185 of the 367 COVID-19 deaths, the official said.

Tripura currently has 598 active cases, while 31,707 people have recovered from the disease. **PTI**

# Baba Amte's granddaughter Sheetal kills herself by injecting poison

**TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI**

In a shocking development, noted social worker and public health expert Dr Sheetal Amte-Karajgi, granddaughter of Magsasay Award winner Murlidhar D Amte alias Baba Amte, committed suicide on Monday morning, by allegedly injecting herself with some poisonous liquid, in Warora taluka town in Chandrapur district of eastern Maharashtra.

Dr. Sheetal was the CEO of Maharogi Sewa Samiti and also a member of the board of the directors of the organisation that focuses on helping people disadvantaged by leprosy. She used to run "Anandwan", a place housing Maharogi Sewa Samiti (Leprosy Service Society) that her grandfather had founded at Warora in Chandrapur district which had converted into a smart village.

Dre Sheetal was declared dead at Warora sub-district hospital, where she had been rushed to earlier in the morning after it was prima facie learnt that she had administered herself with a poisonous injection.

She was 40 and is survived by her husband Gautam, six years old son Sharvil Karajgi and her parents Dr Vikas Amte and Bharati Amte. Her famous uncle Prakash Amte and Mandakini Amte, both Magsasay laureates, are doctors at Anandwan.

Given that the motive behind Dr Sheetal's suicide is not known, the Chandrapur district police have launched investigations into her death. The investigators are trying to ascertain if she had left a suicide note.

Significantly enough, Dr Sheetal had posted a photograph of an acrylic painting named "War and Peace" done by her on a 30 inches x 30 inches canvas on her twitter handle on Sunday. The painting carried



File pic of Dr Sheetal Amte-Karajgi

# I am facing life threats from my own daughter: Abdul Rashid Shora

**MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU**

Even after quitting 'active' politics a year ago former student leader and JNU activist Shehla Rashid on Monday found herself in a spot after her father, Abdul Rashid Shora surfaced in Jammu claiming he was facing death threats from his daughter and a security guard attached with her.

Abdul Rashid Shora also accused her of indulging in anti-national activities in the company of few notorious people. Referring to a series of meetings which took place between him and a Kashmiri businessman Zahoor Watali, former M.L.A Engineer Abdul Rasheed in 2017, Abdul Rashid alleged his daughter was offered a sum of Rs Three crores by the same people to join hands with them in the active politics. Zahoor Watali was arrested by the National Investigation Agency in the terror funding case in August 2017.

Feeling insecure due to

recent life threats, Abdul Rashid Shora claimed he has sought security protection from the Director General of Jammu and Kashmir police to ensure his safety.

In a written complaint addressed to the Director General of Jammu and Kashmir, Abdul Rashid Shora also claimed that Shehla is being supported by his elder daughter Asma Rashid, his wife Zubeida Shora and one of the security guards, Sakib Ahmad.

Abdul Rashid Shora also went on to claim in his complaint, "As a concerned father when I strongly objected to my daughters decision for joining these notorious people as I felt the money coming will be used for unlawful activities they threatened to kill me."

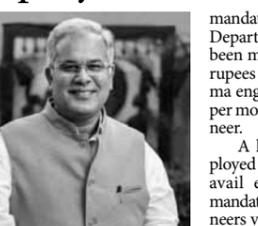
"I have a strong belief that there are anti-national activities going on in my house, the characters involved in this plan are my daughters, my wife and Shehla's security guard namely Sakib Ahmad," he added.

# Chhattisgarh Govt announces steps to eradicate unemployment from State

**Raipur:** The State Government under the leadership of Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel took a historical decision today, to employ the unemployed youth of the State.

Concerning this, the E-category registration system in the Public Works Department of the State Government is to be initiated in all the construction departments, bodies and boards of the State Government.

Baghel affirmed that the integrated "E" category registration system has been implemented in the state by the Public Works Department. A provision has been made to employ the local unemployed youth via the "E" category registration system in a single work through a lim-



ited tender at block level costing up to Rs 20 lakhs.

The appointment of Diploma Engineers in the projects undertaken worth Rs 20 lakh and graduate engineers to be appointed in projects costing up to one crore in construction contracts have been made

mandatory by the Public Works Department. A provision has been made to pay 15 thousand rupees per month to the diploma engineers and 25 thousand per month to the graduate engineer.

A large number of unemployed engineers will be able to avail employment with the mandatory appointment of engineers via the tender contracts.

The Chief Minister has further directed the Chief Secretary of the state that instructions should be issued to follow the above two decisions of the Public Works Department in all construction departments, bodies, boards, boards etc. so that more and more youth of the state could avail its benefits.

AMU landmarks illuminate on Nov 30, December 1

**Aligarh:** The landmark buildings of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) such as the Administrative Block, Bab-e-Syed, University Staff Club, Faculty of Arts, Maulana Azad Library, Victoria Gate, Centenary Gate, University Mosque and Strachey Hall will be illuminated during evenings of November 30 and December 1 with projections of creative lights and design, weaving in the rich and unique University heritage to mark the Centenary Celebrations.

# AMU has produced 2 Bharat Ratnas, completes 100 yrs

**Aligarh:** A premier institute of learning and a central university that has produced two Bharat Ratnas: the Frontier Gandhi, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Dr Zakir Husain now completes 100 years of existence. It was on December 1, 1920, the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College was transformed into Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) through the official gazette. Since its inception, AMU has been making seminal contributions to different branches of knowledge and many of its students and faculty members have been awarded.

In another tweet posted on November 19, Dr Sheetal had opined that one should not feed trolls. "The first rule of social media sanity: don't feed the trolls. When someone courts controversy and hurls insults, responding runs the risk of reinforcing the behavior. If people are seeking attention, sometimes silence is the message that speaks loudest. @AdamMGrant," her message read.

## Cong's State pillars

The party's CMs have kept the farmers' issue boiling, enough for the Govt to take note. Can the leadership build on this?



If Prime Minister Narendra Modi has had to clarify in every public speech within days that the new farm laws are progressive and he is just as protectionist about farmers' interests, then the latter's agitation has worked. If Home Minister Amit Shah is trying to douse the fire and attempting reconciliatory talks after his own partymen are labelling the stir as a Khalistani and Maoist plot, then the *kisan* unions have had their way. And though the protesters have largely stayed away from politicians on principle, the fact that Punjab's Congress Chief Minister, Capt Amarinder Singh, has been consistently pushing their cause, no matter how self-serving that might

be, has given the farmers' campaign a political heft that has blunted the edge of the Centre's unilateralism. In fact, it is the first time that Congress Chief Ministers like Singh and Chhattisgarh's Bhupesh Baghel have turned the tide of national discourse by crusading against the farm Acts and forcing a discussion on consensus politics, something that the central Congress leadership has fallen far short of. Singh's Government has not only brought its own amendment Bills against the farm Acts, Congress MLAs are on a relay dharna in Delhi demanding an audience with the President, who may not entertain a challenge to the Central laws. But at least Singh has given the Congress a talking point at a time when it's languishing by the wayside. Of course, the Punjab Government could have simply brought in its own law to pick up all State produce at Minimum Support Price (MSP), regardless of the Central laws that allow farmers access to wider markets but throw them at the risk of being cheated out of a fair price given the competition. There are fears that the older regulated system, while co-existing, would be weakened by a parallel market and Singh played on these by pushing an amendment to the Central law itself, knowing full well that it was a negative rather than assertive action but would be more politically loaded. The first amendment says that the sale of wheat and paddy (which are the State's cash crops) will be valid only if the seller pays a price equal to or greater than the MSP announced by the Central government and that any violation would be punishable. The second Bill reintroduces the market fees or licences for private players outside the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) *mandis*, which the Central law has abolished. This it says will be used to create a distress fund for small and marginal farmers; hence is populist. The third Bill attacks the central Act that gives unlimited power of stocking essential commodities to traders and reassigns that right to itself, arguing that production, supply and distribution of goods make for a State subject. Punjab is also planning to tweak the definition of a "trade area", where farmers, traders and electronic trading/transaction platforms are given freedom to deal in farmers' produce without any restrictions, to cover its limits. It is impossible for the Centre or food majors to agree to such clauses but Singh has scored over the might of the ruling BJP or any sane argument by crusading with zeal and symbolism. Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and Baghel, too, have pushed amendment Bills but with not as many punishing clauses. But the three have certainly built momentum on an issue that matters across heartland India and have sustained and mobilised a movement around it, strong enough to give the Congress its first cogent tool as an Opposition.

In fact, strategy or not, the three Congress Chief Ministers are not just holding on to their turfs but are articulating positions on national issues. Baghel and Gehlot have been warning against the brutal communalisation of personal freedoms implicit in the proposed "love jihad" laws by BJP-ruled States. Singh has refused the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) entry without his permission. Unless there is a strategy to deflect attention from the central leadership, the Congress chieftains are doing pretty well as the voice of the Opposition on their own. The problem is people still want to hear the central leadership and expect it to steer the discourse. But ever since the Hathras rape-murder case, when the Gandhi scions visited the victim's family amid high drama, they have been silent. In fact, that was a bit of a hit and run given their belligerence as we are yet to hear from them on a follow-up to the case. Contrast that to the Chief Ministers, who have stayed with their respective causes. Also Singh, Gehlot and Baghel have defended the leadership tooth and nail, speaking out against the Congress' dissenters, saying it was more important to coalesce against the BJP on graver issues than fight among themselves or lampoon the leadership. And that "electoral defeats were not the yardstick for leadership change." Question is will the Congress leadership reward this loyalty and bring its chieftains forward or use them for fire-fighting? The fact that Singh and Baghel are more popular than Rahul Gandhi in their home States shows that the Congress does have leaders of merit, who collectively have it in them to revive the party and keep it relevant. The Central leadership has no choice but to devolve power and build a semblance of representational democracy in its organisational structure. In fact, the Congress has historically had strong regional leaders. If only it were to nurture their strengths than making their continuity conditional on doing the bidding of its first family, the party's organisational matrix wouldn't have been lying in shreds across States. Nor would the grassroots workers go fortune-hunting to other parties, fearing their voice wouldn't ever matter. Will the Congress learn to identify its assets first?

## Vaccine troubles

What does the case of the volunteer in Chennai tell us about medical trials?



While a 40-year old man, apparently a business consultant from Chennai, has claimed that he has suffered from adverse reactions to the trial vaccine administered by the Serum Institute of India (SII) during the Phase-III clinical trials, we do not know the full details of the case. This is the vaccine developed by Anglo-Swedish pharmaceutical firm AstraZeneca and University of Oxford where SII is a partner. For one, we still do not know whether the individual was given the new vaccine or a placebo, which is why his allegations raised by his lawyers are slightly suspect. The instant countersuit by SII makes one suspect whether this was

just an extortion attempt but one thing is clear, the individual involved has little chance of success in court as volunteers to clinical trials for any medication should be fully aware that they can suffer extremely adverse reactions to trial medication and those reactions could also mean death.

The extremely rushed research and development for vaccines to counter the COVID-19 virus, which has devastated the global economy and driven millions across the world back into poverty, might yet be successful but rushing clinical trials will mean that certain adverse effects and even a death or two might occur. Those who volunteer for such trials should be made fully aware of the risks and they usually are. In case this is genuine, and it well might be, the individual and his family should be compensated for his tribulations. The system of clinical trials in India should ensure that those who take upon the civic responsibility to better mankind by subjecting their bodies to such insane risks should be given adequate coverage for the danger involved. Ever so often in India, many trials are highly risky and those who volunteer, often from poorer families, are dumped and left without compensation or recourse if things go wrong. There may be more than what meets the eye in this particular case. But that should not take away from the tremendous risks and troubles that many clinical trial volunteers put themselves through. This also highlights that companies involved in clinical trials, whether they are large, global pharmaceutical firms or small research firms in India, should be more open and transparent about what the volunteers suffer. SII would do well to tell us the entire story lest this becomes a case where the anti-vaccine movement can get a foot in the door in India.

# Why Modi still stands tall

The answer lies in his minutiae precision on last-mile micro-management of 269 key projects, down to the district level percolation



BINDU DALMIA

As we enter the last month of a calamitous year, my year-end musings have been pivoted around the key question — What led to a surge in Modi's popularity while the opposite happened to the elected leaders of US and UK? Why did his persona prevail despite the pandemic challenging resources and policies? I would say that he kept the response specific to our reality rather than promising the moon and went in for long-term transformative measures that would equip the nation against any such unforeseen crisis in the future. **Trusteeship paradigm of governing the largest democracy:** At the recently concluded G20 summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for a new global index based on "respecting nature in the spirit of trusteeship of Mother Earth." His collaborative response in sync with multi-lateral institutions to prioritise ESG-centric concerns (based on the tri-pillar of environment, sustainability and governance) commits to a much-needed collective responsibility of all nations in managing the planet's resources.

By the same yardstick, the Prime Minister's post-pandemic management of his own country has paved the way for a new and distinct style of governing democracies on a similar "trusteeship paradigm." When benchmarked against global counterparts, Modi's crises-management places him in the league of the tallest global leaders for coming across as a trustee-head of the nation, who from the beginning, remained visible, accountable, admonishing, nudging and persuasive. At the same time, he was empathetically "shepherding his people, instead of resorting to punitive measures that would have regressed economic recovery."

Democracies, noticeably for the last five years, have mutated their strains, deviating from the original concept of fair, inclusive and participative governance to morphing into illiberal and totalitarian regimes. Viewed in this context, a "trusteeship model of democracy" is in sharp contrast to the ascent of authoritarian leaders, even in the most advanced democracies.

Was the Modi-led Government's response to the crisis financially adequate? This will



remain a subjective question as developed countries had greater flexibility for welfare measures to cushion vulnerable sections of society. In contrast, injecting four stimulus packages worth 10 per cent of the GDP to fire up the economy was the extent to which the Government could stretch its limits, with the fiscal deficit doubling to 7.7 per cent of the GDP.

Were India's containment measures and public messaging of the COVID crisis the best? Certainly not, when compared to Vietnam, Taiwan, Canada, Germany or New Zealand. Was Modi's early lockdown proactive or premature? Initially, the response to relief and rehabilitation was ad-hoc and knee-jerk. But then the Government swung into streamlining Centre-State coordination for DBTs and food grains reaching 800 million people.

During disaster management, it is impossible to forecast the duration or depths of *force majeure* damages as no leader can possibly see the end of the tunnel clearly when adversities strike. While the US and the UK's health infrastructure is ranked among the best by the Global Health Security Index, India's "mortality rate per million" remained among the lowest.

**Modi's popularity:** Modi 2.0 in 2020 is a distinctly changed persona, in image, in demeanour, in electoral rhetoric, in elevating the national agenda above narrow political, ideological or populist gains, and in taking the moral high ground

at international fora by demanding the reform of archaic multilateral institutions.

As we enter the last month of a calamitous year, one is compelled to assess just what was it about Modi that he not only retained but exponentially widened his electoral base as seen in the recently-concluded Bihar elections, despite a severely pandemic-ravaged economy? Because 2020 was a year that savagely punished elected leaders for acts of omissions in administering inadequate relief and rehabilitation, while outrightly rejecting Trump for remaining in denial of a humanitarian crisis of unprecedented scale.

The answer lies in Modi's minutiae precision on last-mile micro-management of 269 key projects, down to the district level percolation. As India approaches the delivery stage of the vaccine, Modi's forward-planning is becoming more job-stepped by visiting vaccine hubs to fine-tune distribution mechanisms, down to assessing the availability of cold storage chains and ancillary equipment like syringes.

