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WORLD 12
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ON JAPAN CRUISE SHIP: MEDIA

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**KANGANA'S
LOOK AS PILOT
RELEASED
13 VIVACITY**

Women in non-combat command

SC also orders permanent commission for women in Army within 3 months

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a landmark judgment, the Supreme Court on Monday opened the way for women in command positions in the Army and directed the Centre to grant permanent commission to all women officers within three months. The apex court orders, on grounds of the need to end gender bias in the Armed forces, will directly benefit more than 300 women officers, including making them eligible for pension.

The women officers, however, will not be inducted into the combat arms such as the infantry, artillery and armoured corps as the Supreme Court clarified that their deployment is a matter of policy as held by the Delhi High Court.

While directing the Centre to grant permanent commission, the court termed the Government's argument of physiological limitations and social norms for denying them command posts as "disturbing."

The court said women officers in the past have brought laurels to the country and change of mindset is required on the part of the Government to put an end to gender bias in Armed forces. A Bench headed by Justice DY Chandrachud said there will not be any absolute bar on giving women command postings.

Landmark judgment

- The SC orders, on grounds of the need to end gender bias in the Armed forces, will directly benefit more than 300 women officers, including making them eligible for pension
- The women officers, however, will not be inducted into the combat arms such as the infantry, artillery or armoured corps as the top court clarified that their deployment is a matter of policy as held by the Delhi High Court

The top court said despite there being no stay on the 2010 Delhi High Court verdict allowing grant of permanent commission to women officers, the Centre showed scant regard in implementing the directive in the past one decade.

"There is no reason and justification for the union of India not to act as per the Delhi High Court verdict. On September 2, 2011, the Supreme Court clarified this aspect and said there is no stay on the High Court verdict. Despite that scant regard has been paid to the verdict of the HC and the order of Supreme Court as well," the Bench said.

The SC said it is of the opinion that physiological features of women have no effect in granting permanent commission and they have to be

given equal opportunity on a par with their male counterparts in the armed forces.

It said the Centre's submission of physiological limitation is based on flawed notion and there is no constitutional basis to deny them equal opportunity. The SC said permanent commission can be given to women officers in the Army irrespective of their tenure of service.

On February 9, serving women officers in the Indian Army had countered the Centre's stand in the SC on denying command posts to women on the ground of their physiological limitations, terming it not only "regressive but also completely contrary to the demonstrated record and statistics."

In their written submission to the court, the women officers had sought rejection of the submission of the Centre and said it is unfortunate that such grounds have been raised, which are completely contrary to the demonstrated records of the case.

The women officers had said they have been serving in the 10 Combat Support Arms, for the last 27 to 28 years and have proven their mettle and courage under fire. The written submission had also said the women officers have demonstrated that they do not lack in any manner in the roles that have been assigned to them.



(Left to right) Short Service Commission women officers Anjali Bisht, Seema Singh and Sandhya Yadav flash victory sign outside the Supreme Court in New Delhi on Monday

5 theatre commands for modern warfare by 2022

RAHUL DATTA ■ NEW DELHI

With the objective of fighting modern-day warfare, India will roll out two to five theatre commands by 2022 to take care of security challenges along the western (Pakistan) and northern (China) borders.

While Jammu & Kashmir will be a separate theatre, the western and eastern Navy commands will operate as one and known as peninsular command to guard the strategically important Indian Ocean, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)



General Bipin Rawat said here on Monday. Stressing that his charter as CDS is clearly enunciated, he said the mandate is to achieve jointness and synergy between the three Services

by undertaking these reforms. Rawat said the theatre commands will be geographically defined and demarcated and a study will be conducted from March 31 onwards.

The study will be submitted for scrutiny by the end of next year and hopefully the commands will roll out by 2020, said Rawat, adding the study groups will evaluate the options of number of commands which could vary from two to five. At present, the three Services have their own commands and operate in silos.

Now, Nirbhaya rapists to hang on March 3

Death warrant issued for third time even as convicts' bids on to exploit legal lacunae

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Monday issued fresh death warrants against the four death-row convicts in the Nirbhaya gangrape and murder case. The four convicts will be now hanged to death on March 3 at 6 am. This is the third time that death warrants have been issued against them.

Additional Sessions Judge (AS) Dharmender Rana issued fresh warrants against death row convicts Mukesh Kumar Singh (32), Pawan Gupta (25), Vinay Kumar Sharma (26) and Akshay Kumar (31).

The first date of execution, January 22, was postponed to February 1 by a January 17 court order. Then the trial court on January 31 stayed "till further orders" the execution of the four convicts as they had not exhausted all their legal remedies.

Mukesh on Monday told the court that he didn't want to be represented by advocate Vrinda Grover, after which advocate Ravi Qazi was picked to represent him.



Nirbhaya gangrape case convicts

The court was also informed that Vinay is on hunger strike. Vinay was assaulted in jail and has head injuries, his lawyer told the court, adding that he was suffering from acute mental illness and hence the death sentence cannot be carried out.

The court directed the Tihar Jail superintendent to take appropriate care of Vinay as per law.

Pawan's counsel informed the court that he wanted to move curative petition and the mercy plea against the death sentence before the President.

Protest a right, but can't block roads, SC tells Shaheen Bagh

Court asks senior advocate Hegde to persuade anti-CAA protesters to shift

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Blockade of the public road at Shaheen Bagh is "troubling us", the Supreme Court said on Monday and suggested that the anti-CAA protesters go to another site where no public place would be blocked.

The SC asked senior advocate Sanjay Hegde to "play a constructive role as an interlocutor" to persuade the protesters to move to an alternative site. People have a fundamental right to protest "peacefully and lawfully" but blocking public roads and public places is a matter of concern as it might lead to "chaotic situation", the apex court said, stressing that there has to be a "balancing factor".

"Democracy works on expression of views but there are lines and boundaries for it," a bench of Justices SK Kaul and KM Joseph said, adding, "The question which is arising is



Women during a sit-in protest at Shaheen Bagh in New Delhi on Monday

where to protest."

"Our concern is if everybody starts blocking public areas then where will it end," the bench asked.

The SC said Hegde can take assistance of advocate Sadhana Ramachandran and former Chief Information Commissioner Wajahat Habibullah for talking to the protesters.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Delhi Government and the Delhi Police, told the court that the solution is to remove these protesters from the site.

"We will not go that far but the problem is that they (protesters) are keeping children and women as shield. We have

held a series of meetings with the local resident welfare associations, priests of mosques, there and we are trying to persuade them that this is not the way to keep entire city to hostage under the garb of protest," Mehta said.

Sharjeel Imam sent to police custody

New Delhi: A court here sent Sharjeel Imam, arrested on sedition charge last month, to one day custody of the Delhi Police on Monday in a separate case related to violent protests against CAA at New Friends Colony on December 15.

UK MP, leading anti-India Kashmir opinion, lands at IGIA, packed off to Dubai

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

British MP Debbie Abrahams — at the forefront of creating opinion against India on the Kashmir issue after the special status to the State under Article 370 was abolished — was stopped at the Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) in Delhi on Monday and deported to Dubai.

The Labour Party parliamentarian, also the chairperson of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Kashmir in Britain, was not allowed entry into India and was told upon her arrival at the airport that her e-visa had been rejected.

The British MP said in a statement that she arrived in Delhi on Monday morning and was informed that her e-visa, which was valid till October 2020, had been cancelled.

Countering her claims, the Union Home Ministry spokesperson said the British parliamentarian had been duly informed that her visa was cancelled and she arrived in Delhi despite that.