**India ready for economic take-off:** In January 2021, the levers of global growth are expected to rebalance more favourably towards a partial return to globalisation, which is a distinct reversal from the economic insularity of the Trump era. With President-elect Joe Biden taking charge next month, economic recovery is expected to accelerate with the liberalisation of international

trade as America regains its leadership as the primary engine of growth, instead of China, which augurs well for global recovery.

India is now uniquely positioned for a faster climb-back after a contraction of -7.5 per cent, with the grounds being laid to expand economic activity. Optimism for an economic rebound is based on the structural reforms undertaken in 2020, the lowered rate of corporate taxation, a stable currency backed by strong foreign reserves, vibrant FDI flows of \$35.73 billion and the Finance Minister's nudge to increase CAPEX spending by public sector enterprises to drive economic growth. Sustained buoyancy will, of course, depend on the budgetary proposals and the efficacy of the vaccine in controlling future surges.

Going beyond crisis management, the Government needs to scale up human resource capital and find newer avenues for raising capital resources.

Second, if we aspire to make India a "Plus One" investment destination, gaps must be plugged for delays in contract enforcement. India takes 1,440 days to implement contracts against 150 days in Singapore. We need to hasten dispute resolution and follow Vietnam's example of allocating large land parcels on lease/rent/ mortgage.

Third, the pandemic forces a relook at our woefully inadequate investment in healthcare, education and labour-skilling,

all of which are State subjects and constitute three vitals of the Human Resource Development index. The Centre and States need to work more closely to incentivise private participation in education and healthcare by not restricting brick and mortar hospitals and universities to compulsory compliance with "not-for-profit agenda," as any prospective investor will look for a lucrative return on capital.

Removing the regulatory restrictions on "not-for-profit" institutions in education will create a facilitative environment for private participation by big domestic and overseas brands, build optimal capacities and bring in technology while lowering costs per-child per annum.

UNDP estimates that the total financial requirement for India to reach SDG 4 by 2030 is \$173 billion per year, as against the current budgeted outlay of \$76 billion annually for education.

The education sector will see explosive growth if Modi's plan to turn 1.2 million schools into "smart classrooms" is implemented by connecting 60,000 villages within three years with high-speed optic fibre. The Ministry of Electronics and IT is contemplating a public-private business model for this visionary project, which will lower the cost of education per child through e-learning.

In order to evolve as a knowledge-based economy and transit towards optimal digitalisation, the Modi Government has made great strides to push brand India into the top 50 countries club in the Global Innovation Index for the first time. Our higher education institutions have improved their global rankings and in the Employability Rankings 2020 Index, India has scaled up to the 15th position globally. However, we need to scale up to skill/re-skill 40 crore people by 2022 in order to match up to the pace of virtualisation which is a key enabler for economic recovery as these measures remain a work-in-progress.

I conclude this analysis by paraphrasing an opinion from *The New York Times*, which lauded Modi's initiatives by stating that he fared "better than many peers because he acted decisively, pre-emptively and relatively early...Modi's success, analysts say, may be more durable. He's widely seen as a mobiliser, not a despot..."

(The author is a columnist and Chairperson for the National Committee on Financial Inclusion at the Niti Aayog)

## SOUNDBITE

We need to recognise as a society that all of our economies around the world are built on the backs of women's unpaid labour.



American philanthropist —Melinda Gates

Happy Gurpurab to everyone celebrating. May the blessing of Guru Nanak ji always be with us.



Former cricketer —Sachin Tendulkar

Today, our farmers are forced to ask for their own rights! Shame on BJP govt for putting barriers to farmers in their own country.



Congress leader —Vivek Bansal

India considers SCO as an important regional organisation to promote cooperation in the areas of peace, security, trade, economy & culture.



Secretary (West), MCA —Vikas Swarup

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Don't blame FBI

Sir — The never-ending, well until January 20 to be precise, denial of the presidential election outcome is getting more extreme each day. However, US President Donald Trump's lawsuits have been failing with his pleas getting rejected in US courts.

The latest bit from a Trump interview — "This is total fraud and how, the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) and Department of Justice, I don't know, maybe they're involved" — shows that doubts will always remain around the verdict.

Surely, the FBI and DOJ are beyond reproach as their basic purpose is to protect the US and its way of life. They serve the country and its President, regardless of who is in power.

The 1960s TV series, *F.B.I.*, starring Efrim Zimbaldist, Jr, may have been over the top but the good guys are still serving their country by working for the FBI and not against it. Shame on you, President Trump!

### Beyond the kitchen counter

Opinion, which is a staple kitchen item among others for an average Indian, is an essential ingredient for many cuisines and recipes. From spicy curries to tangy relishes, it is impossible to imagine cooking anything without it. But it also has high medicinal value.

If folk remedies are to be believed, onions could treat cold, cough, asthma and bronchitis. Among other nutritional benefits, onions stimulate growth of healthy bifidobacteria in the colon and help in lowering blood lipids and are thus effective in managing cholesterol levels. The sulfide in onion reduces tumor growth and is being explored as a possible ingredient in the cure for cancer.

The flavonoids in onion help in reducing bad cholesterol while thiosulfinate thins out the blood further. These, traditional practitioners say, reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke. Onion also stimulates hair growth because of the huge content of sulphur in it. It stimulates blood flow and produces collagen, which helps in the growth of hair. One can extract its juice, mix it with almond oil or coconut oil and massage it on the scalp; leave it for around 45 minutes; then wash



it with warm water. One can also mix onion juice with lemon juice and massage the scalp with it. This prevents hair loss and dandruff.

In these times of immunity-boosters, we must tap into our plant wealth and heritage and develop a holistic well-being routine in our daily lives. Much of our herbal heritage needs to be recognised and patented for pharmaceutical uses.

Jubel D'Cruz  
Mumbai

certified Trump's Democratic rival Joe Biden as the winner in the State which has 20 electoral college votes.

Trump told reporters on Thursday that it would be "hard" to concede to Biden, a Democrat. He said he would leave the White House if the Electoral College declares Biden

as the winner but made it clear he was not prepared to "concede" the election.

Dennis Fitzgerald  
Melbourne, Australia

### Farmers' woes

Sir — In a democracy, it beats reason that its police force wants to

use stadiums to imprison protesters (farmers). It is a small mercy that the Delhi Government refused to grant the police the permission to do so. These farmers have simply been protesting against a law that they don't find favourable. They have as much right to make themselves heard and be invited to negotiations in

the consultative nature of democracy. Cracking down on them with force is no solution.

Given the recent decisions on Shaheen Bagh and other cases, pertaining to protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, this brutal silencing of protest was all but expected.

The discontent of farmers in this country has been growing over the years due to the Central government's careless economic policies. These have debilitated the rural economy. Farmers have experienced a growing mismatch between their production efforts and income under the current regime.

Climate change and its outcomes have already worsened the farmers' condition. The new farm Acts expose them to market fluctuations, hence the insecurity. The community of farmers is thus right in feeling agitated. The Government can try and keep farmers under control but it cannot deny the discontent that is growing among 60 per cent of the country's voting population. They could turn the tide.

Bhagwan Thadani  
Mumbai

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

**FIRST COLUMN**

## A polarising municipal poll

The GHMC campaign was centred around comments on Pakistan, Jinnah and a Hindu-Muslim narrative, not civic issues



KALYANI SHANKAR

Whoever thought that a civic poll would create so much excitement, passion and polarisation? The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) election scheduled for today (December 1) has become an unprecedented high-profile political event. It is being fought with the same vigour as the Lok Sabha polls by not only the BJP, which is aiming high, but also by the other players like the ruling Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS), the All-India Majlis-e-Ittehaadul Muslimin (AIMIM) and the Congress Party. The BJP is ambitious and wants to replace the TRS. This is an indication of what will come in the 2023 Assembly polls. The party has an advantage because the Congress, which ruled the State, for many decades and the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), which was in power till a few years ago, left a space for the BJP to occupy. The TDP is almost wiped out and the Congress receded to fourth place in the recent Lok Sabha polls.

Eyebrows are being raised at the way the BJP has fielded national heavyweights for campaigning for a municipal poll, like the party chief JP Nadda, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. Though he did not campaign, even Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Hyderabad to review the progress of the COVID-19 vaccine clinical research on November 28. First of all, the BJP, which surprised everyone by winning four Lok Sabha seats out of 17 in Telangana in 2019, got the momentum and continued with another surprise victory in the Dubbaka bypolls early in November. After the recent stunning performance in the Bihar Assembly elections, the party's morale is high. Second, if the BJP wins the GHMC polls, it means that the saffron party is continuing its winning spree.

Moreover, the BJP is positioning itself to spread its footprint further South. As of now, the party is weak there as it has only one State Government (Karnataka) in its kitty. Third, the BJP wants to cut the AIMIM to size. The Asaduddin Owaisi-led AIMIM has always been strong in the Hyderabad region. Owaisi has expanded his party to Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The AIMIM is quite upbeat after winning five seats in the recent Bihar polls and wants to expand in West Bengal in next year's Assembly elections, too. However, this will cut into the Muslim vote bank and it will be helpful for the BJP to split the Muslim votes. Even though the TRS has always contested against the AIMIM in every election, the former has enjoyed issue-based support from the latter. The two parties tactically announced that there would be no tie-up in the municipal polls in order to protect their turfs.

The BJP the TRS and the AIMIM have all been generous in spending money and have more than adequate muscle power and manpower to fight this election for different reasons. The BJP wants to spread its wings further in the South. The AIMIM has always won in the Hyderabad region and is protecting its turf. As for the ruling TRS, it is a fight for its prestige. The party, which has been on a winning spree since the State was bifurcated in 2014, made a clever and surprise move by advancing the civic poll by two months. The TRS had won 99 seats in the previous civic elections while the AIMIM won 44 seats, the BJP three and the Congress two.

The BJP is attacking the TRS for its politics of appeasement. Plus, the recent flood relief measures have been inadequate. The Musi River that runs through the city was in spate last month and tanks and nullahs developed breaches and low-lying areas were waterlogged. About 50 municipal wards were affected due to it. The BJP cleverly wants to cash in on this. Interestingly, while the GHMC poll is normally fought on civic problems like water, sewerage, sanitation, roads and other amenities, the campaign showed a polarising trend. It was centred around polarising comments on Pakistan, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, allegations involving Rohingya refugees and a Hindu-Muslim narrative, not civic issues.

This led to the Director-General of Police Mahender Reddy to warn the parties after a security meeting. "They are trying to incite communal trouble. We are examining the speeches carefully. Action will be taken as per law against those trying to create disturbances," he cautioned. Hyderabad has one of the largest Muslim populations for a city in India; about 44 per cent of the people in the city are Muslim while 52 per cent are Hindu. All the parties have been generous in promising sops to the electorate if they win. The BJP, the TRS and the Congress have promised free drinking water supply to the city, while the BJP has promised a free vaccine to tackle the Novel Coronavirus and renaming of Hyderabad as Bhagya Nagar.

The Chief Minister of Telangana, Kalvakuntla Chandrababhan Naidu, is threatening to mobilise a non-BJP Opposition front including the Trinamool Congress, the Samajwadi Party, the Nationalist Congress Party and so on, in an attempt to revive the anti-BJP front. Opinion polls have come up with varied findings, giving the maximum seats to the TRS at 85, while almost all of them see the BJP winning nearly 30 per cent of the votes. The 35 votes of the MLAs and MPs in the region would go in favour of the TRS. However, it all depends on whom Dame Luck favours in the end.

(The writer is a senior journalist)

**POINT COUNTERPOINT**

**THEY (AUSTRALIA) HAVE OUTPLAYED US. WE WERE INEFFECTIVE WITH THE BALL AND DIDN'T HIT THE AREAS.**  
 —INDIAN CRICKET CAPTAIN VIRAT KOHLI



**KOHLI IS AN IMPULSIVE CAPTAIN. HE IS MAKING TOO MANY CHANGES IN HIS BOWLING. AND THIS IS AN AREA THAT HE NEEDS TO TAKE CARE OF.**  
 —FORMER INDIA PACER ASHISH NEHRA

# Plug the leaks

The Government should stop selling food at a subsidised price through the PDS. Instead, it should limit its role to crediting subsidy directly to the accounts of beneficiaries



UTTAM GUPTA

Since 2014, the Narendra Modi Government has weeded out close to 44 million bogus ration cards by using the Information Technology (IT) infrastructure viz. digitisation, seeding of Aadhaar on ration cards, electronic point of sale machines at retail shops and so on. However, this addresses only a small aspect of the problem and that, too, is unlikely to be rooted out completely with the use of technology alone. Besides, large-scale diversion and black marketing of grain, inclusion of the privileged among beneficiaries, a ballooning subsidy bill and so on will persist so long as the extant system of routing food subsidy through State agencies continues. What then is the way forward? The Government should stop selling food at a subsidised price. Instead, it should limit its role to crediting subsidy directly to the accounts of beneficiaries. When foodgrains at ₹1/2/3 per kg are not available, these malady will be automatically nipped in the bud.

Under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), the Union Government arranges for supply of wheat, rice and coarse cereals to the beneficiaries at ₹2/3/1 per kg, which is a fraction of the cost of procurement, handling and distribution (eg. 1/15th in case of wheat). Every person whose name is mentioned on the ration card is eligible to receive five kg of rice or wheat per month. In addition, during April-June, to mitigate the impact of COVID-19, the PM Garib Kalyan Yojna added a "free" five kg of rice or wheat per person per month to all 815 million individual beneficiaries under the NFSA. Besides one kg of free pulses per month was provided to every family. These additional provisions were extended for a further five months till November.

The supplies are made by the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and other State agencies on behalf of the Central Government, which reimburses to the former the excess of the cost of purchase, handling and distribution over the price charged from the beneficiaries i.e. ₹2/3/1 per kg on additional supplies (during the eight months of the current year, this is zero). This reimbursement or food subsidy is paid from the Central Budget. In recent years, food subsidy has increased to frightening levels. During 2019-20, it was ₹2,19,000 crore. For 2020-21, prior to COVID-19, the likely spend was estimated to be ₹2,53,000 crore. Including the impact of free food during April-November or about ₹1,50,000 crore, this will scale up to ₹4,03,000 crore. In case the free food scheme is extended further, the spend will be much higher.

The ballooning food subsidy is putting a huge stress on the Union Budget. Faced with a shortfall in tax collection in recent years and the overarching need to contain fiscal deficit, the Centre has been making short payments to the FCI, forcing the latter to borrow heavily to sustain its operations. The situation is so pathetic that since 2016-17, the FCI has been drawing funds from the National Small Savings Fund (NSSF). As on March 31, the cumulative borrowings from the NSSF were to the tune of ₹3,30,000 crore.

The allocation for the current year being ₹1,26,000 crore (₹1,16,000 crore provided in the Budget, plus ₹10,000 crore in the first supplementary demands for grants) against the requirement of ₹4,03,000 crore, the shortfall is ₹2,77,000 crore. If no further supplementary authorisation comes, the FCI will have to borrow all of this from the NSSF, taking its borrowings to a gargantuan ₹6,07,000 crore as of March 2021. Though staying on the FCI's balance sheet, this mammoth debt

“  
**THE GOVERNMENT CAN TRANSFER ₹280 PER MONTH (SUBSIDY AT THE RATE OF ₹28 PER KG FOR 10 KG) TO THE BENEFICIARY'S ACCOUNT TO ENABLE HIM/HER TO BUY 10 KG FROM THE MARKET BY PAYING ₹300 (INCLUDING ₹20 FROM HIS/HER POCKET). THIS WILL STRIKE AT THE VERY ROOT OF DIVERSION, PILFERAGE AND BLACK MARKETING.**  
 WHEN FOODGRAINS AT ₹1/2/3 PER KG ARE JUST NOT AVAILABLE, THE VERY THOUGHT OF MAKING A QUICK BUCK WILL BE NIPPED IN THE BUD  
 ”



is entirely the liability of the Union Government and will need to be serviced from the latter's tax collections in the future. The core feature of this scheme, or supply of wheat or rice at a price almost close to zero, may be a boon for the beneficiaries but ends up being a bane for the economy. The availability of wheat at ₹2 per kg through the Public Distribution System (PDS) under the NFSA, when the market price is a minimum ₹30 per kg, is a huge allure to all those involved in its implementation. No wonder, there is large-scale diversion of foodgrain from rick unloading points and godowns of the FCI. Trucks disappear on way to the retail sale points. Then there are millions of non-existent or fake beneficiaries.

There is a clamour for becoming beneficiaries under the scheme even as there are numerous instances of people selling their subsidised quota of foodgrain, say wheat bought at ₹2 per kg, to dubious traders at ₹12 per kg or more. Clearly, there are millions availing subsidised food despite being above the poverty line. The official word on the number of poor in India is no more than 25-30 per cent; yet the beneficiaries under NFSA are nearly over 66 per cent.

Further, since the handling and distribution cost, besides the Minimum Support Price (MSP) paid to farmers, is reimbursed to the FCI and other State agencies on "actual" as food subsidy, inefficiency and inflated cost claims (including bogus) are inevitable. The "loaders" getting away with monthly salary in lakhs easily pass muster under a cost-based mechanism. Reports of disappearance of food stocks in Punjab causing a loss of over ₹20,000 crore to the exchequer in 2016 are still fresh in people's memory. Such inefficiencies and irregularities have also been pointed out by the Comptroller and Auditor

General (CAG) of India. Meanwhile, the most deserving (poorest of the poor) continue to be deprived of their full requirement. This is because supplies under the NFSA at five kg per person per month barely cover 50 per cent of the requirement of a person, which is 10 kg per month, as estimated by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO). Having to buy the balance five kg at a very high price, say ₹30 per kg in case of wheat, they are worse off.

Weeding out of 44 million bogus beneficiaries in itself may appear to be a big accomplishment. But seen in the broader perspective, this addresses only a small aspect of the problem and that, too, is unlikely to be rooted out completely with use of technology alone. Besides, other problems will persist so long as the system of routing food subsidy through State agencies continues. In early 2015, a committee under Dr Shanta Kumar, a senior BJP leader, had recognised the need to deal with non-deserving beneficiaries and restricting subsidised food only to the very poor. It recommended a cut in the number of those eligible for subsidised food from 67 per cent to 40 per cent and restricting the benefit of ₹1/2/3 per kg only to the poorest of poor people under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana, while increasing the supply to seven kg per person. Others should pay 50 per cent of the MSP paid to farmers.

Even as that report is lying in cold storage, its prescription is nowhere near addressing the flaws in the existing system. The way forward is to stop routing subsidy through the State agencies. In other words, the Government should not sell food at subsidised price; instead, it should limit its role to crediting subsidy directly to the beneficiary's account. The Government can transfer ₹280 per month (subsidy at the rate of ₹28 per kg for 10 kg) to the ben-

eficiary's account to enable him/her to buy 10 kg from the market by paying ₹300 (including ₹20 from his/her pocket). This will strike at the very root of diversion, pilferage, black marketing. When, foodgrains at ₹1/2/3 per kg are just not available, the very thought of making a quick buck will be nipped in the bud. As for the FCI *et al*, while they will still be involved in purchase, handling and distribution, they will operate like any other business entity and be compelled to operate efficiently and keep costs low.

With private entities, too, allowed to directly buy from farmers, stock farm produce sans any limit (courtesy, the three farm laws recently enacted by the Centre), there will be plenty of products available in the market ensuring fair amount of competition and enabling low price to consumers.

We will have a scenario whereby the market price of wheat could come down to say ₹25 per kg or even less (from the existing minimum of ₹30 per kg) giving relief to everyone. Ditto for other products. It will have a deflationary impact down the line as all of the processed food will cost less. There will be huge saving in subsidy, which will be restricted only to the poor or about 300 million (down from existing 800 million) even as the Government need not have to pay for any flab such as inflated cost, inefficiencies, subsidy to bogus beneficiaries and so on. This will rein in fiscal deficit and trim borrowings, thereby preventing an unsustainable burden on the future generation of taxpayers.

The outcome of this approach is very promising; however, its adoption will require political courage and a fundamental change in the mindset of our policymakers.

(The writer is a New Delhi-based policy analyst)

# A leader who believed in leaving no one behind

Indira Gandhi nationalised private banks, turned them into the biggest public sector banking system in the world which gave people loans for self-employment



EDUARDO FALEIRO

Recently, we commemorated the birth anniversary of the late Indira Gandhi, who has so far remained the only woman Prime Minister of India. She was considered the most popular leader of the masses of Independent India especially among the weaker sections of society. The Congress Party during Indira Gandhi's tenure coined the slogan "Garibi hatao" (eradicate poverty)" and she led the efforts for the amendment to the Preamble of the Constitution to include the words, "Socialist, Secular and Democratic Republic of India."

In furtherance of these concepts, her Government implemented the 20-point programme. Its basic objective was to eradicate poverty and to improve the quality of life of the poor and the weaker sections of society. It included removal of rural poverty, health, education and housing for all, justice for Scheduled Caste (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) and equality for women.

Indira Gandhi nationalised private sector banks and turned them into the most gigantic public sector banking system in the world, which gave people loans for self-employment. I happened to be involved in the implementation of the 20-Point Programme when I was Union Minister of State for Finance. The banks were instructed to provide loans to the poor and weaker sections of society who wanted to open some small business. As a result, millions across the country got those small loans for setting up their own ventures. The rate of repayment of those loans was as good, if not better, than

the repayment of large loans taken by big firms. For the benefit of the people, the number of bank branches was increased substantially, too.

In Goa, we had branches of the State Bank of India (SBI) and of a couple of other banks in the main towns but not in the villages. During my tenure, in the process of implementation of the 20-Point Programme, branches of different banks were opened in practically every village of our State. Similar steps were taken in all States across India.

Indira Gandhi was much criticised for imposing the Emergency in 1975 which lasted for 21 months. To my mind, Emergency was thought to be necessary at that time in view of the moves of the Opposition to destabilise the Government and the country. The Emergency was imposed on the advice of Sanjay Gandhi and Siddhartha Shankar Ray. Much of the criticism of the Emergency was on account of the Family Planning programme, which was implemented in North India

sometimes in a drastic and brutal manner. Sometime later, Indira Gandhi herself felt that imposition of the Emergency had been a mistake.

In Goa itself, Emergency proved to be beneficial. "Trains are running on time" was then a national slogan and in Goa the Administration became more efficient, black marketing and hoarding stopped and food and other articles of general consumption were easily available, which was not the case earlier. The support of the Goan people to the Government of India during Emergency benefitted the Congress Party, which went on to win the Lok Sabha seat of South Goa. This was the first-ever election victory of the Congress Party in Goa. Until then, the Congress had not won a single seat either in Parliament, in the Assembly or even at the municipality level.

In the general elections held in 1977, Indira Gandhi lost her Lok Sabha seat from Rae Bareilly but immediately thereafter in 1978 she won a byelection from the

Chikmagalur constituency. In November 1978, the Janata Party brought in a motion to expel Indira Gandhi from Parliament. My party, the Congress (U), supported this motion of the ruling party. However, I personally could not support it. I felt that I had won the Lok Sabha election in the name of Indira. I met Yashwantrao Chavan, who was the leader of the Congress (U) in Parliament. Chavan permitted me to oppose the motion. During the debate, while my party supported the motion, I strongly opposed it. Indira Gandhi was in the Lok Sabha during the debate and apparently she never forgot my support to her on that day. In 1980, I was the only candidate in the whole country belonging to the Congress (U) who was also supported by the Congress (I).

After Liberation, there were two opposite points of view on the status of Goa, Daman and Diu. In the first four Assembly elections, the Maharashtra Gomantak Party (MGP) obtained a significant victory

and formed the Government. The MGP wanted the merger of Goa into Maharashtra on the grounds that Goa identified culturally and in many other ways with Maharashtra. The United Goans Party (UGP) as well as the Congress held that Goa should not merge with Maharashtra. The MGP wanted the matter to be decided by voting on the floor of the Assembly.

This was strongly opposed by the UGP and the Congress. Thereafter, during the premiership of Indira Gandhi an opinion poll (referendum) was held for Goa. This was the first and so far the only ever held in the country. It went against the demand for the merger. Thereafter, the Congress and the UGP demanded statehood for Goa.

My first speech in the Lok Sabha echoed that demand for statehood. However, Morarji Desai, then Prime Minister, was not in favour of small States. In 1980, Indira Gandhi returned as Prime Minister and I moved a Bill seeking statehood for

Goa. Rajiv Gandhi, then General Secretary of the Congress Party, met me and promised that statehood would be granted to Goa. True to his word, statehood was granted to us in the next term of the Lok Sabha during the premiership of Rajiv Gandhi himself.

It was obtained due to the efforts of then Chief Minister Pratapsingh Rane, my colleague in the Lok Sabha Shantaram Naik and other leaders of the Congress and the MGP's Pankar. The MGP brought a resolution demanding Statehood for Goa. While replying to the debate, Shashikala Kakodkar, then Chief Minister said, "In the early years after Liberation, the MGP stood for merger with Maharashtra and fought for it through the opinion poll in a democratic way. The verdict of the poll went against the merger. The MGP accepted the people's verdict because it believes in the wisdom of the electorate."

(The writer is a former Union Minister)

# Russia under pressure to explain Navalny poisoning

**The Hague (Netherlands):** Russia came under renewed pressure on Monday to explain the nerve agent attack on opposition figure Alexei Navalny as the annual meeting of the global chemical weapons watchdog got underway amid measures aimed at reining in the spread of coronavirus.

Navalny fell ill on August 20 during a domestic flight in Russia, and was flown to Germany for treatment two days later. His allies accused the Kremlin of poisoning its fiercest opponent.

Tests carried out by labs in Germany, France and Sweden and by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons established that Navalny was exposed to a Soviet-era Novichok nerve agent.

The organization's director-general, Fernando Arias, told Monday's meeting that according to the Chemical

Weapons Convention, "the poisoning of an individual through the use of a nerve agent is a use of a chemical weapon."

A group of 56 nations issued a statement at the start of the annual meeting of the OPCW's member states urging Moscow to disclose "in a swift and transparent manner the circumstances of this chemical weapons attack."

Russia, which denies involvement in Navalny's poisoning, reacted bullishly in its written statement to the conference.

"Instead of trying to look into what had happened, Germany and its allies resorted to megaphone diplomacy, unleashed a mass disinformation campaign against Russia and started to demand some 'independent international investigation' under the auspices of the OPCW," Moscow's statement said.

In October, Moscow asked

for OPCW experts to visit Russia to provide "technical assistance" in its investigations.

Arias said talks are underway to define "all the legal, technical, operational and logistical parameters in order for this visit to take place."

The European Union has imposed sanctions on six Russian officials and a state research institute over the poisoning.

Moscow responded earlier this month by announcing that it had adopted sanctions against a number of German and French officials.

The OPCW's annual meeting has been broken into two parts amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Two days of talks this week will focus on approving the proposed 71.74 million euro (USD 86 million) annual budget for 2021. The second half of the meeting will take place next year.

# 26/11: Extradition hearing for Tahawwur Rana to be held on Feb 12

**Washington:** A US court has set February 12 as the date of hearing for extradition of Pakistani-origin Canadian businessman Tahawwur Rana, who has been declared a fugitive by India for his involvement in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack case.

Rana, 59, a childhood friend of David Coleman Headley, was re-arrested on June 10 in Los Angeles on an extradition request by India for his involvement in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack in which 166 people, including six Americans, were killed.

Rana was earlier arrested in October 2009 by US police soon after Headley's arrest at Chicago O'Hare airport. US District Court Judge in Los Angeles Jacqueline Chelonian said in her order on November 13 that the Extradition Hearing in this case is scheduled for February 12, 2021, at 10:00 am.

Rana has time till December 21 to file his opposition to the request for extradition. The United States Government will have another month's time to file its reply.

In its motion on September 28, the US government support-

ed Rana's extradition to India where he has been charged with the offenses of conspiracy to wage war, commit a terrorist act, the waging of war, the commission of murder, and a terrorist act.

Rana, in his defense, has argued that the US' decision not to extradite his co-conspirator, David Headley, to India is inconsistent and bars his extradition.

However, the US government argued differently "because Headley fulfilled the required terms, the plea agreement established that Headley would not be extradited to India," said US attorney Nicola T Hanna.

"Rana's situation is different because he neither pleaded guilty nor cooperated with the United States. As a result, cannot avail himself of the benefits afforded to Headley through his negotiated plea. Such a position is neither inconsistent nor a bar to extradition," he said.

Unlike Rana, Headley immediately accepted responsibility for his conduct and pleaded guilty to all of the charges in the Superseding Indictment, Hanna said.

# Beware of coronavirus scams as vaccine approaches FDA approval

**Washington:** The coronavirus vaccine inching toward approval in the U.S. is desperately anticipated by weary Americans longing for a path back to normal life.

But criminals are waiting, too, ready to use that desperation to their advantage, federal investigators say.

Homeland Security investigators are working with Pfizer, Moderna and dozens of other drug companies racing to complete and distribute the vaccine and treatments for the virus.

The goal: to prepare for the scams that are coming, especially after the mess of criminal activity this year with phony personal protective equipment, false cures and extortion schemes. "We're all very excited about the potential vaccine and treatments," said Steve Francis, assistant director for global trade investigations with Homeland Security Investigations.

"But I also caution against these criminal organisations and individuals that will try to exploit the American public."

No vaccine has yet been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The FDA has approved the first treatment for COVID-19, the antiviral drug remdesivir.

With vaccines and treatments both, it has warned about the potential for fraud.

"The FDA is particularly concerned that these deceptive and misleading products might cause Americans to delay or stop

appropriate medical treatment, leading to serious and life-threatening harm," the agency said in a recent statement.

The drug companies are to have safeguards and brand-protection features in place to help avoid fraud, but that may not be available until the second generation of vaccine because everything is operated on such an emergency basis, said Karen Gardner, chief marketing officer at SIPCA North America, a company that works as a bridge between the government, businesses and consumers.

She said that makes it more important to educate health care providers on what the real thing looks like.

"When you have anything in high demand and limited supply, there is going to be fraud," she said. Desperation will drive people around normal channels.

Meanwhile, investigators are learning about how the vaccine will be packaged and getting the message out to field agents, creating a mass database of information from more than 200 companies, so they can be prepared to spot fakes and crack down on dangerous fraud.

They are monitoring tens of thousands of false websites and looking for evidence of fake cures sold online. Earlier this year as cases exploded, hospitals and governments grew short on masks, gloves and other protective gear.

# Huge potential for furthering India-Dutch economic ties: India's envoy Venu Rajamony

**The Hague:** There is huge potential for furthering growth in the Indo-Dutch economic ties, especially in the key areas of water, agriculture, food processing and healthcare, India's envoy to the Netherlands Venu Rajamony said on Monday.