Reacting to Home



Debbie Abrahams

Ministry's clarification, she said she had "not received any emails before February 13". After that, she had been travelling and was away from office. In her statement, Abrahams said she had presented herself at the immigration desk along with her documents and e-visa.

"...The official looked at his screen and started shaking his head. Then he told me my visa was rejected, took my passport and disappeared for about 10 minutes. When he came back he was very rude and aggressive shouting at me to 'come with me'. I told him not to speak to me like that and was then taken to a cordoned off area marked as a Deportee Cell.

He then ordered me to sit down and I refused. I didn't know what they might do or where else they may take me, so I wanted people to see me," the British MP said.

Kejriwal takes charge as CM sans portfolio, DJB goes to Satyendar

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his Cabinet colleagues took charge of their respective offices on Monday and asserted that they would work to fulfil the promises made in the "guarantee card", released during the poll campaign, including reduction in pollution and the expansion of metro network.

The Chief Minister later issued an order making minor changes in the portfolios of the Ministers. Gopal Rai has been given Environment apart from holding Labour and Employment. Satyendar Jain has been allocated Delhi Jal Board apart from key portfolios of Health, PWD, Urban Development, Power and Home. Women and Child department has been given to Rajender Pal Gautam. Earlier this department was with Manish Sisodia.

Kejriwal has not assigned any department under his control. He will continue to oversee and guide all departments.

Soon after taking the charge, the AAP Government made its priorities clear and said the Government will fulfil the promises made to the



AAP supreme Arvind Kejriwal takes charge as the Chief Minister of Delhi for the third time at Delhi Secretariat in New Delhi on Monday

people in its manifesto.

Soon after taking the charge, Deputy CM and Finance Minister Sisodia announced about Delhi Budget. The AAP Government will present Delhi's 2020-21 Budget after Holi, Sisodia said while kicking off the budgetary exercise with holding several back to back meetings with officers.

He discussed issues pertaining to poll promises made by the AAP in the run up to recently-concluded Assembly

elections and asked officials to make those provisions in the Budget.

Holding another meeting with officials of the trade and taxes department, Sisodia directed it to take steps to prevent tax evasion.

He said, "Earlier, the budgetary exercise used to start from December, but as there was Delhi Assembly election, we could not do so. In the next 20-25 days, we will work hard to prepare the budget and present it after Holi."

CAPSULE

TWO CRIMINALS KILLED IN DELHI ENCOUNTER

New Delhi: Two men, involved in multiple cases of murder and robbery, were killed in a gunfight with the Special Cell of the Delhi Police here on Monday.

MARKETS
SENSEX 41055.69 (-0.49)
NIFTY 12045.80 (-0.56)
GOLD 40,809.00 (-0.41)
SILVER 46,188.00 (-0.08)

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Fresh smoke for you! 'Best before' date on cigarette packs

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

Cigarette manufacturers may soon have another mandate to "benefit" smokers. Besides the statutory warning and other relevant details, the packets will have to specify "best before" or "expiry" details, on the lines of other edible and consumable items, including medicines.

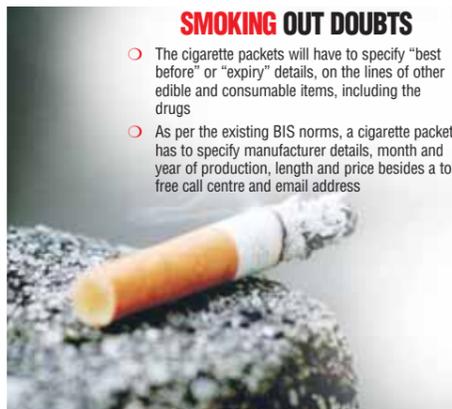
Sources in the Bureau of India Standards (BIS) said that research is ongoing on the subject as this is the long pending demand of tobacco and gutkha associations and even by the consumers.

"The best before/expiry dates of cigarette packets may be introduced soon and we believe this will in a way also counter fake manufacturing of the cigarettes. Our research team have also found that cer-

tain products had traces of fungus which when inhaled is more harmful," said BIS sources.

Sources clarified that good quality cigarettes are manufactured after taking full precautions in processing of the tobacco to avoid any fungal growth but research has found that it goes stale after a certain period. Illicit cigarettes are on the rise and smoking them impacts the health more.

"Cigarettes don't really expire, they go stale. When a cigarette goes stale it has lost its moisture in the tobacco and tastes differently. Commercial cigarettes usually don't go stale unless the pack has been opened and it usually takes about two days. Usually, people look for an expiration date to make sure something won't taste bad, smell bad, or be bad



for your health. Hence, work is on to incorporate expiration schedule or the best before date on the cigarette packs which will be in the interest of consumers as well as manufacturer

SMOKING OUT DOUBTS

- The cigarette packets will have to specify "best before" or "expiry" details, on the lines of other edible and consumable items, including the drugs
- As per the existing BIS norms, a cigarette packet has to specify manufacturer details, month and year of production, length and price besides a toll free call centre and email address

ers," the sources said.

As per the existing BIS norms, a cigarette packet has to specify manufacturer details, month and year of production, length and price besides a toll free call centre and email address.

"A pictorial danger sign was incorporated on tobacco products on the directions of the Supreme Court a few years ago and expiration date will be the new addition," the sources said.

India ranks fifth, jointly with Hong Kong and Thailand, in terms of the largest pictorial warning on cigarette packs with 85 per cent of both sides of the packets covered, according to an international cancer society report.

The report found that 118 countries and territories now require pictorial health warn-

ings on cigarette packages, up from 100 in 2016.

A data from World Health Organization (WHO) shows that tobacco use kills nearly six million people in a year. The situation is equally bad in India with estimated number of tobacco users being 274.9 million as per Global Adult Tobacco Survey India (GATS). This includes 163.7 million users of smokeless tobacco, 68.9 million smokers and 42.3 million users of both smoking and smokeless tobacco.

"Cigarettes often come with best before information. While idea of an expiry date would be fine, its compliance is something that regulatory and enforcement agencies will have to deal with. We sincerely hope, as and when this comes into effect, it does take care of the growing menace of the illicit

cigarettes in the Indian market. Over the years, India has emerged as world's 4th largest market for illegal cigarettes and besides causing huge revenue losses to the Government, it also poses severe risks to national security as illicit trade is known to fund organised crime, across the world," said RS Tiwari of Centre for Public Awareness that works on awareness on illicit cigarettes.

He also added that as per a World Bank Report, illicit cigarettes have severe implications on the health of the nation as the "availability of inexpensive illicit cigarettes increases the likelihood of young people developing addiction — particularly where illicit imports "glamorise" smoking through aspirational brands."

MCD to finalise new protest site by weekend

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Municipal Corporation of Dehradun is expected to finalise the new protest site in a week. Demonstrations at the Parade Ground have been causing public inconvenience and traffic jams among other issues.

This and the planned development of the Parade Ground area under the smart city project are the reasons for the authorities deciding to shift the protest site to another location. In the recent past the Dehradun mayor Sunil Uniyal 'Gama' had stated that the protest site would be shifted away from its current location near the Parade Ground.

According to deputy municipal commissioner of Dehradun, Rohitash Sharma, "For now, the locations at Nanoorkheda and Ekta Vihar on Sahastadhara Road are being considered for the new protest site in the city. Though

the new site has not been finalised yet, the new site will probably be finalised by the end of this week."

However, the protesters on the site do not agree to the decision of shifting protesting site to these locations. According to one of the anti-CAA protesters Sardar Khan, "We have been told verbally to vacate the protest site but nothing in writing has been given to us by the official of any department.

Our protest will not shift to any other location till we are given a protest site near the Clock Tower or near the centre of the city." "What is the point of protesting in a location which is far from the centre of Dehradun? The protest is done so that the voice of people can be heard by the authorities.

Who will come to these areas to hear or support the protesters? Protesting against the wrongdoing of the government is the right of every citizen in a democratic country so



it is the duty of the MCD to provide a place which is satisfactory to everyone," said another protestor Mohammad Ishad. According to one of the

members of Devbhoomi e-rickshaw welfare society, Satyaveer Arya, "We are not protesting here for now but we are not leaving the site either as

we will be commencing our license camp here. Since we have not received any kind of notice to vacate the protest site, we'll stay here."

VASSM against us due to drop in their extra income: e-rickshaw drivers

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The members of Vikram-Auto Sanyukt Sangharsh Morcha (VASSM) do not want e-rickshaws to operate on the main roads because they are not earning extra by overcrowding their vehicles as in the past, alleged the members of Devbhoomi e-rickshaw welfare society.

VASSM has warned to go on a strike if any amendments are made in the gazette notification issued by the state transport department in which the entry of e-rickshaws is banned on the main roads. As per the members, if the department will allow the e-rickshaw drivers on the main roads they will protest against it.

On this, the members of e-rickshaw union said that the members of VASSM are infuriated since the operators of buses and Vikrams are not getting to overload their vehicles as much as they did before the operation of e-rickshaws started in the city.

According to the secretary of the e-rickshaw union Santosh Kumar, "Everyone is earning sufficiently, be it drivers of the Vikrams, auto rickshaws or city bus operators but the point is they are not earning extra as they were accustomed to by overcrowding their vehicles or charging extra from the passengers. Since an electric rickshaw cannot accommodate more than four passengers at a time, we do not wait for it to get overloaded and immediately head off to the destination after picking up passengers."

"We do not have any problem with any member of other unions, we want to operate our e-rickshaws beside them but if they want to protest against us then we cannot do anything. The department has allowed us to operate and the department itself will take care of the other unions too. We hope the right decision will be taken by the state transport department," said a member of e-rickshaw union Satyaveer Arya.

He further added that Vikrams do not have stage carriage permit but they still pick up the passengers in between stops across the city. Besides this, there are number of rules which are being violated by the

Mixed response of Doonites to e-rickshaws on main roads

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The people in Dehradun are divided in their opinion regarding the operation of electric rickshaws on the main roads of the city. "I prefer e-rickshaws to Vikrams or auto rickshaws because they don't make as much noise as the other public transport vehicles. I'll prefer them to pick me up from my home rather than the main road.

We have other options on the main roads but I also understand the point of e-rickshaw drivers that one cannot earn much only driving through the lanes and colonies," said a senior citizen Brijeshwar Prasad.

Anshu Prajapati, a housewife said, "I used to send my two kids to school in e-rickshaw when the school was near to our house but when we admitted them to a new school, we had to hire a cab. E-rickshaws seem to be risky for long distances.

They are not as sturdy as Vikrams or cabs. Children play, tease and sometimes nudge each other; the e-rickshaws can be quite risky with naughty kids on board. According to me, the e-rickshaws should be used only for short distances."

Alay Khan, a college student said, "E-rickshaw really made my college mornings easy because I could catch it

nearby my house and it drives me direct to the entrance of the college. Buses wait till it doesn't get congested with passengers, but e-rickshaws are ready to go even with two passengers during college time.

When the e-rickshaw drivers went on strike, I had to walk to the main road to get an auto or the bus or book a cab. How will they serve people from internal lanes if the government will not allow them to pass through the main roads? Nobody wants to change multiple vehicles to reach the place as near as Doon hospital or MKP College."

However, some people also expressed their views on limiting the number of public transport vehicles in the city. "I think the government should really limit the number of public transport vehicles on the roads of the city. These days most of the people have their own vehicles and the facility of hiring a cab online.

So there is no need for several public means of transport in Dehradun. There are thousands of three-wheelers besides the buses which just add to the city's air pollution, noise pollution and traffic. The electric rickshaws at least do not contribute to the pollution of the city's environment," said a local.

Operation Samaritan: Arunachal Pradesh students visit IMA

Tour is part of Indian Army's initiative to foster spirit of national integration



PNS ■ DEHRADUN

A group of school children from Arunachal Pradesh visited Indian Military Academy (IMA) on Monday under the Operation Samaritan. The tour was part of the Indian Army's initiative to foster the spirit of national integration across the country.

The team comprising of 15 students led by the Army Officer-in-charge of the tour along with two Army personnel visited this premier training institution and interacted with the officiating Commandant of IMA Brigadier S K Narain. A communiqué of IMA said, "This visit to the Academy provided

a unique opportunity to all the children hailing from one of the remotest corners of our country to learn about the rich history, traditions and ethos of the Indian Army. The children were highly motivated by the interaction conducted during the tour and many wanted to join the Armed Force and serve the Country."

Investiture ceremony of Western Command of Indian Army today

15 officers and 26 soldiers of the Army would be awarded for their exemplary service to nation

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The investiture ceremony of the western Command of Indian Army would be organised at Ranjit Singh auditorium, Clement town on Tuesday. In the ceremony the General Officer Commanding in chief (GOC in C) of western command, Lieutenant General R P Singh would felicitate 15 officers and 26 soldiers of the Indian army with gallantry

awards for their exemplary service to the nation. One of the awardees will be honoured posthumously. In the ceremony, Lt Gen Singh would bestow unit citations to 16 units of the western command for their meritorious and outstanding performance. He would also interact with the award winners. On the eve of the ceremony, a special light and sound show titled 'Jung e Saragarhi' was staged on Monday.

The show was dedicated to the supreme sacrifice made by 21 valiant soldiers of 36th battalion of the Sikh regiment in the famous battle of Saragarhi where 21 Sikh soldiers fought against an army of 10000 Pathans to save their post.

कार्यालय नगर निगम देहरादून
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 पत्रांक- 1272(H) ई-निविदा दिनांक-17.02.2020
 नगर निगम देहरादून द्वारा वित्तीय वर्ष 2020-21 हेतु 40 नये वाडों में स्टीट लाईट लगाने तथा मरम्मत कार्य हेतु यूटीटी0ली0टी0 2 सीटर लोडिंग बोडी गाड़ी किराये पर लेने हेतु ई-निविदा, तकनीकी बिड व वित्तीय बिड आमंत्रित की जाती है। ई-निविदा वेबसाइट उत्तराखण्ड की ई-निविदा साईट www.uktenders.gov.in में दिनांक 24.02.2020 को 02:00 बजे तक जमा की जा सकती है। जो कमेटी के समक्ष दिनांक 24.02.2020 सांय 04:00 बजे सांय खोली जायेगी।
 नगर आयुक्त,
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Teen wrestler wins Bronze in Khelo India Youth Games

PNS ■ HARIDWAR

Sixteen-year-old Umang Singh of Harjoli Jat village in Haridwar district won the bronze medal in the recently concluded Khelo India

Youth Games 2020. Umang has also won gold medals in state-level wrestling event and silver medals at the national level. There is an atmosphere of happiness in the whole village on this success of



Umang with people thronging to his home to congratulate him. This year Khelo India Youth Games were held in Guwahati, Assam earlier this year. Competing in the wrestling event, Umang won the bronze medal. The youngster credited his father, brother and trainer for his success. He said that there is a festive atmosphere in his village with people coming to wish him on his performance. The young wrestler said that he wants to progress further and win laurels for the nation in this sport. Meanwhile, the local MLA Qazi Nizamuddin also reached the village to congratulate him on his success. Stating that he himself is quite interested in sports, Nizamuddin congratulated the teenager.