Modern flood management principles adopted by the Dutch nation are of great value to India besides the culture of fitness and passion for cycling are worth emulating, he said on the last day of his tenure in this country.

"The pandemic has opened everyone's eyes to the need to stay healthy and build immunity. Bicycles are cheap, efficient and environment friendly. Electric bikes of the kind popular in the Netherlands can transport people over long distances with little effort. If manufactured in India in large numbers, prices will also be reasonable," Rajamony told PTI in an interview over tele-

phone.

He said that India has strong economic interests in the Netherlands in terms of trade and investment. In the financial year 2020-2021 (April-June), the Netherlands is the second largest investor into India at USD 1.085 billion, the senior diplomat said.

In the ongoing fiscal (April-September 2020), the Netherlands was the third largest destination for Overseas Direct Investment (ODI) from India with investments estimated at USD 679.12 million, Rajamony said. The top two destinations were Singapore and the US.

Rajamony, who superannuates on Monday after putting in over three decades as an Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officer, said that the relations between India and the Netherlands are at an all-time high and significant progress has been made during his tenure.

# Australia demands apology from China for tweeting 'falsified', 'repugnant' image on war crimes

**Melbourne:** Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Monday demanded an apology from the Chinese government for tweeting a "falsified" and "repugnant" image of an Australian soldier killing a child in Afghanistan, amid escalating political tensions between Canberra and Beijing.

Morrison also demanded that the Chinese foreign ministry delete the fake tweet attacking the Australian Defence Force in the wake of a war crimes inquiry.

Amidst spiralling tensions between the two nations over trade issues, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian on Monday tweeted a graphic image showing a grinning soldier holding a bloodied knife to the throat of a child holding a lamb.

"Shocked by murder of Afghan civilians & prisoners by Australian soldiers. We strongly condemn such acts, & call for holding them accountable," Zhao tweeted along with the picture.

"Don't be afraid we are coming to bring you peace," reads the message on the image,

referring to a report by Australia's military earlier this month which found "credible information" that some Australian soldiers were involved in the murders of 39 Afghan civilians and prisoners between 2009 and 2013.

The report recommends a total of 36 incidents be referred to the Australian Federal Police (AFP) for criminal investigation.

Morrison said the image tweeted by Zhao was "falsified", "truly offensive" and "repugnant".

"The Chinese government should be totally ashamed of this post. It diminishes them in the world's eyes," he said.

The image, the prime minister said, is "deeply offensive to every Australian, every Australian who has served in that uniform, every Australian who serves in that uniform today, everyone who has pulled on that uniform and served with Australians overseas from whatever nation, that they have done that. It is utterly outrageous and it cannot be justified on any basis whatsoever."

# Thai protest leaders hear police charges of defaming king

**Bangkok:** Five leaders of Thailand's pro-democracy movement reported to police on Monday to acknowledge charges that they defamed the king, the most serious of many offenses of which they stand accused.

The five are part of the student-led movement that for several months has been campaigning for Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha and his government to step down, the constitution to be amended to make it more democratic and the monarchy be reformed to make it more accountable.

The demand about the monarchy is the most radical and controversial, because by tradition the institution has been considered untouchable, the bedrock element of Thai nationalism.

# Iran says Israel remotely killed military nuclear scientist

**Tehran:** A top Iranian security official on Monday accused Israel of using "electronic devices" to remotely kill a scientist who founded the Islamic Republic's military nuclear program in the 2000s.

Ali Shamkhani, the secretary of the country's Supreme National Security Council, made the comment at the funeral for Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh, where Iran's defense minister separately vowed to continue the man's work "with more speed and more power". Israel, long suspected of killing Iranian nuclear scientists over the last decade, has declined to comment on the attack.

Fakhri-zadeh headed Iran's so-called AMAD program, which Israel and the West have alleged was a military operation looking at the feasibility of building a nuclear weapon.

The International Atomic Energy Agency says that "structured program" ended in 2003.

U.S. Intelligence agencies concurred with that assessment in a 2007 report.

Israel insists Iran still maintains the ambition of developing nuclear weapons, pointing to Tehran's ballistic missile program and research into other technologies. Iran long has maintained its nuclear program is peaceful.

Shamkhani's remarks drastically change the story of Fakhri-zadeh's killing Friday. Authorities initially said a truck exploded and then gunmen opened fire on the scientist, killing him.

State TV's English-language Press TV earlier reported a weapon recovered from the scene of the attack bore "the logo and specifications of the Israeli military industry."

State TV's Arabic-language channel, Al-Alam, claimed the weapons used were "controlled by satellite," a claim also made Sunday by the semi-official Fars news agency.

# UN hosts latest round of talks on Syria's constitution

**Geneva:** Delegations from Syria's government, opposition and civil society are meeting in Geneva for the latest round of talks toward revising the war-battered country's constitution.

The U.N. Envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen, was hosting the various sides Monday a day after saying Swiss health officials signed off on hygiene measures in place to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

Several cases cropped up among the Syrian envoys during a previous round of talks.

Nearly a decade into Syria's war, Pedersen acknowledged Sunday "challenges" in moving

forward talks on the constitution, which notably do not include extremist factions that control some parts of Syria -- notably much of northwestern Idlib province.

He said overcoming "deep mistrust" would take a long time, but hoped that work toward possible exchanges of detainees and the establishment of common "principles" in the discussions could help to overcome it.

"I hope that what we have achieved is actually the beginning of starting to build trust between the parties and that this building of trust could then be a door opener to a broader political process," he told reporters on Sunday.

# 'China firmly supports Nepal to safeguard its sovereignty, territorial integrity'

**Beijing:** China's Defence Minister Gen. Wei Fenghe has lauded Nepal's leadership for resolutely pursuing the 'one-China' policy and offered firm support to the Himalayan country in safeguarding its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, the defence ministry said here on Monday.

Wei, who is also a State Councillor, met Nepal Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli and exchanged views on matters of mutual interest and held talks with Army chief Gen. Purna Chandra Thapa on ways to resume military cooperation and training impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic during his one-day visit to Nepal on Sunday.

According to a Chinese defence ministry statement, Wei told the Nepalese leaders that China highly appreciates Nepal for resolutely pursuing the 'one-China' policy, and also firmly supports Nepal to safeguard its national independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Under the 'one-China' policy, Beijing emphasises other countries to recognise Taiwan and Tibet as part of China, it said.

# Charity says shelling kills 11 civilians in Yemen's Hodeida

**AP ■ CAIRO**

Artillery fire killed at least 11 civilians, including four children, near Yemen's strategic port city of Hodeida amid that country's grinding war, an international charity said on Monday.

Yemen's internationally recognized government blamed the Iranian-backed Houthis rebels for the attack. A spokesman for the Houthis did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Save the Children said the attack took place Sunday when shells hit home in the town of Durayhimi, just south of Hodeida, which handles about 70% of Yemen's commercial and humanitarian imports.

# New Zealand files 13 safety charges after volcano killed 22

**Wellington (New Zealand):** New Zealand authorities filed safety violation charges on Monday against 10 organizations and three individuals after a volcanic eruption at White Island last year killed 22 people.

The island had been a popular tourist destination before the December 9 eruption. But many people now question why tourists were allowed to visit, especially after experts monitoring seismic activity raised the volcano's alert level two weeks before the eruption.

The names of those charged are being kept secret for now by authorities under New Zealand legal rules.

But two agencies which rely on public funding have disclosed they are among those charged: GNS Science and the National Emergency Management Agency.

Some of the others charged likely include private companies which took tourists to the island. The individuals charged were either company directors or managers.

# 13 charred to death as bus collides with van in Pakistan's Punjab

**Lahore:** At least 13 people were burnt alive and 17 others suffered injuries in a head-on collision between a bus and a van in Pakistan's Punjab province on Monday.

The accident took place on Kalakhatari Road Narang Mandi, some 75 kms from here.

According to rescue officials, the van collided with the bus head-on apparently due to poor visibility owing to fog.

"The van completely burnt after the collision. Rescue officials reached the spot and shifted the injured to hospitals," a rescue spokesperson said, adding that 13 passengers died of burns while the condition of some of the 17 injured is stated to be critical.

# The Empowered Officer, TRRDA, PWD(PMGSY), 7th Block, 2nd Floor, Secretariat Building, Agartala, Tripura invites sealed tender(s) against press NleT No : 14/EO/TRRDA/2020-21 date: 25.11.2020.

For Construction/Upgradation of Road & CD's including LS Bridges of PMGSY Works including performance based maintenance for five years,

1.Package No: TR-04-213: With Estimated cost: a) Construction: ₹ 525.73 Lakh b) Maintenance: ₹ 19.08 Lakh c) Earnest money: 10.90 lakh

2. Package No: TR-04-224: with Estimated cost: a) Construction: ₹ 249.10 Lakh b) Maintenance: ₹ 12.26 Lakh c) Earnest money: ₹ 5.23 lakh

For details please visit: [www.pmgstyenderstrp.gov.in](http://www.pmgstyenderstrp.gov.in)

**Sd/- Empowered officer**  
Tripura RRDA, PWD (PMGSY)  
7th Block, 2nd Floor,  
Secretariat Building, Agartala

# Novel coronavirus may enter brain via nose: Study

**Berlin:** The novel coronavirus may enter the brain of people through the nose, according to a study published on Monday that may help explain some of the neurological symptoms observed in COVID-19 patients, and inform diagnosis and measures to prevent infection.

The research, published in the journal Nature Neuroscience, noted that SARS-CoV-2 not only affects the respiratory tract but also impacts the central nervous system (CNS), resulting in neurological symptoms such as loss of smell, taste, headache, fatigue and nausea.

Although recent research has described the presence of viral RNA in the brain and cerebrospinal fluid, it remains unclear where the virus enters and how it is distributed within the brain.

The researchers from Charité-Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Germany examined the nasopharynx -- the upper part of the throat that connects to the nasal cavity -- a likely first site of viral infection and replication, and the brains of

33 patients -- 22 males and 11 females -- who died with COVID-19.

The median age at the time of death was 71.6 years, and the time from onset of COVID-19 symptoms to death was a median of 31 days, they said.

The researchers said that they found the presence of SARS-CoV-2 RNA, the genetic material of the virus, and protein in the brain and nasopharynx, adding intact virus particles were also detected in the nasopharynx.

The highest levels of viral RNA were found in the olfactory mucous membrane, they said.

According to the researchers, the disease duration was inversely correlated with the amount of detectable virus, indicating that higher

# 8 inmates killed, 37 others hurt in Sri Lankan prison riot; Govt orders probe

**Colombo:** The Sri Lankan government on Monday ordered a thorough probe into a riot by inmates over rising coronavirus infections at a prison outside the capital Colombo that left at least eight prisoners dead and 37 injured.

Defence Secretary Major General (Retd) G D H Kamal Gunaratne has instructed Inspector General of Police (IGP) C D Wickramaratne to conduct a special investigation into the tense situation reported at the Mahara Prison on Sunday.

Issuing a statement, the Defence Ministry said the directive was issued on Monday after it was noted that several inmates had reportedly attempted to escape the prison premises demonstrating unruly behaviour, the Colombo Gazette reported.

The latest clash at Mahara Prison started when some inmates protested against prisoners infected by the COVID-19 virus being transferred from other facilities to Mahara jail.

Police spokesman Ajith

Rohana said inmates created "unrest" at the Mahara prison, located about 15 kilometers north of Colombo, and prison officials took steps to control the situation.

The incident comes as pandemic-related unrest has been growing in Sri Lanka's overcrowded prisons. Inmates have staged protests in recent weeks in several prisons as the number of confirmed COVID-19 positive cases spiked in the country's overcrowded jails.

"The incident was started by a set of remand prisoners when they tried to force open a door and escape following which the authorities had to use force," Rohana said.

He said during the entire incident at least 37 more, including two jailors, were injured and all of them were transferred to the nearby Ragama hospital.

The residents near the prison said smoke was coming out of the premises due to fire.

Prison authorities said the rioters had set fire to the kitchen and a record room of the prison.

# Explosions in 3 Malian cities amid jihadist attacks

**Bamako (Mali):** The cities of Kidal, Gao and Menaka in northern Mali were hit by simultaneous attacks on Monday against military camps housing international forces, according to residents and a United Nations official.

Kidal resident Souleymane Ag Mohamed Ali said he heard more than 10 explosions coming from the direction of the camp for UN peacekeepers and soldiers for the French Operation Barkhane.

A UN official confirmed the attacks on three cities, saying rockets fell Monday morning on the camp in Kidal, and at the same time there were similar attacks in Gao and Menaka. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not permitted to speak to press on the matter.

There were no further details. No group has claimed responsibility for the simultaneous attacks, but they bear the mark of jihadist groups linked to al-Qaida that carry out attacks in both northern and central Mali.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Notice is hereby given on behalf of Mr. Shiv Hari Anora who is the owner of the Plot No. 183, area measuring 56 sq. yds., out of Kharsa No.821/21, situated in the revenue area of Village Bahata Hazipur, Colony known as Hanuman Khurd, Gula Vatika, Paragan Loni, Tehsil District Ghazabad, U.P. and further all be mortgage against the financial assistance from Unmed Housing Finance Pvt. Ltd. That, the Will executed by Mrs. Anoushka Devi W/o Mr. Sriraj Jain in favour of Mrs. Shrimati Jain W/o Mr. Karamjit Jain in respect of Plot No. 183, area measuring 56 sq. yds., out of Kharsa No.821/21, Death Certificate of Late Mrs. Shrimati Jain and Legal heir Certificate/Surviving Member Certificate of Late Mrs. Shrimati Jain are not available so to comply the requirements of BANK/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any person(s) having any objection regarding ownership and/or creating mortgage of the said property please hereby requested to intimate in writing to the undersigned within 7 days after the date of this notice.

Lucern Legal LLP  
269, Rama House, Ground Floor,  
Masjid Moth, Opp. Uday Park, South Ext. II,  
New Delhi-49, Contact #011-40046316

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Information is given to general public at large that my client Mr. Madan Singh S/o Late Mr. Narain Singh owner of Freehold Residential House No. 8-353, Plot No. 226 & 227 (Part) area measuring 40 Sq. Yds., Part of Kharsa No. 48-C, situated in the area of Village -Saton Puz Maga, Buzari, Dalia, Delhi abadi known as Gali No. 37/2 E, Block-P, Kirti Khand Enclave, Buzari, Delhi-110084, by virtue of Notarized General Power of Attorney Agreement to sell & will dated 21/02/2012 in date and has lost/impair his copy of Notarized General Power of Attorney Agreement to Sell & Will dated 23/03/2018 & Original Notarized Will dated 05/04/2011, I was executed in favour of Mrs. Jayashree Mutherejee Dio Late Mr. Kallu Das Mutherejee and same property is going to be financed by M/s. Vasu Housing Finance Corporation Ltd. A-32, 2nd Floor, Industrial Area, Phase-I, Naraina New Delhi-110028. If any person(s) have any objection(s) or Claims with respect to the right, title or interest in the said property then contact us within 7 days from the date of this notice on the number mentioned herein below calling which my client Mr. Madan Singh Housing Finance Corporation Ltd. A-32, 2nd Floor, Industrial Area, Phase-I, Naraina New Delhi, 110028 shall not be held responsible in any manner whatsoever.