Snake man rescues serpents, brings relief to people

Bhola Ram routinely rescues venomous and non-venomous snakes

PNS ■ HARIDWAR

Due to the close proximity of Haridwar city to the Rajaji national park and other wooded areas, various wild animals moving in areas populated by humans is not uncommon here. Apart from the mammals, there are also different species of snakes in the region.

It is here too that the forest department is playing a proactive role by rescuing snakes that enter human habitations. The timely action of the department staff prevents harm to both the humans and the serpents.

One of the major responsibilities of the divisional forest office is to take necessary action on reported conflict situation between a human and a snake or a wild animal.

When it comes to snakes, Bhola Ram is the person who attends to the calls from citizens.

He used to look after routine work in the forest department office in the past but after learning the necessary skills has become known as 'snake man' among the locals.

Talking to The Pioneer, he said, "I used to work in the department office. However, once when I accompanied the snake catching team, it



occurred to me that I too could do this task. After learning the basics among experienced officers, I too started catching snakes. Now, I rescue an average of two to three snakes a day or about 100 snakes a month due to which some people know me as 'snake man'."

The forest division has also felicitated him in the past for efficiently rescuing snakes and resolving human-wildlife conflict situations.

Talking about him, the Haridwar divisional forest officer Akash Verma said that Bhola Ram is a capable person who is playing an important role in the department.

Currently, he is working on a contract basis and has been given a place in the rescue squad.

उत्तराखण्ड विद्युत नियामक आयोग
 'विद्युत नियामक भवन' निकट आई.एस.बी.टी., पो0 आँ0 माजरा, देहरादून-248171
राज्य में प्रस्तावित विद्युत दरों पर जन सुनवाई
 आयोग के समक्ष उत्तराखण्ड पावर कारपोरेशन लि0 (UPCL) पावर ट्रांसमिशन कारपोरेशन ऑफ उत्तराखण्ड लि0 (PTCUL), यूजेवीएन लि0 (UJVN Ltd.) तथा एस0एल0डी0सी0 (SLDC) द्वारा वित्तीय वर्ष 2018-19 के लिए सहीकरण (Truing up), वित्तीय वर्ष 2019-20 के लिए वार्षिक समीक्षा, वित्तीय वर्ष 2020-21 के लिए दायर ए0आर0आर0 (ARR) एवं टैरिफ याचिकाओं पर उपभोक्ताओं व अन्य सम्बन्धित संस्थाओं व्यक्तियों से सुझावों/मतों को जानने हेतु उत्तराखण्ड विद्युत नियामक आयोग द्वारा निम्न कार्यक्रम के अनुसार जन सुनवाई आयोजित की जा रही है :-

जन सुनवाई की तिथि	स्थान
26.02.2020 (प्रातः 11:30 बजे से 01:30 बजे तक)	रानीखेत : सभागार, होटल रानीखेत ग्रैण्ड, सदर बाजार रानीखेत (अल्मोड़ा)।
28.02.2020 (प्रातः 10:30 बजे से 01:00 बजे तक)	रुद्रपुर : सभागार, विकास भवन नैनीताल रोड, रुद्रपुर, (ऊधमसिंह नगर)।
04.03.2020 (प्रातः 11:00 बजे से 01:00 बजे तक)	उत्तरकाशी : ओडिटोरियम, जिलाधिकारी कार्यालय, उत्तरकाशी।
06.03.2020 (प्रातः 10:30 बजे से 01:00 बजे तक)	देहरादून : सुनवाई कक्ष, उत्तराखण्ड विद्युत नियामक आयोग, विद्युत नियामक भवन, निकट आई.एस.बी.टी., पो0आँ0 माजरा, देहरादून।

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Brief Budget session elicits objections

Cong leader Karan Mahra meets Speaker Prem Chand Agarwal; Speaker to take up issue with CM

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The proposed four-day Budget session of Uttarakhand Vidhan Sabha at Gairsain is eliciting objections from various quarters. Joining the league of those opining that the important session should get extended, the speaker Prem Chand Agarwal said on Monday that he would discuss the issue with the Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat.

The speaker told the media persons at his residence that it is the government's prerogative to decide on the place and the duration of the sessions of the Vidhan Sabha. He however added that he shares the concern about short duration of the budget session this time and added that he would hold talk with the CM on the subject.

Expressing concern over

less sittings of Uttarakhand Vidhan Sabha, the speaker said that reducing the gap between two sessions of Vidhan Sabha would result in increasing the total sittings. On Monday, the deputy leader of the Congress legislature party, Karan Mahra met the speaker and apprised him about his concern on the short duration of the budget session of the assembly.

Later, talking to The Pioneer, Mahra said that organising a session of only four days is very unfortunate. He said that on first day, only the address of the governor is scheduled and for budget presentation and department wise discussion the time allotted for the session is very less.

Giving the example of neighbouring Uttar Pradesh (UP) where budget session would last for more than a month, the Congress leader said that the Uttarakhand



Government is not serious about its parliamentary obligations.

Mahra also claimed that in Vidhan Sabha never starts on Monday and Tuesday due to which the departments headed by chief minister never

come up for discussions. It is convention that questions concerned with the chief minister are listed on Mondays and Tuesdays. The budget session this time is slated to start on Tuesday (March 3) but since the governor addresses the

house on day one, this time also the questions related to the departments headed by CM are not expected to come up. The budget session of Uttarakhand Vidhan Sabha would commence on March 3 and the session would be held at Gairsain.

Six dead, one missing after car falls off road

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Six people have died and one is missing after the car they were travelling in fell off the road and landed up near the Bhagirathi river on the road to Yamunotri.

The accident occurred on Monday afternoon in Uttarkashi district. The governor Baby Rani Maurya and chief minister Trivendra Singh Rawat have expressed deep sorrow at the deaths caused in the mishap.

According to sources, resident of Manpur village near Uttarkashi, Buddhi Prakash worked in the power corporation. As usual, he was driving in his car to Chinyalisaid. At Uttarkashi, his relative Brij Lal took a lift in Prakash's car along with his wife Roshni, sons Priyanshu,

The accident occurred on Monday afternoon in Uttarkashi district. The governor Baby Rani Maurya and chief minister Trivendra Singh Rawat have expressed deep sorrow at the deaths caused in the mishap

Divyanshu, sister-in-law Arti and her five year old daughter.

According to the Uttarkashi district magistrate Ashish Chauhan, Prakash lost

control of the car near Nalupani about 20 kilometres from Uttarkashi. The car broke through the parapet and tumbled down to near the Bhagirathi river.

After the local villagers informed the police about the mishap, the district magistrate along with the police and State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) reached the accident site.

Arti's daughter was rescued in a serious condition and sent in an ambulance towards the district hospital but succumbed on the way.

The bodies of Buddhi Prakash, Brij Lal, Roshni Devi, Divyanshu and Arti had been recovered by the authorities.

The exact cause of the mishap will be known after the investigation into it.

Seven Cong MLAs to press for intra-party unity

They are said to be close to former CM Harish Rawat, who is to hold a meeting at Khatima in Udham Singh Nagar on Feb 29

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Ostensibly fed up with the continuing the infighting among the senior leaders of the party, the young MLAs of the Congress party has decided to create their own pressure group.

Seven MLAs of the party said to be close to former chief minister, Harish Rawat would hold a meeting at Khatima in Udham Singh Nagar district on February 29.