Naveen Kumar Verma, Advocate  
F-211, Sector-3 vaishali, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh-201016

# S&P retains India's growth forecast at (-)9% this fiscal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

S&P Global Ratings on Monday retained its forecast of 9 per cent contraction in the Indian economy for the current fiscal, saying even though there are now upside risks to growth but it will wait for more signs that Covid infections have stabilised or fallen.

S&P, in its report on Asia Pacific, projected the Indian economy to grow at 10 per cent in the next fiscal.

"We retain our growth forecast of negative 9 per cent in fiscal 2020-2021 and 10 per cent in fiscal 2021-2022. While there are now upside risks to growth due to a faster recovery in population mobility and household spending, the pandemic is not fully under control. "We will wait for more signs that infections have stabilised or fallen, together with high-frequency activity data for the fiscal year third quarter, before changing our forecasts,"

S&P said.

According to the official data released last week, Indian economy recovered faster than expected in the September quarter as a pick-up in manufacturing helped GDP clock a lower contraction of 7.5 per cent. Indian economy had contracted 23.9 per cent in April-June.

The RBI in October projected India's economy to contract by 9.5 per cent this fiscal. It said the industrial sector is leading and the output is now above levels from a year ago, helped by rising demand for consumer goods.

Investment recovered faster than consumption in the second quarter, partly due to resumption of stalled projects. The private sector drove the recovery as spending resumed and households and firms moved more toward normalised activity.

S&P said inflation should ease from recent highs, albeit

gradually.

"We project that headline consumer price inflation just above the mid-point of the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) forecast a range of 2 to 6 per cent through 2021.

One-off factors should ease, including food-supply disruptions and supply constraints related to earlier lockdowns.

But the pass-through to core inflation, currently near 6 per cent, suggests that inflation persistence remains a challenge," it said.

S&P said it does not expect much fiscal easing in its projections. "Past action has targeted low-income households, with substantial welfare effects, but a broader fiscal effort has been lacking. We do not see this changing. At the same time, the RBI will be constrained from cutting rates and we anticipate rates will start normalising upward from 2021 onwards," it added.

## HEALING ECONOMY

# Green shoots to support equity markets

FIANS ■ MUMBAI

Faster-than-anticipated economic recovery along with likely continuation of accommodative monetary stance will support the domestic indices' expected northward trajectory during the week ahead.

However, spurts of likely profit bookings coupled with expensive propositions as well as any delay in anti-Covid vaccine rollout might arrest the potential up move.

"Equity markets could open higher on Tuesday, reflecting the positivity of the Q2 GDP numbers. Nifty continues to consolidate after reaching a high on November 25," said Deepak Jasani- Head of Retail Research at HDFC Securities.

"An upward breach of 13,146 is necessary to expect more upsides while a downward breach of 12,833 could

bring in more downsides and mean that a temporary top has been made on November 25."

Last Friday, official data showed that India's gross domestic product (GDP) contracted 7.5 per cent in the July-September period, as the economy rebounded from a record slump of 23.9 per cent in the previous quarter due to slowdown caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

This figure was higher than anticipated by the market.

Among sectors, automobile industry will be in focus during the holiday-shortened week, as the industry will divulge its sales performance during November.

The main festive season of 2020 ended last month and investors expect healthy sales performance from the sector.

"Going ahead, the overall structure of the market remains positive, but intermittent prof-

it booking cannot be ruled out, given the sharp rally in the past few weeks," said Siddhartha Khemka, Head of Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

"Auto companies will be in focus as November sales data will start coming from Tuesday, while banks or financials will be in focus as the RBI's Monetary Policy is scheduled for Friday."

The Reserve Bank's MPC is scheduled to announce the last review for the calendar year 2020. "The present liquidity glut, and the low-interest rates, will lead to improvements in the cost of funds for corporates and thereby their performance to a significant extent," said Joseph Thomas, Head of Research - Emkay Wealth Management. Market watchers opined that the RBI will maintain both repo rate and accommodative stance.

## GST ENABLEMENT ON UPI

# 4 months let-off from penalty on invoices without QR code

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

To promote digital payments in Business to Customer (B2C) transactions through QR Code and GST enablement on UPI, the government has conditionally waived the penalty provisions for a period of four months from December 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021 for issuing invoices without mandatory dynamic QR code by the registered persons with a turnover exceeding Rs 500 crore, sources said.

Sources in the Department of Revenue (DoR) said that the government has been pursuing the banks, vendors and the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) for almost a year now to introduce GST enablement on UPI. Multiple meetings were conducted by the department with the NPCI, top banks and other stakeholders to push the project.

The NPCI developed the necessary solution required and shared technical documents, FAQs, etc, with the banks. Also, the NPCI was ready for the bank certification from February 6, 2020 and targeted for GST enablement on UPI to go live from first week of March 2020.

Sources said that the government, also, in pursuance of its objective to create a less cash society, mandated issuance of invoices with dynamic QR code by registered persons (business entities) with turnover exceeding 500 crores,

The NPCI developed the necessary solution required and shared technical documents, FAQs, etc, with the banks

vide its order dated March 21, 2020 to enable GST on the UPI which was to be effective from December 1, 2020 in respect of invoices issued to unregistered persons (customers).

A penalty provision was also invoked for issuance of invoices without dynamic QR code from December 1. However, the majority of the banks lagged behind in their preparedness for enablement of GST on UPI despite multiple meetings, persuasions and necessary support from the NPCI.

According to the sources, recently in a high level review meeting at North Block on GST enablement on UPI, it was decided to give one time waiver on penalty provisions for four months period till March 31, 2021 on the condition that the stakeholders would set up necessary process during this period to go-live with QR code on invoices by April 1, 2021, thereby enabling GST on UPI.

Thus, the government, said the sources, decided to extend certain concession and issued fresh notification dated November 29, waiving the penalty for issuing invoices without dynamic QR code from December 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021, provided that the taxpayers start complying with requirement of QR code from April 1, 2021.

# Nitin Gadkari confident India will get Covid-19 vaccine as early as possible

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Monday expressed confidence that India will get a Covid-19 vaccine "as early as possible" and overcome the pandemic to win the economic war. Gadkari said the whole world, including India, is facing the crisis of Covid-19 and the situation is challenging. "We need to create positivity and self confidence in the mind of the people. Negativity and suspicion will create more complication," Gadkari said this at the Virtual Horasis Asia Meeting 2020.

He also said that on the basis of the latest statistics, "we can say that we are coming to the normal situation". At the same time in the manufacturing sector also, particularly trade and business, a lot of opportunities are up, he said.

The Minister for Micro,

Small and Medium Enterprises and Road Transport & Highways said that currently, "majority of countries are not interested to deal with China"; they are rather interested in India.

Gadkari also said that as compared to China, India has got the huge potential, as the young talented manpower is available in India. He added that there is availability of raw material in India and policy is favourable. "I feel that it is appropriate opportunity for the investor to invest in India," said.

He said such a situation is advantageous for the country's manufacturing sector to ramp up its capabilities to boost exports from India. "I am confident that we will get a vaccine as early as possible and 100 per cent we will win this war against COVID-19 and also win economic war," Gadkari said at a virtual event.

# Petrol, diesel price hike pauses after continuous rise

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

Oil marketing companies held back the increase in the prices of petrol and diesel on Monday much to the relief of consumers who have faced consistent increase in auto fuel prices in the past week.

With this, diesel prices continue to remain at 72.42 a litre in Delhi while petrol prices remain unchanged at Rs 82.34 per litre in the national capital. In other cities too, the price stayed at Sunday's level.

Oil marketing companies had raised the price of petrol by 21 paise and diesel prices by 29 paise per litre on Sunday. Before this, fuel prices increased in nine out of the last 10 days starting from November 20.

In the past 10 days petrol prices have now risen by Rs 1.28 per litre and diesel by Rs 1.96 a litre. The increase has been primarily on account of firming up of global oil and



product prices following news of a successful coronavirus vaccine. Petrol prices had been static since September 22, and diesel rates hadn't changed since October 2.

Though retail pricing of petrol and diesel has been deregulated and oil marketing companies were following a daily price revision formula, the same was suspended for almost two months to prevent volatility in international oil markets from impacting fuel prices regularly during the pandemic.

But with crude on the boil again on news of a successful coronavirus vaccine launch soon, the patience was lost by OMCs who finally resorted to price increase to cover for their under recovery on the sale of two petroleum products.

The benchmark Brent crude has crossed \$48 a barrel on Intercontinental Exchange (ICE) lately but is now hovering a tad lower at around \$47 a barrel. It has remained over \$ 44 a barrel for most part of November.

# KVIC's Honey Mission helps migrants earn

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The distressed migrant workers who were engaged with the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)'s Honey Mission in Uttar Pradesh in August this year, have reaped their first honey harvest and are awaiting a bumper yield in the months from December to March.

According to the KVIC, to begin with, five migrant workers in Western UP's Muzaffarnagar district extracted 253 kg of honey from their 50 honey bee boxes that were distributed to them on August 25 this year.

Raw honey sells at an average of ₹200 per kg and at this rate it is estimated to fetch nearly ₹50,000 to the migrant workers. This means an average income of ₹10,000 to each of these beneficiaries. A total of 700 bee boxes were distributed to 70 migrant workers after training by KVIC in this region.

# Gold down ₹142, silver declines by ₹701

In the previous trade, the precious metal had closed at ₹47,625 per 10 gram

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices fell ₹142 to ₹47,483 per 10 gram in the national capital on Monday on a weak global trend, according to HDFC Securities. In the previous trade, the precious metal had closed at ₹47,625 per 10 gram. Silver prices also declined ₹ 701 to ₹57,808 per kilogram from ₹58,509 per kilogram in the previous trade. In the international market, gold was trading lower at USD 1,781.50 per ounce, while silver was quoting flat at USD 22.29 per ounce. "Gold prices continued downside on Monday as optimism on vaccine has boosted investment sentiment towards riskier assets," HDFC Securities Senior Analyst (Commodities) Tapan Patel said.

# Auto wholesale billings to moderate as peak festive season ends: Ind-Ra

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

With the festive season now over in India, India Ratings and Researcher expects wholesale billings to moderate in the next couple of months, given that the inventory has already reached to a high level.

The ratings agency, in a report, pointed out that the inventory at dealer level for PVs (passenger vehicles) and 2Ws (two-wheeler) is already at higher than the 21 days recommended by Federation of Automobile Dealers Association (FADA).

However, it expects the overall automotive industry to continue to revive in the next two to three months, in line with the improving economic indicators.

According to the agency, domestic automobile industry (excluding CVs) reported year-

on-year (yoy) growth for the third consecutive month in October 2020, up 14 per cent YoY.

In fact, PVs and 2Ws sales volumes continued the growth trend, up 14 and 18 per cent on YoY basis, respectively, driven by increased consumer proclivity for personal mobility.

Besides, higher sales volumes in October were also to cater the increased demand during Navratri, the report cited. Furthermore, original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) chose to continue to stock up the dealership inventory ahead of Diwali in November, banking on a likely strong demand.

"In contrast, while retail sales volumes continue to see growth on a month-on-month (mom) basis, it remains a far cry from the FY20's levels, barring PVs," the agency said in the report.

# Banks acting as villains for traders, alleges CAIT

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) on Monday urged Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to prevent banks from entering into an "unholy nexus" with e-commerce companies which is damaging "small businesses".

In a communication sent to Sitharaman, it expressed serious concern over granting of 10 per cent cash back or discount by some of banks on purchase made via their cards from e-commerce portals.

It alleged that several banks are entering into an "unholy nexus with Amazon, Flipkart and other e-commerce companies, forming a cartel with them for indulging into anti-competitive practices and offending 'Fair Practices Code' of RBI for banks".

# Air India pilot unions seek civil Aviation Ministry's intervention on wage cut issue

Mumbai: Air India pilot unions IPG and ICPA on Monday sought the civil aviation ministry's intervention on the wage cut issue and also requested for an "urgent" meeting with him on several other issues. "In our meetings in September, you had given us an assurance to look into our grievances positively. While other airlines are rolling back the austerity pay cuts for their pilots, the wage cut for Air India pilots further increased from October. "This is completely divorced from market reality and equally unfair to pilots of Air India and its subsidiaries," the pilot unions stated in the joint letter addressed to Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri.

Lamenting that pilots of Air India and its two subsidiary airlines, Air India Express and Alliance Air, continue to get reduced wages, up to 70 per cent lower of their normal wages, it said.

"Through our representations and meetings, we have shown you how Air India management's cost cutting (move) is malafide and disproportionate and does not have any semblance to the aviation industry standards," according to the letter. The Indian Commercial Pilots Association (ICPA) represents the pilots flying Air India's narrow-body aircraft, while the Indian Pilots Guild (IPG) represents those who operate wide-body aircraft of the national carrier.

Stating that even the parliamentarians' salaries have been "reduced by 30 per cent for a period of one year" to meet the exigencies arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic, it said that "even at the highest strata, there is a clear recognition of reasonable time-bound austerity measures across the board to compensate for the disruption due to the lockdown".

# 80% of India Inc fear more fraud cases in next 2 yrs: Deloitte survey

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

The uncertainty and business disruption brought about by the pandemic has contributed to fears amongst corporate India about the rise in fraud cases in the future.

According to biennial survey - The India Corporate Fraud Perception Survey, Edition IV by Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu India LLP, over 80 per cent of respondents felt fraud cases would rise in the next two years, a 22 percentage point increase over the previous edition of the survey in 2018. About 70 per cent respondents felt that fraud losses

would rise and one-third of the respondents felt losses would be between 1 per cent and 5 per cent of revenues. These adverse sentiments are due to large-scale remote working arrangements and changes in business models, which have made it challenging to understand fraud-related vulnerabilities. The survey findings indicated that such adverse sentiments were further exacerbated by reliance on static data for Fraud Risk Management. Management efforts. About 43 per cent respondents felt their existing fraud risk management frameworks were inadequate to address future frauds.

Accordingly, they indicated diverting budgets towards adopting enhanced technologies that could provide an enterprise view of fraud (22 per cent); implementing enhanced fraud risk management processes for third parties (17 per cent); and creating awareness amongst employees (17 per cent) for fraud prevention. For the first time in four editions of the survey, nearly 35 per cent respondents believed that future frauds would be detected using data analytics and other technology tools (and not rely entirely on conventional approaches, such as internal audits).

# Banks to post larger capital declines without support: Moody's

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

Banks in India are expected to post larger capital declines without public or private injections, Moody's Investors Service said in a report. In its 2021 outlook for financial institutions amid COVID-19 recovery, Moody's Investors Service said that capital will moderately fall in emerging Asia over the next two years.

"Capital will moderately fall in emerging Asia over the next two years, and banks in India and Sri Lanka will post larger capital declines without public or private injections," it

said in a statement. It cited moderate and uneven economic recoveries amid the coronavirus pandemic as well as political and trade uncertainties pose risks for financial institutions in emerging markets throughout Asia, Latin America, Europe, the Middle East and Africa in 2021. Overall, the outlook for banks is negative, while insurers are more stable, as the lockdown from the pandemic has resulted in one-off gains in profitability, although pressures on capital are increasing. "The uncertain trajectory of asset quality is among the biggest risks for banks as oper-

Overall, the outlook for banks is negative, while insurers are more stable

ating environments remain fragile amid ongoing health concerns," said Moody's Managing Director Celina Vansetti-Hutchins. "Profit growth will be modest because of low interest rates and subdued lending, but lower loan volumes should aid capital. Additionally, banks' lending and funding shifts in response to flatter yield curve dynamics and low rates will also pressure net interest margins.