These MLAs have invited many former MLAs and other leaders of the party for the meeting. The deputy leader of the Congress legislature party in Vidhan Sabha, Karan Mahra said after the meeting, the Congress MLAs would hold meetings with the senior leaders, Harish Rawat, Pritam Singh, Indira Hridayesh and Kishore Upadhyaya.

He said that if the things don't improve then the MLAs would meet the party high

command. Interacting with media persons, Mahra said that due to infighting, the party is getting denigrated. He added that the leadership of the state party don't take the MLAs into confidence on important issues. Mahra said that the seven MLAs of the Congress party can go to any extent to save their pride and Uttarakhandiyat.

It is learnt that apart from Mahra, Quazi Nizamuddin, Furkan Ahmed, Mamta Rakesh, Harish Dhami, Manoj Rawat and Adesh Singh Chauhan would participate in deliberations at Khatima.

Mahra said Congress party is not making proper use of the former chief minister and general secretary of All India Congress Committee (AICC),



Harish Rawat in Uttarakhand. He said that Rawat is seasoned campaigner and has a vision for development of the state and Congress can return to power in the year 2022 if Harish Rawat is used properly.

Even as Mahra is trying to project that the seven MLAs are concerned about the unity of the party, the political observers are of the view that the meeting is the part of the strategy of the powerful Harish Rawat camp to flex its muscle and remove Indira Hridayesh from the position of Leader of Opposition (LoP) in assembly.

HC issues notices to Peyjal Nigam MD, EE



PNS ■ NAINITAL

Hearing on a public interest litigation seeking CBI probe into allegations of corruption leveled at Peyjal Nigam executive engineer Imran Ahmed, the high court has issued notices to the corporation's managing director and Ahmed.

The matter was taken up for hearing by the division bench of chief justice Ramesh Ranganathan and justice Alok Kumar Verma. Dehradun resident Suhail Saifi had filed the

PIL stating that executive engineer Ahmed was accused of corruption in approval granted to a drinking water scheme. Ahmed had allegedly demanded a bribe of Rs 15 lakh from a contractor. When the matter was publicised on YouTube, the state government suspended the executive engineer.

However, Ahmed challenged the government's suspension order in the high court. The high court quashed the government's suspension order, observing that said order had been issued on behalf of the sec-

retary instead of being issued by corporation's managing director. Saifi has also contended that along with Ahmed, senior officials are also involved in encouraging corruption in the Peyjal Nigam. Citing this, the petitioner has sought a CBI investigation in the case.

Considering contentions, division bench of the high court has issued notices to the corporation managing director and Ahmed while directing Peyjal Nigam and other respondents to submit their reply in court in three weeks.

MDDA order cancelling building map near Assembly quashed by HC

PNS ■ NAINITAL

The decision of the Mussoorie Dehradun Development Authority (MDDA) to not pass the amended map of the multi-storied building being constructed near the Vidhan Sabha building in Dehradun has been quashed by the high court. This decision was made by the single bench of justice Manoj Tiwari.

According to the case details, Chandra Construction Company had filed a petition in the high court stating that it had got the map of a multi-storied building near the Vidhan Sabha in Dehradun passed during 2013. However, some years later, the authority reportedly cancelled approval to the map on the grounds that the approval of the Vidhan Sabha secretariat



had not been taken for clearing the map. Due to security reasons, the permission of the Vidhan Sabha is needed before constructing a multi-storied building on the opposite side of the road near the Assembly building, it was stated.

However, the petitioner contended in the high court that there is no rule among the provisions of the MDDA for seeking permission from the Vidhan Sabha.

Accepting the petition on this ground, the court quashed the order of the MDDA.

CM pays tributes at National Police Memorial

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat paid homage to martyrs at the National Police Memorial in the national capital on Monday.

Addressing the media persons on the occasion, Rawat said that this national memorial reminds one of the sacrifice and dedication of the police and paramilitary personnel martyred in the line of duty. He said that the national police memorial is an inspiring monument.

Rawat recalled that the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) was formed in Uttarakhand after the major disaster experienced in the state during 2013. The SDRF conducts rescue and relief work in case of natural disasters and accidents.

At present four companies of the SDRF are func-

tional in the state. He further informed that City Patrol Unit (CPU) had also been formed in four districts of the state with an aim of putting a check of crimes in the city.

The tasks of the CPU include preventing and acting against crimes like chain snatching, eve teasing, auto thefts and preventing accidents. Rawat said that from 2000 to 2019, a total of 182 police personnel died in the line of duty.

The men and women in uniform work to maintain peace and order in the nation, providing relief and facilitating rescue during disaster scenarios and are present when they are needed by the citizens.

Rawat wrote in the visitors book, "Got a chance to pay tribute at the National Police Memorial. The martyrdom of our jawans gave the



inspiration for building the memorial.

Got the opportunity to salute their martyrdom with the building of the memorial in the national capital."

Cabinet minister Madan Kaushik, MPs Ajay Bhatt, Mala Rajya Laxmi Shah, MLAs Deshraj Karnwal, Ritu Khanduri, Harbans Kapoor, Ganesh Joshi, Surendra Singh

Jeena, Munna Singh Chauhan, director general (Law and Order) Ashok Kumar, DIG Sanjay Gunjyal and other officers were also present on the occasion.

UVSP plans malpractice free board examinations

Will commence on March 2 and end on March 25

PNS ■ RAMNAGAR

The Uttarakhand Vidhyalaya Shiksha Parishad (UVSP) popularly called Uttarakhand board has prepared an elaborate plan to make the upcoming board examinations of Class XII and X free from malpractices. The important examination is starting from March 2 this year. These examinations would end on March 25.

The evaluations of answer sheets would start after the end of examination and the process is expected to get completed by April 15.

The chairman of the UVSP, R K Kunwar said that a meeting of the examination committee of board was held at Ramnagar recently. In the

meeting strict orders to prevent malpractices in the examinations were given. He informed that a mobile squad would be set in every district to prevent malpractices. Kunwar said that CCTV cameras would be installed in at hypersensitive examination centres.

In the meeting it was decided that the onus of security of the question papers would be on the custodian of the centre.

In view of the incident happened at Khatima last year in which answer sheets of 38 students got lost in transportation, the board has decided to deploy a police personnel along with the representative of education department while transporting the copies from examination centre to collec-

tion centre. The examination of class X would start on March 2 while the examinations of Class XII would start on March 3. The examinations would be held in single shift from 10 am to 1 pm.

A total of 150279 candidates have been enrolled for class X while 121126 students are slated to appear in class XII examination this year.

The board has set up 1324 examination centres out of which 225 are sensitive while 27 are hyper sensitive.

The UVSP has claimed that all necessary arrangements for fair board examination would be taken and special arrangements would be made to prevent incidents of examination related malpractices.

Sadhvi Padmavati taken to AIIMS at Rishikesh, Shivanand alleges conspiracy

PNS ■ HARIDWAR

Sadhvi Padmavati who has been undertaking a protest fast at Matri Sadan in Haridwar seeking measures for protection of the Ganga river experienced some deterioration in her health.

She was being taken in a private ambulance to Delhi for treatment on Monday when at Bahadrabad, the district administration stopped the ambulance and got Padmavati admitted to All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Rishikesh Matri Sadan head Swami Shivanand alleged that doctors and administration were working under the pressure of the chief minister.

He said that yesterday, when Padmavati was told

"We then decided to take her to AIIMS in Delhi. However, when we started moving, the authorities stopped us at Bahadrabad. The officers told us that they would take her by air ambulance to AIIMS in National capital but they admitted her to AIIMS in Rishikesh.

about a team of doctors coming to check her, she became anxious and silent.