**Sportking INDIA LTD.**  
CIN: L17122DL1989PLC035050  
REGD. OFFICE: 5/69, Guru Mansion, 1st Floor, Padam Singh Road, Karol Bagh, New Delhi-110005  
Phone: 011-25754885, website: www.sportking.co.in, Email: cs@sportking.co.in

**NOTICE**

NOTICE is hereby given that

- The 31st Annual General Meeting of the members of Sportking India Limited is scheduled to be held on Saturday, 26th December, 2020 at 02:00 p.m. at the registered office of the company at 5/69, Guru Mansion, 1st Floor, Padam Singh Road, Karol Bagh, New Delhi-110005.
- Electronic copies of Annual Report for FY 2019-20 including the Notice of AGM have been sent to all the members who have registered their email ids with depositories or with the company. The same are also available on the website of the Company www.sportking.co.in. The Physical Copy of Annual Report for FY 2019-20 including the Notice of AGM have been sent to other members at their registered address in the permitted mode.
- Pursuant to the provisions of Section 108 of the Companies Act 2013, read with Rule 20 of the Companies (Management and Administration) Rules, 2014 and Regulation 44 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements), Regulations, 2015, the company is providing to its members, the facility to exercise their right to vote at the 31st AGM by electronic means ("remote e-voting"), and the business may be transacted through the e-voting services provided by Central Depository Services Limited (CDSL). All the members are informed that:
  - Date and time of commencement of remote e-voting: Wednesday, 23rd December, 2020 at 09.00 am.
  - Date and time of end of remote e-voting: Friday, 25th December, 2020 at 5.00 pm.
  - Cut-off date: Saturday, 19th December, 2020.
  - The voting rights of members shall be in proportion to their shares of the paid up equity share capital of the company as on the cut-off date of Saturday, 19th December, 2020. Any person, who acquires shares of the Company and becomes member of the Company after dispatch of the notice of the meeting and holding shares as on the cut-off date i.e. 19th December, 2020 may obtain their User ID and password by sending a request to beatairfa@gmail.com. If the member is already registered with CDSL for e-voting then he/she can use his/her existing User ID and password for casting through remote e-voting.
  - Remote e-voting shall not be allowed beyond 5.00 pm on 25th December, 2020.
  - Facility for voting through ballot paper (poll) shall also be made available at the AGM. Members attending the meeting, who have not already cast their vote by remote e-voting shall be able to exercise their right at the meeting.
  - Members who have cast their vote by remote e-voting may also attend the meeting, but shall not be allowed to vote again at the AGM.
  - A person, whose name is recorded in the register of Members or in the register of Beneficial owners maintained by the depositories as on the cut-off date only shall be entitled to avail the facility of remote e-voting as well as voting at the AGM through ballot paper.
  - The Company has appointed Mr. Sunny Kakkar, Practising Company Secretary (M. No. FCS 10111 & C.P. No. 12712) as the Scrutinizer to scrutinize the e-voting process in a fair and transparent manner.
  - The notice of 31st AGM is available on the company's website www.sportking.co.in as well as stock exchange website www.bseindia.com.
  - In case you have any queries or issues regarding e-voting, you may refer the Frequently Asked Questions ("FAQs") and e-voting manual available at www.evotingindia.com, under help section or write an email to helpdesk.evoting@cdslindia.com or contact at Corporate Office, Village Kanech, G.T. Road, Near Sahnewal, Ludhiana-141120, Punjab, Phone No.: 0161-2845456 (Ext: 258), Email: cs@sportking.co.in.

**FOR SPORTKING INDIA LIMITED**  
Sd/-  
(MUNISH AVASTHI)  
Managing Director  
Date : 30.11.2020  
Place : Ludhiana  
DIN-00442425



## Vitamin D Helps

After several studies linked high Vitamin D supplementation with reduced Covid-19 effects, now researchers from Penn State University in the US, to study whether Vitamin D could help people ward off or reduce symptoms caused by Coronavirus. The research team have received nearly \$241,000 from the National Institutes of Health for research on how Vitamin D regulates the immune system



## DOCYARD

DR RINKU JAIN

BioM Dentist

SPARSH CLINIC



## Bite off your bad posture



When most people talk about their oral health, brushing, flossing and mouthwash come to mind. While these tasks are crucial to maintaining oral hygiene, there may be one habit that could be affecting your jaws and it will surely surprise you. Each tissue of our body is interconnected. There is said to be a direct link between our head posture and bite, teeth contact, and, ultimately, jaw pain. Our bite (Bite is technically referred to as dental occlusion) influences our posture. It is the contact between the upper and lower teeth when the mouth is closed. To understand the relation between the bite and posture here's a simple exercise:

Bend your neck backwards and close your jaw, notice that first, your back teeth come in contact with each other. Now bend your neck forwards and down towards the chest and close your jaw, notice that your front teeth will come in contact.

This exercise demonstrates how the bite and head position are interrelated. Our bite determines the position of our jaw, hence it also affects the position of our head on our spine. Your teeth and skeleton are interconnected, that is your head, spine, pelvis and the legs. Our teeth are the ones that help us to maintain our head position. As and when there is a change in the biting pattern, the body adjusts itself which involves the muscles of head & neck, back, pelvis, leg and feet.

**Our teeth are the ones that help us to maintain our head position. As and when there is a change in the biting pattern, the body adjusts itself which involves the muscles of head & neck, back, pelvis, leg and feet**

- Faulty dental restorations
- If a tooth is removed and not replaced.
- Thumb sucking and tongue thrust in kids
- Mouth breathing, Tongue tie, high frenum attachments
- Symptoms associated with a change in bite patterns are:
  - Headaches, neck aches, back pain
  - Pain in the jaw joint(TMJ)
  - Body ache
  - Muscle fatigue
  - Cracking sound in the TMJ while opening or closing the mouth
  - Bruxism
  - Sensitivity in teeth
  - Tingling and numbness in the fingers
  - Cracks in teeth
  - Change in posture.

When the bite is involved you must visit a dentist to correct the problems so that the muscles of the face and neck, the TMJ, nerves and ligaments all work harmoniously without any strain and tension.

Correction of the bite depends on the cause and the extent of damages already done. Using the most advanced digital occlusal analysis(T-scan) needs to be used, so that the bite can be balanced, so the muscles, jaw joint, and nerves are all relaxed. So if you face any of the problems mentioned, consult with your dentist, to see the involvement of your bite and get it corrected.

## WARMFOODS

**PEANUTS:** Peanuts or groundnuts are high in nutrients like magnesium; Vitamin E, copper, phosphorus, potassium, zinc, calcium, arginine and many others.

Studies suggest that peanuts can help lessen the risk of cardiovascular diseases. Antioxidants, on the hand, help to protect the body from oxidative stress, which occurs in various cancers and diseases. Peanuts are also an extremely high source of plant protein and medical practitioners have advised that it should be incorporated in the diet for children, vegetarians, and protein deficient people. Peanuts provide our body with essential Vitamins, which helps in regulating metabolism, converting fat and carbohydrates into energy, and facilitating bone and tissue formation. Eating nuts has been associated with plenty of health benefits from increased cognitive function to protection from Alzheimers and lower risk of mortality and developing chronic diseases like respiratory disease, neurodegenerative disease, diabetes and cancer.



# A SAFE VACCINE?



ADAR POONAWALLA, CEO, Serum Institute of India, talks about the efficacy and safety of the COVID-19 vaccine Covishield and how the institute will apply for an emergency use licence. MUSBA HASHMI brings you a report

Only after two months into the pandemic, the world started to find a vaccine that could help. However, now even after nine months, the hunt for an effective vaccine is still on. A ray of hope for Indians is the Serum Institute of India's (SII) Covishield vaccine trial. The institute has partnered with AstraZeneca and University of Oxford to manufacture the vaccine.

With everybody's eyes glued on each and every minor development in the Covishield vaccine, what comes as a positive is the announcement that the institute will apply for emergency use of the vaccine in two weeks. With that being said, a cause of worry for most people is the safety of the vaccine.

To solve their worries, Adar Poonawalla, CEO, SII, explains that the vaccine provides 60 per cent sterilisation.

"This vaccine is a very good one, there were zero hospitalizations for those who took it. It also offers the sterilising immunity of about 60 per cent reduction of the virus, which is very good for a vaccine for this disease," Poonawalla said while addressing a virtual press conference on Saturday.

Not only this, but the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi also carried a three-city visit to the institute to know the status of the vaccine on Saturday and he was impressed.

"The PM is well-versed with vaccines now and we had very lit-



Dr Cyrus Poonawalla, Adar Poonawalla and Natasha Poonawalla welcome PM Narendra Modi to the Serum Institute of India, Pune plant & office

tle to explain to him. He was extremely impressed with the facility," Poonawalla said.

He added that the institute has discussed the implementation plan and is in process of submitting the data of the review plan. "After we have submitted the review plan and with the decision of Health Ministry, we will roll out 100 million doses, but it depends on the submission and approval status," Poonawalla said.

Though it is still unclear how many doses does the Government

plan to buy, Poonawalla says the figures can be around 400 million.

"As of now we don't have any information on how many doses the Government will buy, but we are anticipating 300-400 million doses by July 2021. We are talking about how and when to distribute it. We are also in talks to keep it at an affordable price. Having said that, we are waiting for the licence as of now," he said.

The good news is that they are not anticipating any delay in the vaccine production. "I don't suspect any delay, even if the approval comes two weeks later, at the end point it shouldn't make any difference in the production," he said.

The distribution of the vaccine, he said, will be focused towards India initially and then to the African countries.

"We are producing 50-60 million doses a month and after January-February next year we plan to produce 100 million doses a month," Poonawalla said.

In his concluding statement, Poonawalla said that he wouldn't want to give out any message that would raise the doubts in people's mind.

"In a world where some people are questioning the vaccine, we don't want to build any doubt in the mind of people. Some are unsure or sceptical about it, hence we should only give out a message after proper fact check with the Health Ministry and not make any negative statement without proper research," he said.

**This vaccine is a very good one, there were zero hospitalizations for those who took it. It offers a sterilising immunity of about 60 per cent, which is good for a vaccine for this disease**

## BREAKING BACK

The prolonged remote working phase has taken a toll on our backs and necks. MOHD WASIF tells you how by following simple steps you can keep the pain at bay



More than eight months into the COVID-19 crisis, has made us get used to the new normal of adapting to the culture of work from home. Leading companies are heavily involved in standard occupations that aim and promote the work culture of presently sitting at our homes, slumping in front of our portable workstations while also being constrained to oversee family chores. This puts a parcel of strain on our solid, inflexible and rigid spine.

Working from home isn't transitory; it's an ambush on our frame. This prolonged remote working phase has surely taken a toll on our backs and necks. And if you fall under those lucky ones who have not faced any kind of back pain as of now the probability of it happening to you too is pretty high. The single leading cause of disability across the world is related to back pain.

Four out of every five adults experience back pain sooner or later in life, making it the most common medical condition around the globe. It's high time we rethink about and work upon our sitting and sleeping postures. It's not that this issue didn't exist before the pandemic, but the adaptation to work from home has led to a rapid increase in the number of back and neck strain cases. We know for a fact that as we grow old, our spine ages along with it, and we may start feeling some aches and pains. But the interesting fact is that backache is more than a minor annoyance for people of all age groups.

Now the question arises; what causes the intolerable back and neck pain.

- It all comes down to a single word, posture. Poor posture while doing our day-to-day activities such as sleeping or working, is one of the major reasons behind it. While working in the office, an individual sits on his/her chair for eight hours continuously.
- Strain on a particular ligament or muscle is one of the most common issues leading to issues related to the spinal cord.
- Undoubtedly exercising is good for health but it should be done under proper guidance and training, else this could lead to major health issues like slip disc.

Yes, back and neck pain could prove to be a severe physical condition, but every problem has its own solutions. Few things that could help in avoiding backache, neck ache, or other related issues are discussed as follows.

- Engage in mindful meditation once/twice a day, to keep the body in tune.
- Make exercise a habit, be it yoga or gym the choice is yours. The main purpose is to gently stretch your joints and tissues.
- Make sure your blood circulation isn't hindered. Take a break after every 45-50 minutes, walk a little.
- Sort out your work setup or workstation as you call it nowadays. Get yourself a comfortable chair which helps in maintaining an upright posture and decreases the strain on the ligaments in the spine while you're working for long stretches.
- The kind of mattress we choose matters the most. Select a mattress that helps you in keeping your spine neutral and aligned and to minimise any curve in your spine, you can go for orthopedic mattresses. If a mattress is too firm or too squishy it won't support your spine at its neck or lower back the way it needs to. So choose accordingly.

The writer is Founder-CEO, Fresh Up Mattress

## DadiKaKehna

Sensitive teeth can be extremely painful, especially if one is fond of having hot and cold beverages. ROSHANI DEVI shares easy home remedies that can help ease the pain without costing you an arm and a leg



If you love having tea, hot or cold coffee and soft drinks, teeth sensitivity can definitely make you feel annoyed, not to mention the pain that it causes.

Here are a few home remedies that can help reduce the pain so that you can enjoy your cup full of happiness.

First, take half teaspoon of salt, mix it in a glass of lukewarm water and rinse your mouth with it. Do this about 30 seconds twice a day.

Second, take help of honey and warm water. Mix honey in a glass of lukewarm water. Rinse your mouth with it. Honey is an antibacterial and can help in oral healing.

Third, don't forget turmeric. Turmeric is an anti-inflammatory agent. Use turmeric to massage your teeth. Alternatively, you can make a past using one teaspoon of turmeric, half teaspoon of salt and half teaspoon of mustard oil. Apply this paste to teeth and gums twice daily and see the magic.

Last but not the least, green tea works just as fine. Most of us love having green tea daily just to give a treat to our taste buds or to treat our body. However, green tea is good for oral health too. One can use unsweetened green tea as a mouthwash twice a day to strengthen teeth.



## Let's test it out

Whether it is done in the physician's office or the patient's home testing is an invaluable tool. SAURABH GOYAL tells you how regular ketone testing can help manage Diabetes

All blood tests are tools. Some are to diagnose Diabetes, some are to help you manage it on a daily or long term basis and some are to keep you safe.

People with Diabetes are often told about blood testing and how important testing is to manage their blood glucose. It is a critical part of Diabetes management. Whether it is done in the physician's office or the patient's home it is an invaluable tool. This very important test called ketone testing is often not taught too well.

This test can be life-saving and should be explained to every person whilst sharing knowledge on Diabetes and the skills required to deal with it. It is simple and if you have diabetes you should know about it.

When the body is unable to burn glucose it burns fat and this produces a chemical called ketones. This occurs when there is too little insulin for the

amount of glucose in the body. Possible causes for this could be:

- Experiencing stress or illness such as fever
- Having an infection
- Omitting or taking too little insulin
- Eating more food than planned
- Improper storage of insulin

The human body primarily runs on glucose. When your body is low on glucose, or if you have diabetes and don't have enough insulin to help your cells absorb the glucose, your body starts breaking down fats for energy. Ketones (chemically known as ketone bodies) are by-products of the breakdown of fatty acids.

When the needle is inserted to draw blood, some people feel slight pain. Others feel a prick or stinging. This soon goes away.

If left untreated, ketones continue to rise and can result in a condition called Diabetic Ketoacidosis, or DKA. This

condition is quite serious and requires immediate medical attention. DKA is the most common cause of hospitalisation and death among children and young adults with diabetes, and the leading cause of adverse events for insulin pump users.