She was then taken to the Ramkrishna mission hospital on Monday where the doctors said that her health parameters were fine but she was experiencing mental trauma due to which she was not talking to anybody.

"We then decided to take her to AIIMS in Delhi. However, when we started moving, the authorities stopped us at Bahadrabad.

The officers told us that they would take her by air ambulance to AIIMS in National capital but they admitted her to AIIMS in Rishikesh.

We fear that the authorities will conspire to eliminate her," alleged Shivanand.

DM & officials inspect situation at Kedarnath

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Ahead of the resumption of Achar Dham Yatra, the Rudraprayag district magistrate and other officials trekked to Kedarnath to inspect the situation there.

During the inspection along with the superintendent of police Navneet Singh Bhullar and other officials, the DM Mangesh Ghildiyal directed the officers concerned to set up 12 toilets each for male and female pilgrims at Gaurikund, prepare compost pit every 300 metres between Gaurikund and Bhimbali, repair the drinking water supply facilities, repair the damaged power lines and replace the faulty lines.

He also said that the empty water bottles, plastic and garbage strewn around on the lower portion of the Yatra route should be cleared soon.

The district magistrate also directed the Jal Sansthan executive engineer to build a water trough for horses and mules at a distance of 400 metres.

He also issued strict instructions to officials of the Guptkashi municipal council and district Panchayat to ensure that dirt generated by horses and mules is not left uncleared at Gaurikund. In case of the death of an equine, the animal should be buried at a site away from Gaurikund.

Ghildiyal also directed the chief medical officer to ensure the repair of all medical relief posts as required while also ensuring water and electricity connection at all these posts.

He further said that high quality heaters should also be provided in all the medical relief posts so that the facility can be provided in case any pilgrim suffers from some health condition due to the cold.



Ghildiyal also instructed officials of the executing agency to speed up execution of work

underway near the Taptkund ahead of Gauri temple in Gaurikund. Personnel of the

State Disaster Response Force were also among those present on the occasion.

Police detain Congress members protesting outside Kaushik's home

PNS ■ HARIDWAR

The police detained a number of Congress members after they staged a protest outside the residence of cabinet minister Madan Kaushik here on Monday. According to the police, the protesters were demonstrating on the road without permission.

However, the Congress members claimed that they had informed the city magistrate through a letter a day ago about their planned protest. The police acted under political pressure, they alleged.

Members of the Youth Congress who had organised the protest alleged that cabinet minister and Haridwar MLA Madan Kaushik had not done anything progressive for Haridwar so far. They further averred that Kaushik protects elements of the mafia involved in liquor, land and mining businesses.

Alleging that Kaushik and his team had also pressurised some local Congress members to join his party, the protesters said that no new school, college or hospital had been built in Haridwar during the past 16 years.

Earlier, the protesters pitched a tent on the roadside outside Kaushik's residence on Monday morning to protest. The police personnel headed by city circle officer Abhay Singh reached the spot. Singh asked the protesters to change their protest



site as the traffic was being disrupted on the narrow stretch of the road where they were protesting. However, the Congress members remained there and continued raising slogans. The police then detained the protesters and took them to the police

line in Roshnabad. Singh said that the site chosen for protesting was not suitable as the road was narrow. Stating that the protest had affected the traffic, he added that they did not have the permission to protest.

Citizenship for Pak minorities sought

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC) demanded grant of citizenship to Pakistani minorities— Hindu and Sikh families— living in jhuggis (slums) and semi-permanent structures in unhygienic conditions on the Yamuna floodplains, south of Gurudwara Majnu Ka Tila.

Addressing the media, along with Pakistani Hindu refugee families on Monday, Manjinder Singh Sirsa president of DSGMC said 60 families have reached in New Delhi from Pakistan between February 2 to 16, while 10 families have reached few days ago. "Around 160 refugee families living in Delhi should be granted Indian citizenship on priority.

Majority of the migrant refugee members are professionally qualified and willing to contribute to growth and economy of the India," he said.

Sirsa said that he spoke to Union Home Minister Amit Shah in this regard and he was very positive to their demand. "The Union Minister has already instructed union Home Secretary to find out any



viable legal alternative to ensure dignified living to these families who have reached India leaving behind their movable and immovable properties in Pakistan.

He also demanded that their visa conditions be relaxed at the earliest so as they could move in other parts of the country seeking employment and education avenues to their children and told that at present their visa is restricted to Delhi

or Haridwar which has put restriction on their movement and they are unable to explore avenues and opportunities in other parts of country. "A delegation of these Hindu and Sikh families will meet Union Home Minister to thank the Government for Citizenship Amendment Act Bill which has paved the way and hope for persecuted minorities in Pakistan," he added.

"These refugee families should be extended all facilities, privileges and benefits as per international laws applicable to refugees to ensure dignified life to them as per international charter.

Delhi Government and civic agencies in the national capital should provide opportunities like Kiosk or teh bazari etc to these families to lessen their dependence on charity organisations and other government agencies," he said.

Punjab launches State-wide drive to check vehicles' conditions

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Government on Monday virtually placed the parents in the driver's seat for checking violations by school buses, while launching a state-wide drive against those steering clear of the law. Out of 4,504 school buses or vans checked during the drive on Monday morning, 149 were challaned while 253 were impounded.

Alarmed over the tragic incident where four school children were charred to death after a van ferrying them caught fire in Sangrur on Saturday, the

State Government has launched a drive across the state to check the condition, safety measures,

ness of vehicles, fire extinguishers in buses, first-aid box, among other things. Authorities

Chief Minister on Monday checked 4504 vehicles, of which 1649 were challaned besides impounding 253 vehicles for not complying with the requisite parameters of the Motor Vehicle Act," said an official spokesperson.

The spokesperson said that the drive would continue further to ensure that all such vehicles must adhere to the stipulated norms for the security and safety of the school children. The Chief Minister, in a tweet, assured that the Administration will keep a strong vigil with respect to school buses and vans. At the same time, he urged everyone, especially the parents, to check the vans or buses themselves as well and immediately report the same to the Police and District Administration in case of any violation.

"The Administration will keep a strong vigil with respect to school buses and vans but I would also urge everyone to check the vans or buses themselves as well and in case of any violation immediately report the same to the Police and District Administration," tweeted the Chief Minister. The Chief Minister added that the Deputy Commissioners are closely monitoring the drive. "The safety of our children is para-

and roadworthiness of the school buses and vans on the directions of the Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh.

Under this statewide drive, the authorities were checking overloading, the fit-

were also checking private vehicles like three-wheelers, arranged by parents on their own, for sending children to schools. "Taking cognizance of Longowal school van fire tragedy, the State Transport Department on the directives of

AAP demands regulatory body to ensure safety to school children

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Demanding the dismissal of Punjab Education Minister Vijay Inder Singla over Sangrur school van accident, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Monday demanded to set up a regulatory body to check the maintenance of vehicles, their fitness and road worthiness and ensuring safety measures, among other things. AAP's senior leader and the Leader of Opposition in Vidhan Sabha Harpal Singh Cheema also slammed the Capt Amarinder Singh Government for being "insensitive" to the safety and security of school children travelling in private school buses or vans. Expressing deep shock over the loss of four innocent

lives of children who were charred to death in an old and ramshackle school van in Sangrur district, Cheema sought dismissal of Education Minister by the Chief Minister.