Testing your blood or urine to measure your ketone levels can all be done at home. At-home testing kits are available for both types of tests, although urine testing continues to be more common. Urine tests are available without a prescription at most drug-stores, or you can buy them online.

At-home meters (Blood Glucose Monitoring systems) are available to test for blood ketones. This is performed in a similar way to a finger-stick glucose test. You prick your finger with a needle and place a small drop of blood onto the testing area.

The writer is Managing Director, Dr Trust (Nureca Ltd)

## INBRIEF

Lung cancer treatment has changed dramatically in the last decade with the emergence of an era of personalised medicine. New treatment options are available that are more precise and customised according to subtype and molecular profile of lung cancer. Targeted therapy which involves administration of oral tablets has revolutionised lung cancer therapeutics, said Dr Ullas Batra, Senior Consultant & Chief of Thoracic Medical Oncology, Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Institute and Research Centre, Delhi.

Almost 90% of patients with lung cancers present late and are usually already at an advanced stage disease, warranting the institution of chemotherapy upfront. However over the last few years, molecular targeted therapy has caused a paradigm shift, with a better safety profile, fewer side effects and better survival outcomes for the patients.

According to Dr Batra, lung cancer is no longer only a smokers' disease and almost 30% of the lung cancer patients are non-smokers. It can happen at any age and hence warrants early detection to render a better quality of life. However if detected early, lung cancer can be better controlled, with minimum disruption to quality of life.

Trend Slazer

Deols announce their new film

The Deol family announced their new film, *Apne 2*, on the occasion of Guru Nanak Jayanti on Monday. The film brings together the three generations of the family, Dharmendra, his sons SUNNY DEOL and BOBBY DEOL, and grandson Karan Deol.



Announcing the same, Sunny Deol tweeted from his verified account: "Babaji ke aashirwaad aur aapke pyaar ki wajah se aaj hum vapas ek sath nazar aayenge. Feeling blessed to get a chance to work with my father, brother and yet again with my son. #Apne2, in cinemas Diwali 2021." The film goes on floors in March.

**'There is nothing wrong with becoming a popular celebrity on social media, just that there is a huge change that has happened. I entered the industry during the transition period. Earlier, it was important to have talent and as an artiste, we used to sharpen our skills. Now there is something called talent management.'**  
—Amrita Rao



Bollywood icon RAVEENA TANDON's friendly appearance for her friend Neelam Kothari Soni in the Netflix series

*Fabulous Lives of Bollywood Wives* has got everyone talking.

She earned love from the audience for her cameo in which she even mimics her *Parampara* co-star Saif Ali Khan. If the insiders are to be believed, Saif loved the scene and they had a good laugh on it.

Reacting to this, Raveena said, "I'm happy that the show is a success, and I enjoyed my day out with Neelam and the fun cooking class that we took."

Halsey slams Grammys

After being snubbed at the Grammy nominations this year, American singer-songwriter HALSEY has called out the nomination process, criticising it for being about more than just releasing quality music or cultural impact.

"I've been thinking and wanted to choose my words carefully because a lot of people have extended sympathy and apology to me since the Grammy nominations. The Grammys are an elusive process," she wrote on Instagram Stories.



Oscar and Grammy-winning Indian composer AR Rahman has been roped in as ambassador of the BAFTA Breakthrough initiative in India.

"I am happy to be working with BAFTA to discover some of the amazing talent that India has to offer in film, games and television," Rahman said. "This is a unique opportunity for promising artists to be supported by a world-renowned organisation, to not only make connections with other talented creatives across the world but to be mentored by BAFTA-winners and nominees. I am looking forward to seeing the brilliant talent chosen from India

Beyond the clouds

Music composer-singer AR RAHMAN has been chosen as the BAFTA Breakthrough India ambassador

to be showcased on a global stage," he added.

The initiative marks BAFTA's first steps into India. The talent hunt initiative will enable the Academy to identify and nurture up to five talents working in film, games, or television in India. The exercise, known as BAFTA Breakthrough initiative, is part

of the Academy's year-round effort to support new talent, operating alongside their Awards ceremonies.

"I am also incredibly grateful for the invaluable support of our brilliant ambassador AR Rahman, an industry leader in his creative work and someone who shares our passion for identifying and nurtur-

ing new talent. He is well positioned to support the initiative, with his broad spectrum of work drawing recognition across Hindi, Tamil, and Telugu films, which will help BAFTA to appeal to a wide section of the industry," said Amanda Berry, Chief Executive of BAFTA.



On Monday, the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) shared that the applications are now open for BAFTA Breakthrough India, supported by Netflix.

As part of the initiative in India, a jury of British and Indian industry experts will select five talents from across India to take part in the year-long mentoring and guidance program. The chosen talent will also connect with and learn from the British and Indian creative industries, and will be promoted as BAFTA Breakthrough artists globally. —IANS



Everest in the times of COVID

Delta 105, an army experiential zone, is going to organise a two-day boot camp for aspiring mountaineers



BEAT THE WINTER GLOOM

Here are a few simple yet effective home decor ideas to live the season joyfully. By TEAM VIVA

Winters are truly magical as it brings along the joy of sipping a hot cup of tea, the ease of snuggling in your blanket and the charm of basking in the afternoon sunlight. While it is the season of lounging around in the house wearing your comfy pajamas and working from your bed, this season also brings along the lazy mood swings. So how about we prep-up our space personalised basis our mood? Some like it to be warm, some vibrant and some look for the best of both worlds. So this year beat the winter gloominess by tweaking your home décor and relish the cold season thoughtfully with these simple yet effective ideas!



EMBRACE VIBRANT NOOKS

When the winters hit, your mood can take a backseat due to the sombre skies outside. This is where a bright shade can instantly make your space feel upbeat and energetic. So for your warm and comforting nooks in your house, go for a dark green colour on the walls which come out as pleasing to the senses yet radiating vibrancy. While nooks are great spaces to enjoy various activities, it can also be just a pretty customised corner area in your house.

Unlock your aesthetic sense by incorporating wood pattern laminates to balance the natural impact and sophistication of your look. For instance, one can opt a cabinet made with the Leon Ash laminate, whose subtle light brown shade and exquisite woodgrain texture seamlessly stands out against the walls. A few laminates also offers a safeguard plus technology with health and hygiene features — antiviral, antibacterial, antifungal that retard and kill up to 99.99 per cent of viruses and bacteria which come in contact with the surface. You can be easily assured of indoor hygiene and the health of your loved ones. Lastly, to make your nook cozier and

warmer, layer your cabinet with a thick cloth and mini pinecone plants.

READING SHENANIGANS

The only thing better than curling up with a good book is having a perfect spot to cosy-up with it. This space has to feel like you and to make that happen, think about the things that make you feel happy and soothed. Bring those elements into your reading area. Start with placing a soft chair and plush throw pillow which is all you would require for seating arrangements. Ditch the bookshelves, instead go for ancient trunks or an ottoman for stacking your novels. You can also re-create a coffee bar on a stool with a coffee machine and your favourite mug.

Now, speaking of the walls, go for distressed veneers that are easy to maintain and highly durable. You can opt for this Distressed The Plus Oak Parquet, which has a rich dark brown shade that will infuse cosy vibes in your space. Try to keep your white lighting dim to blend the colours well. A fur rug in beige or cream colour will further accentuate the entire set-up. Place some scented candles and you are ready to unwind with books amid a peaceful abode.

SLEEP, WORK, BINGE-WATCH, REPEAT

With everyone working from home and now with the onset of the winter season, our bedroom has become quite a multi-purpose area. Your bedroom provides a private sanctuary where you unwind, relax and get ready for the day ahead — basically live your daily moments. Go for a timeless monochrome palette of black and white, which brings alive emotions of peace as well as warmth. You can use black as your luxe statement shade by incorporating it in your furniture like bed, armless chair and a floor lamp.

Keep your room spick and span by contrasting the colours with wooden floors like the Oak Cappuccino, whose natural light brown colour will give your interiors a flamboyant panache. Also, it is your chance to bring out your crisp white blankets and grey pillows which are perfect for the cold season while complementing your décor. The beauty of indoor planters lies in its ability to instantly brighten your house, add freshness and bring life to the place. Here, you can place tall sea green ceramic planters to add that inviting essence to your bedroom.

Needless to say, we all need our winterland to be a space that resonates with us and makes us feel comfortable as we go about the day. Don't you already feel like trying these inspiring and distinct home décor themes? We too!

A voice that matters

If empowered well, the youth can become agents of change and peace, says NEIL BINOY

It's important to note how the young ones have started to recognise issues, which need immediate attention. From climate change, corruption, racism and gender to education and technology, they are initiating necessary dialogues. Until now, most of them have lived in the dark. Through this column, I hope to bring light to the issues that thrive in the darkest corners of our world, feeding off children's silence.



Young minds have been scarred by everyday strife and conflict. Bullying, violence, discrimination — you name it and at least, one child will have witnessed it firsthand. The issues we face, as children, are often swept under the carpet. Our voices have been drowned out in the deluge. There are hardly any platforms where we express our views and anguish. Our voices are young and yet, they are powerful. Today, we

see child activists like Malala Yousafzai, Marley Dias and Greta Thunberg speak up and make those around them listen. A 14-year-old Greta has inspired thousands of children and adults to protest against the sluggishness of global leaders in protecting the environment. With her rousing speech in the United Nations, Greta made the world's leaders sit up and listen as she raved about how they had robbed the youth and the next generations of their future by destroying the environment. She set an example, showcasing the difference children can make, and in many ways, we, as children, are as capable as any adult. We all know how the photograph of her ice-cold, piercing stare at the former US President Donald Trump went viral.

Well now, a fresh shift in power means a potential change in diplomatic relations with var-



ious countries across the world, including India and China. The US President is the singular most powerful man in the world with enough power to make or break other nations. More importantly, if he wants to etch out a successful run as president, he needs to build a more inclusive and a sustainable environment. In this era of 'Black Lives Matter' and environmental damage on an irre-

versible and increasingly dangerous scale, we require the power to shift towards a more people-friendly approach, one that helps prevent discrimination. Not only that, but we need a leader who knows how to listen, especially to us, as children, as the youth.

The world has had many leaders who stood for the youth. One such leader was Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. He who valued

children's endeavours and was a leader who knew the best to understand the youth and nurture the leader in them. He had said, "Children are like buds in a garden. They should be carefully and lovingly nurtured as they are the future of the nation and the citizens of tomorrow."

History is evidence of how time and again young leaders have shaped the future and brought a

revolution. Maharaja Shree Chithira Thirunall of Travancore took the reins at a young age, creating a renaissance for the State through his innovative reforms in education, administration and the industrialisation of the city. His ground-breaking Temple Entry Proclamation to eradicate untouchability — a decision he took when he was 12 and implemented at 17 when he took over as the king — is the most remembered act of courage till date.

If empowered well, the youth can become agents of change and peace. Young voices matter, their action could change the course of history. A nation that fails to nurture its youth is destroying its future. In this 21st century, as the future beckons, the young voices matter. As Mary McLeod Bethune said, "We have a powerful potential in our youth and we must have the courage to change old ideas and practices so that we may direct their power toward good ends."

(The author is a teen student activist.)

YOUTH DIALOGUE

# 'Playing FC cricket gives us advantage in Tests'

## Labuschagne says Australian players will get benefit of playing Sheffield Shield matches

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australia's rising star Marnus Labuschagne believes that the home team will enjoy a slight advantage going into the Test series against India as most of its top-order players will be coming in after having played a fair amount of first-class cricket.

Labuschagne, who contributed a solid 70 off 61 balls in the second ODI which Australia won by 51 runs on Sunday, has scored two hundreds in three Sheffield Shield matches.

"It definitely helps to have a few games under your belt just to get the pace and the timing of the game from T20s to one-dayers to four-day cricket," he replied to a query during a virtual media interaction on Monday.

The Indian players, who had played IPL and now ODIs, last played red-ball cricket in New Zealand and will only have two three-day games to get into the groove.

"But a lot of these (Indian) players we're talking about, they've been doing it for a long time, they're not new to the changes of format. I'd be surprised if they didn't shift back into gear very quickly."

"I will say that it's a slight advantage, four out of our top six have been playing Shield cricket and got that rhythm as a batting group."

With David Warner ruled out of the last ODI as well as the upcoming T20 Internationals, Labuschagne won't mind a chance to open the innings if he is asked about it.

"Certainly, if I got asked to open the batting absolutely. It's an

opportunity that I would enjoy taking. We'll wait and see how our team shapes up for the next game and see the balance of the side, but yeah, I would love doing it," Labuschagne said.

"My role at No 4 is just to read the situation of the game and play my role accordingly," he said.

Asked how Warner is emotionally dealing with the injury setback that happened during the second ODI,

Labuschagne insisted that he is fine.

"He is a strong character and he will come back. Also his absence is an opportunity for someone else."

Steve Smith's form is something that will obviously help Australia in the Test series, feels Labuschagne.

"Cricket's a massive confidence game and even though it's a different format, it still gives you

a lot of confidence when you're scoring runs consistently and the way Steve and Davey (David Warner) are batting currently, I've got no doubt they'll be able to transfer that into the Test summer.

"But right now there's still a lot of games to be played before that, we've just got to make sure we finish this one-day series well and then straight into the T20s where we start really well."

Smith's second ODI hundred is one of the best according to Labuschagne and he called his form scary.

"That was one of the best innings I've seen in one-day cricket, not only from Steve but from anyone," the 26-year-old said.

"I think the way he batted yesterday (Sunday) was superb. It almost felt like he didn't give an opportunity, didn't really take any risk, but he got a hundred off 62 balls."

"When someone's doing that, that's kind of scary."

About his own innings, he was happy to have a partnership with Smith.

"It was really nice to build that partnership with him, 136, it was just nice to keep ticking it over and we were really busy through that middle part when we came together. Then towards the back end, Steve really took the game on and that's how we got 390."

"They're two very big scores in the last two games, thanks obviously to Steve."

# Injured Warner out

## Short will replace Aussie opener for white ball series; Cummins also rested

PTI ■ SYDNEY

In-form Australian opener David Warner has been ruled out of the remainder of the limited-overs series against India due to a groin injury that he suffered during the second ODI on Sunday, while top pacer Pat Cummins has been rested as part of his workload management.

Warner, who scored 69 and 83 in the first two ODIs, hurt himself on Sunday while fielding at the SCG in the second one-dayer.

The dashing opener has returned home to begin his rehabilitation and will be looking to get fit ahead of the opening Test at Adelaide starting December 17.

"Pat and Dave are critical to our plans for the Test series," coach Justin Langer was quoted as saying by the Australian media.

"Dave will work through his injury rehab and in Pat's case it is important all of our players are managed well to keep them mentally and physically fit throughout what is a challenging summer."

"The priority for both is being fully prepared for one of the biggest and most important home Test series we have played in recent years, especially with World Test Championship points up for grabs."

Left-handed batsman D'Arcy Short, who was the leading run-scorer in two series in the Big Bash League, has been named Warner's



replacement in Australia's white-ball squad.

India and Australia will play one more ODI on Wednesday before competing in three T20 Internationals, starting Friday, followed by the much-anticipated four-match Test series.

All-rounder Marcus Stoinis, who missed the second ODI after suffering a side strain in the opening game, will stay in the squad.

But all-rounder Mitchell Marsh, who is recovering from an ankle injury sustained while playing in the IPL, will not be playing the warm-up game between India A and Australia A starting on Sunday.