Cheema said that it was unfortunate that the government had been insensitive to the cause of the safety and security of the school children by giving a free hand to the transport mafia, jeopardizing their lives. The incidents like those had touched a new high in the State while the government was maintaining a stoic silence over the rising malaise, he added. Terming Singla as the "most inefficient education minister of the state by far", Cheema said that the horrific incident was not the first of its kind. Earlier also, recur-

ring incidents of crime against children in the Education Minister's home district had been pouring in, day in and day out. Urging the State Government to form a regulatory body to check the maintenance of vehicles, their fitness and roadworthiness and ensuring safety measures, et al, Cheema said that the Government should wake up from its deep slumber to take an urgent call on the safety and security of school children by enacting stringent laws to deal with those flouting safety norms with impunity.

He also sought to bring in a permanent transport policy to keep a constant watch on the entire gamut of hiring private vans or vehicles by the school management.

mount and we will take all necessary steps in this regard," said the Chief Minister. Four children were charred to death when a ramshackle van of a private school ferrying students back home caught fire in

Sangrur district. In the accident that took place on Longowal-Sidsaachar road in Sangrur, eight children were rescued from the burning van by people working in nearby fields. The Chief Minister had

ordered a magisterial probe into the incident while ordering the State Transport Department to launch a statewide drive to check road worthiness and fitness of all school buses.

Punjab sets 15-day deadline for ULBs to make cities 'garbage-free'

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

To make Punjab's cities 'garbage-free' by ensuring 100 percent lifting of garbage heaps from every nook and corner of the cities, Punjab Local Bodies Minister Brahm Mohindra on Monday set 15 days deadline for all the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs). The Minister also directed the ULB authorities to check the menace of stray cattle by bringing other stakeholders, social organization and NGOs on board.

The directions by the Minister came while he was presiding over a high-level review meeting of the Department. Mohindra directed all the Mayors and Municipal Commissioners to lift every bit of garbage from the jurisdiction of the cities, and set a 15-day deadline for them to make cities 'garbage-free'.

At the same time, he assured them full support from the Government in this work but demanded a reciprocal commitment from them to complete this task within 15 days. "The ULBs, who would achieve this target in lesser time, would be rewarded by the State Government in a befitting manner whereas the authorities at those ULBs, who would fail to execute the task in the stipulated time, would have to face the music," said the Minister.

The Local Bodies Minister, highlighting the virtues of 'one time settlement policy' for the recovery of arrears of water and sewerage charges in the Urban Local bodies, which has recently been notified by the department, called upon the various authorities at the ULBs to launch aggressive awareness campaign to sensitize the citizen to urge them to pay their outstanding amount.

"By doing so, the ULBs could generate adequate revenue at their end," he said. Similarly, the Minister asked them to realize the pending revenue from the building department. The Minister asked them to plug the gap in collecting the property tax by making a point that in the recent past around one lakh new electricity connections were given in the urban area of the State but the estimation of property tax was not increased in that proportion.

He directed the ULBs to immediately float the tenders for putting up an advertisement at designated places of the ULBs which would garner bountiful revenue for them. Mohindra also gave a clarion call to the ULBs to check the stray cattle menace which is posing serious socio-economic danger before the civilized society and daily claiming innocent lives across the State.

He directed the officers at ULBs to personally visit the gaushalas in their districts and to make an accurate inventory of the stray cattle housed therein.

He said that the government is providing ₹32 per cattle as maintenance charges to the gaushalas as per the headcount of stray cattle providing by the management of the gaushalas, so the headcount of cattle must be crosschecked by the officers of the ULBs.

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

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I, **AYSHA RAO** W/o Ahsan Ali R/o C-24, Turner Road, Clement Town, Dehradun declare that in my passport bearing No.-H9343521 my name as **Aisha Begum**. Now I have changed my name from **Aisha Begum** to **Aysha Rao** for all future purposes.

I, **Radha Devi** W/o Army No. 4574817H HAV Pramod Kumar Unit 9 Mahar, Upar Camp Anarwala Dehradun C/o 56 APO declare that in my husband's service record my name has been recorded as **Radha Sikervar** which is incorrect. My correct name is **Radha Devi** and it should be updated.

I, **Laxmi Gajanan Landkar** W/o Army No. 16019459K H/NK Landkar Gajanan Dinkar Unit 9 Mahar, Upar Camp Anarwala Dehradun C/o 56 APO declare that in my husband's service record my name has been recorded as **Laxmi Landkar** which is incorrect. My correct name is **Laxmi Gajanan Landkar** and it should be updated.

I, **Uma Bisht** W/o Army No. 4573070H HAV Kundan Singh Unit 9 Mahar, Upar Camp Anarwala Dehradun C/o 56 APO declare that in my husband's service record my name has been recorded as **Uma Rautela** which is incorrect. My correct name is **Uma Bisht** and it should be updated.

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AAP membership drive in UP from February 23



Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh addresses media on Monday

Pioneer photo

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

After winning 62 seats in the Delhi Assembly polls, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) aims to take the "Arvind Kejriwal model of development" to Uttar Pradesh and strengthen its base in the State. The party will launch a massive mem-

bership drive in Uttar Pradesh from February 23, said senior party leader and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh. Singh said "The AAP's massive membership drive will be launched from Lucknow on February 23 and continue till March 23 where people can become members of the party by physically reaching out to our offices and getting receipts, by giving missed calls or by enrolling through our website."

He also slammed the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for its politics of "hate" during the run up to the Delhi polls and also criticised Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath over a host of issues, especially law and order. The party's senior leader Gopal Rai on Sunday formulated a three-point action plan with a tagline "Join AAP for nation building" campaign to expand nationally. Senior AAP leader and Delhi Minister convened a meeting of the State office bearers and in-charges in the

Chief Minister's residence in Delhi to deliberate upon the party's future plans to expand nationwide. The meeting was held after the oath-taking ceremony of Arvind Kejriwal as the Chief Minister of Delhi third time consecutively and other cabinet ministers on Sunday.

Incidentally, the party has also launched an extensive campaign to invite people to take part in the nation building by joining AAP by giving a missed call on 9871010101. Posters inviting the people to join the 'Nation Building' campaign using the missed call number - 9871010101, shall be published in all legislative assembly constituencies in India. It will also take part in municipal elections in other states.

Nearly 15 lakh people have already joined the party through its missed call campaign till February 11. The three point action plan contains a state-level meeting of all active volunteers and office bearers shall be conducted immediately.

Centre to implement 'One Nation One Ration Card' scheme



PNS ■ CHANDIGARH ■ AMRITSAR

To further improve the public distribution system at pan India basis, the Central Government will implement 'One Nation, One Ration Card' scheme in the country soon, Union Minister of State for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Raosaheb Danve said on Wednesday.

He said with the implementation of 'One Nation One Ration Card' scheme, any beneficiary would be allowed to get food security benefits from any PDS (public distribution system) Depot across the country as per the guidelines.

The Union Minister was in the city to attend a meeting with the officials from Food Supply and Consumer Affairs Department, PUNSUP and Warehouse related with wheat procurement.

Danve, interacting with the media persons, informed

that for effective implementation of this new scheme, 12 clusters have already been established in the country and the scheme will be implemented in the coming days.

"This scheme will provide a sturdy apparatus to the PDS system in the country as under this new scheme, the consumers need not to apply new ration card in view of migration to other areas of the country," he said. As the same card will be applicable all over the country, the consumer beneficiaries would be able to buy subsidized food items from any ration depot in the country as per stipulated norms, added Danve.

He further revealed that out of total 332 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) procured wheat at national level, Punjab contributes about 129 LMT. Similarly, Punjab contributes about 113 LMT in the aggregated procurement of rice that touches 416 LMT mark in the country. Danve further said that as the wheat procurement

would start in the coming weeks, the main purpose of his visit was to discuss the arrangements to run the wheat purchase smoothly. "To store wheat on scientific techniques, silos are being set up with capacity of 100 LMT and the Union Government has also fixed a target to set up the silos with 700 LMT storage capacity in the country," he said.