He will now continue his rehabilitation and no replacement has been named for him in the A squad.

# No captain would give Bumrah two-over opening spell: Gambhir

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former opener Gautam Gambhir feels India skipper Virat Kohli committed a tactical blunder that no other captain would, by giving his premier pacer Jasprit Bumrah just a two-over opening spell in the series-conceding second ODI loss to Australia.

Gambhir, who has been pretty critical of Kohli's tactical acumen as captain, felt that the difference between the two sides so far was how Australian captain Aaron Finch handled his most successful pacer Josh Hazlewood in the first two ODIs that the hosts won easily.

"I find it difficult to comprehend that if you have a bowler of Jasprit Bumrah's calibre and you give him only two overs upfront. It's not a tactical mistake but a tactical blunder," Gambhir said in ESPNcricinfo's show Match Day Hindi.

A five-over spell would have allowed Bumrah and Mohammed Shami to at least try and pick up two wickets upfront.

"...I was expecting Bumrah and Shami to bowl five-over spells each upfront and tried getting a couple of wickets each. So, I don't think there is any captain in world cricket who would give Jasprit Bumrah, two overs with the new ball," Gambhir said as it is.

With all top three Australian batsmen — Aaron Finch, David Warner and Steve Smith — striking form at the same time, Gambhir feels that if any bowler had a chance of getting the trio out, it had to be Bumrah.

"Now Finch, Warner and Smith, the top three are in prime form and who has the best chance of taking their wicket? It's Jasprit Bumrah

"... And you give him 2 overs and bring him after 10 overs, when the ball is a tad old and it gets warmer and you expect him to get wickets in these conditions. He is human too."

He then cited the example of how Finch used Hazlewood in the first two games.

"First game, Finch gave him six-over spell and second game a five-over first spell and six overs when Starc had a bad day. Hazlewood has been the standout bowler."

Gambhir was impressed with how Australia's sixth bowling option (the combination of Marcus Stoinis and Glenn Maxwell in first and Moises Henriques and Maxwell in second) controlled the proceedings.

"It happened in the first match as well. First match, Marcus Stoinis gave some 25 runs in 6 overs that he bowled and that was done by Henriques in the second game. So that's the difference you had.

"So, if your sixth bowler can give 6 to 7 overs, then you don't need to bowl with a front-liner who is having an off day like Mitchell Starc."

"Imagine had Hardik not bowled those overs, what kind of pressure it would have been on Shami and Navdeep Saini," he said.

While Virat Kohli, with close to 11,500 runs and 43 hundreds, has a staggering record, Gambhir feels that Smith for all practical reasons isn't too far behind even if the numbers suggest otherwise.

"I don't think there is a lot of difference between Kohli and Smith. If you go by numbers, Kohli always gave better numbers than Smith but if you look at his (Smith) record, in the previous five or seven ODIs, he has had three hundreds, so difference is not much."

"He has scored 62 ball hundreds back to back. Obviously you will call Kohli, the greatest ODI player as per numbers but not much difference between him (Smith) and Kohli."



# SINGLES



Kiwi pacer Lockie Ferguson poses with Player of the series trophy and pay cheque after end of T20 series between New Zealand and West Indies on Monday. @BLACKCAPS

## NEW ZEALAND POCKET T20 SERIES 2-0

**MOUNT MAUNGANUI:** New Zealand on Monday claimed the T20 series against the West Indies 2-0 after the third and final match of the rubber was washed out here. Persistent rain played spoilsport to left-arm spinner Mitchell Santner's debut as New Zealand's T20I captain and the final match of the series was called off after just 2.2 overs. Ferguson was named the Player of the Series for his six wickets. Both the teams will now head to Hamilton, where they will play the first Test of the two-match series, starting December 3.

## NO LEWA. NEUER FOR ATLETICO GAME

**MUNICH:** Bayern Munich will leave Robert Lewandowski and Manuel Neuer at home for the Champions League game at Atletico Madrid on Tuesday, coach Hansi Flick said on Monday. Lewandowski and Neuer "will be rested" along with midfielder Leon Goretzka, while midfielder Corentin Tolisso has a minor injury, Flick said. Backup goalkeeper Alexander Nübel is set to replace Neuer and make his European debut for Bayern.

## 4 OLY-BOUND BOXERS INCLUDED IN TOPS

**NEW DELHI:** Four Olympic-bound Indian boxers — two men and as many women — have been included in the sports ministry's Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS), SAI said on Monday. World Bronze-medallist Simranjeet Kaur (60kg), Asian medallist Pooja Rani (75kg) joined M C Mary Kom in the elite group. Asian Silver-winner Ashish Kumar (75kg) and Asian Games bronze-winner Satish Kumar (+91kg) have been included in a group which already featured Armit Panghal (52kg), Manish Kaushik (63kg), and Vikas Krishan (69kg) among the Tokyo-bound.

## LOW TO REMAIN IN CHARGE OF GERMANY

**BERLIN:** Joachim Low will remain in charge of Germany for next year's delayed European Championship despite a series of poor recent results, the German football federation announced on Monday. "The presidential committee of the DFB decided unanimously this Monday during a teleconference, to continue with coach Joachim Low on the difficult path of renewal started in March 2019," it said in a statement. Low, 60, has been in charge of the Germany team since taking over from Jurgen Klinsmann following the 2006 World Cup and led the nation to a fourth world title, and first since reunification, in Brazil in 2014. However, Germany are in crisis following a 6-0 defeat to Spain and recent draws with Switzerland, twice, and Turkey.

## HAZARD FACES ANOTHER SPELL ON SIDELINES

**MADRID:** Real Madrid attacker Eden Hazard faces another spell on the sidelines after the club confirmed on Monday he sustained an injury to his right thigh in the weekend loss to Alaves. The Belgium international was substituted after just 28 minutes of Saturday's 2-1 home loss to Alaves. The club said in a statement that Hazard had been diagnosed with an injury to his right quadriceps and that his "recovery will continue to be assessed". Real did not provide a timeline for Hazard's return, but local media reported he could be ruled out for at least two weeks.

## WOMEN'S CAMP IN GOA FROM TODAY

**NEW DELHI:** The Indian women's football team will start its first training camp in nine months in Goa from Tuesday under national coach Maymol Rocky in a strict bio-secure environment put in place by the AIFF in wake of the Covid-19. Women's coach Rocky said that the team is excited to resume training with an eye on their big-ticket event — AFC Asian Cup in 2022. AGENCIES

# New ICC boss questions future of Test c'ship

## Barclay is not convinced the current Test championship model is 'fit for purpose'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The International Cricket Council's newly-elected chairman Greg Barclay on Monday conceded that the ambitious World Test Championship hasn't quite achieved what it intended to and the disruption caused by Covid-19 has only highlighted its "shortcomings".

World Test Championship schedule has been thrown haywire by the pandemic and the ICC has come up with a percentage allocation of points as all the scheduled series before the 2021 final at the Lord's cannot be completed in a short span of time.

Has the Test Championship given the format a fillip that it was meant to? "In short, I don't think so. The Covid has probably highlighted its shortcomings of the championship," Barclay, who took charge earlier this month, said during a virtual media conference.

The New Zealander feels that a lot of problems with the current cricket-



ing calendar is due to the World Test Championship which was fitted in to popularise the format, something that didn't happen, according to him. "The issues that we have already got, I wonder whether some of it was because of an attempt to develop a Test Championship, clearly designed to drive interest back into Test cricket, provide a bit of context and relevance

around the Test matches," he said.

While it was good in theory but has probably flopped in practice.

"From an idealist's point of view, probably it had a lot of merit but practically, I do disagree. I am not sure whether it has achieved what it intended to do," he said.

In fact, Barclay dropped a hint that the inaugural WTC could well be the last one as smaller members can't afford Test cricket championship anymore.

"My personal view is let's get through with the little bit that we can in this Covid-19, with reallocation of points and all that."

"...But once we have done that, let's go back to the drawing board as I am not quite sure whether it (WTC) entirely fits the purpose and has achieved what it intended to after being conceptualised four to five years back."

"I think we need to look at it in context of calendar and not put cricketers in a situation where it's a lot more worse and not going to help us," the New Zealand lawyer asserted.

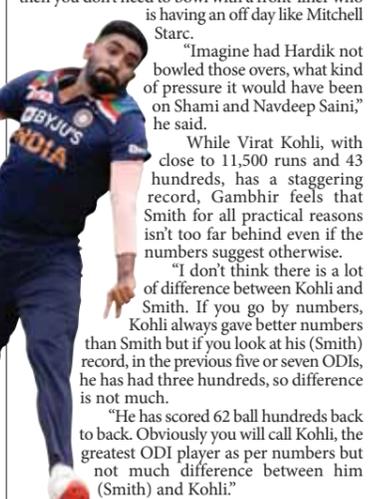
# Smith wasn't sure if he would play

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Top Australian batsman Steve Smith has revealed that he suffered a "bad dose of vertigo" ahead of the second one-dayer and was not sure of playing the game in which he struck a series-clinching hundred.

Smith's quick-fire 62-ball-100 propelled Australia to a mammoth 389 for four in the second ODI, which they defended easily to secure a decisive 2-0 series lead.

However, the former skipper said he "didn't look great there for a while". "I didn't know I was playing today (Sunday). I had a really bad dose of vertigo this morning and I was struggling until... I came down early to have a hit and a bit of a run around," Smith told *cric.com.au* after receiving his second successive Man of the match award. "Just pleased to be able to get out here and play another good innings and help the team."



# Wolves hunt Gunners

AP ■ LONDON

Wolverhampton beat Arsenal in an away match for the first time in more than four decades, winning 2-1 in the Premier League in a game overshadowed by a serious head injury to Wolves forward Raul Jimenez.

The 29-year-old Jimenez was taken away on a stretcher in the fifth minute and then to a hospital, after a collision with Arsenal defender David Luiz while both challenged for a corner from Willian.

While Wolves players were visibly upset by the incident, they went on to take control of the match.

Wolves opened the scoring in the 27th when Pedro Neto slotted in a rebound after Leander Dendoncker's header crashed off the crossbar and fell to Neto in the six-yard box. Adama Traore created the chance, beating Kieran Tierney with a run down the right before the winger lifted the ball into a dangerous area.

Gabriel equalized for Arsenal three minutes later with a towering header as four defenders, including one pulling his shirt couldn't stop the Brazilian from scoring. Wolves made it 2-1 in the 42nd when Daniel Podence took advantage of the rebound after goalkeeper Bernd Leno couldn't collect Neto's shot, which bounced off his legs for Podence to volley home.

Neto's run through Arsenal's shaky defense created panic in the penalty box and allowed Podence to drift in to pounce on the loose ball.

Traore nearly made it 3-1 in the fifth minute of injury time of the first half after cutting in from the right, but his shot crashed into the side netting.

Willian nearly equalized for Arsenal with a free kick in the 57th, but it rose just over the bar. Rob Holding also had an open header but couldn't connect with a Saka cross.



It was the first away win for Wolves against Arsenal since 1979, bringing the team up to sixth in the Premier League. Arsenal, meanwhile, hasn't won a Premier League game since November 1, when the Gunners beat Manchester United, and languish in 14th place.

# Jimenez had surgery for a fractured skull

AP ■ WOLVERHAMPTON

Wolverhampton Wanderers striker Raul Jimenez had surgery to treat a fractured skull after a clash of heads with Arsenal defender David Luiz during an Premier League game, the club said on Monday.

"Raul is comfortable following an operation last night, which he underwent in a London hospital," Wolves said in a statement.

"He has since seen his partner Daniela and is now resting. He will remain under observation for a few days while he begins his recovery."

# 'Mourning' Napoli honour Maradona with big win

AP ■ NAPLES

Napoli beat Roma 4-0 in an emotional match in the Italian league as the team paid tribute to Diego Maradona.

It was Napoli's first Serie A game since Maradona died on Wednesday in his native Argentina. Maradona led Napoli to its only two Serie A titles in 1987 and 1990 and is considered a god-like figure in the southern city.

"Certainly I played with an extra motivation, so did all my teammates," Napoli captain Lorenzo Insigne said. "We've lost our idol and it hurts."

"Today without doubt we wanted even more than normal

to get a result, for Diego, for our city which is suffering this loss. We dedicate the victory to him."

The victory saw Napoli move level with Roma and Juventus, six points below leader AC Milan, which beat Fiorentina 2-0 earlier in the day.

There was a touching moment before the game when Insigne placed bouquets of flowers under banners dedicated to Maradona, displayed in the empty stands at either end of the stadium.

Napoli's Stadio San Paolo will officially be renamed the Stadio Diego Armando Maradona. There was a tribute to

Maradona in all Serie A matches this weekend. That included a minute of silence for Maradona, while his image was also projected on the stadium screens again in the 10th minute, in honor of his shirt number. All players stopped to applaud.

Napoli players were wearing a special kit which bore a resemblance to the Argentina jersey in honor of Maradona.

"There is an air of sadness," said Napoli coach Gennaro Gattuso. "This is a wonderful city even when the weather is bad and yet there is an atmosphere of mourning."

Insigne also held up a shirt with

# Cavani could face 3-game ban for social media post

MANCHESTER: Edinson Cavani's joy at scoring twice for Manchester United on Sunday could be dampened as he is to be investigated by the Football Association over a social media post he subsequently deleted.

The 33-year-old Uruguayan striker sent an Instagram post including the Spanish word "negrito" ("black") in reply to a message of congratulations after his brace completed a come-from-behind 3-2 win over Southampton. United said the word was clearly used in an affectionate manner and has different connotations in South America. The FA issued guidelines pre-season clamping down on racist and discriminatory language and behaviour, with offences on social media carrying a minimum three-game ban. AFP



# Grosjean to miss race after crash

AFP ■ SAKHIR

Romain Grosjean will sit out next weekend's F1 race after escaping a fiery crash in the Bahrain Grand Prix with just burns to his hands, his team Haas said on Monday. Grosjean walked away from the wreckage after he collided with Daniil Kyvat's Alpha Tauri on the first lap of Sunday's race, causing the Haas car to split in half and burst into flames as it smashed through the safety barriers. Haas said treatment for the burns that 34-year-old Grosjean suffered was "going well" and he was expected to be discharged from hospital on Tuesday.

**EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY**

**E-Tender Notice**

**E-Tender Notice No.:-S&T-Con-DNR-68R**

CSTE/CON/ECR/Mahendraghat/Patna for & on behalf of President of India are invited Open online E-Tender.

**E-Tender No. :- S&T-Con-DNR-68R**

**Name of work :-** Design, Manufacturing, Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of Electronic Interlocking System (Indoor & Outdoor) including Telecom work at Patliputra & Pahlejaahat in connection with doubling work of Patliputra-Pahlejaahat of Danapur/Sonepur Division of East Central Railway. Approximate cost :- Rs. 142944318.36 Earnest Money :- Rs. 854700/- **Cost of Tender document :- Nil as per GCC 2020 Completion Period :- 06 Months. Last Date & Time of submission of online E-Tender :- 18.12.2020 up to 12.00.** For details information, may kindly see the tender notice and tender documents which are available at Indian Railways website <http://www.reps.gov.in>

**Assistant Signal & Telecom Engineer/Con East Central Railway, Danapur PR/1000/CDNR/ S&T/T/20-21/40**

**Stay Protected from Corona**

**Wear your mask properly**

**Frequently wash your hands with soap**

**Maintain safe distance**

**NO CARELESSNESS UNTIL THERE IS A CURE**