He added that to store 33.5 LMT wheat, 92 sites have been selected in Punjab and preparation work was already in progress. "Till January 31, there was 96 LMT wheat in store and the same is being shifted to Maharashtra so that the sufficient space would be available for the wheat to be procured in the coming season," added Danve after the state Food Supply Corporation general manager Arshdeep Singh Thind urged him to vacate the storage sites as soon as possible keeping in view the coming wheat procurement season in Punjab.

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SEXUAL HARASSMENT CASE

HRD to pursue action against Prof Jena

Enquiry was stopped due to Delhi Assembly elections

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

With the electioneering process over in the national Capital and Arvind Kejriwal back at the helm, the Union HRD Ministry is now planning to pursue the initiation of administrative action against a former Central Government employee, currently working as Professor and Dean at Ambedkar University Delhi (AUD), falling under the purview of the Delhi Government.

The don, Professor Sitanshu Shekar Jena, was held guilty of sexual harassment at workplace by HRD Ministry's Internal Complaints Committee during his tenure as Chairman of National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). Subsequently, IGNOU, parent cadre, had punished him by reducing his pay band and increments.

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- The don was held guilty of sexual harassment at workplace by HRD Ministry's Internal Complaints Committee during his tenure as Chairman of National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). Subsequently, IGNOU, parent cadre, had punished him by reducing his pay band and increments
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increments. There are allegations in the complaints to the HRD Ministry and the Delhi Government that Jena concealed the punishment fact when applying for the post at AUD.

Further, he also did not inform his parent department while applying to AUD. And to facilitate his appointment in AUD, he applied for VRS from IGNOU.

Jena was appointed by the Delhi Government as Professor and Dean in the AUD School of Vocational Studies almost two years ago.

For his part, Jena said he was not aware of the complaints and such matters against him.

HRD Ministry and the Delhi Government that Jena concealed the punishment fact when applying for the post at AUD.

Under the Government rules, sexual harassment invokes a major punishment which includes dismissal from service. IGNOU recently took strict action against an official found guilty of sexual harassment by immediately suspending him and then awarding a major punishment.

"As per the allegation of manipulation against Dr Jena, it was also stated that he was given undue favour by awarding a minor punishment and that too retrospectively which is against rules. Jena also has an inquiry of financial irregularity pending against him when he applied. The Delhi Government probe is expected to look into the role of AUD officials too," sources said at the HRD Ministry.

being talked about now, has already been settled then no controversy stands," Jena told *The Pioneer* over phone.

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Education Minister in his last tenure, had initiated a probe a year ago and a report was to be submitted within seven days but which hasn't been done so far. The inordinate delay in the proceedings has now led the HRD Ministry to pursue the matter as it has received complaints against the AUD Professor.

Jena was appointed by the Delhi Government as Professor and Dean in the AUD School of Vocational Studies almost two years ago. When the case, which is

years ago. A senior official said now that the elections are over and the Delhi Government is in place, the matter will be expedited and taken up in the first meeting of Education Ministry.

For his part, Jena said he was not aware of the complaints and such matters against him. "I am not a Central Government employee anymore as I have already taken VRS from IGNOU three years ago. When the case, which is

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ED unearths unaccounted ₹3.75 cr cash, 39 kg gold

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) unearthed unaccounted cash worth ₹3.75 crore and over 39 kg of gold and silver after conducting raids in Jaipur, Kolkata and Chennai against jewellers associated with an alleged gold-smuggling hawala racket.

The ED claimed that the action under Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) has led to detection of "huge evasion" of customs duty, GST as well as Income Tax.

"The ED received reliable input that Maharaja Jewellers (proprietor Tara Chand Soni), Bhagwati Jewellers (owner Ram Gopal Soni) and Ladiwala Associates (owner Honey Ladiwala) of Jaipur were purchasing smuggled gold bars from Harsh Bothra of Chennai and Banka Bullions Pvt. Ltd etc," the agency said in a statement.

While acting on the information, it was found that vari-

HAWALARACKET

Agency too discovered over 39 kg of gold and silver after conducting raids in Jaipur, Kolkata and Chennai against jewellers associated with an alleged gold-smuggling hawala racket

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bars were then dispatched to various domestic markets by different modes of transportation to evade action from the law enforcement agencies.

The accused jewellers did not account for jewellery manufactured from smuggled gold and illegal funds generated were then transferred through hawala agents based in these cities, the agency said.

Hawala denotes the illegal manner of transferring funds by skirting banking channels and dealing in cash through agents.

"Searches at various premises in Jaipur, Kolkata and Chennai resulted in seizure of unaccounted Indian and foreign currency worth ₹3.75 crore, gold bar and jewellery weighing 26.97 kg and silver weighing 12.22 kg along with incriminating documents. Electronic and digital devices seized are still to be examined and may lead to further details of illegal dealings," the agency added.

Two individuals were involved in smuggling of gold bars and subsequent dispatch of those to Jaipur. Gold bars were mainly arriving in Jaipur via Kolkata and had high purity level, it said.

The suspects used to remove the foreign mark of manufacturer or bank engraved or embossed on the gold bars and then smuggle those into the country, the ED said. These

India issues strong demarche to Turkey on Kashmir remarks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Following its President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's comments expressing concern over the prevailing situation in Kashmir and comparing the "struggle" of Kashmiri people with that of the fight by the Turkish during the World War I, India on Monday issued a strong demarche to Turkey.

In a strongly worded statement, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said Erdogan's remarks reflected neither an understanding of history nor of the conduct of diplomacy and that they will have strong implications on India's ties with Turkey. MEA Spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said India rejected the repeated attempts by Turkey to justify the cross-border terrorism "practised so blatantly" by Pakistan.

In an address to a joint session of Pakistan's Parliament on Friday, Erdogan compared the "struggle" of Kashmiri people with that of the fight by Turkish people against foreign domination during the World War I, and threw his weight behind Islamabad on the Kashmir

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issue.

"India has made a strong demarche with the Turkish government on the remarks made by President Erdogan on the Indian Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir during his recent visit to Islamabad. These remarks reflect neither an understanding of history nor of the conduct of diplomacy," Kumar said in a statement.

He said the Turkish President's remarks "distorted" events of the past to advance a "narrow minded" view of the present. "This recent episode is but one more example of a pattern of Turkey interfering in the internal affairs of other countries. India finds that completely unacceptable," Kumar said.

The demarche was made by Secretary (West) Vikash Swarup to the Ambassador of Turkey.

JAMIA VIDEO

Cong stands for those operating against country's interests: BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Monday condemned the Congress for "giving political colour" to the violence at Jamia Millia Islamia on December 15 last year saying the party criticises security forces and stands for those operating against country's interests.

The BJP reacted after the Congress criticised Modi Government following circulation of a video showing police and paramilitary hitting students with their batons in the university library on December 15 evening. Another video had gone viral in social media captured images with a few masked "students" moving around the library with stones in their hands.

"Congress party is continuously supporting anti-social elements and those who indulge in violence. It raises voice against the security forces and police personnel of the country," BJP spokesperson GVL Narasimha Rao said.

Talking about the second video in which people were seen in the gangway with some covering their faces, Rao asked why were students wearing masks and what were they studying with stones in their hands. "Which academic discipline requires students to wear masks and hold stones while studying?" he asked.

"The Congress party always chooses to stand with those who are inimical to the country and rile up security forces," the BJP spokesperson said.

CAA, NRC, NPR

154 prominent citizens to Prez: False, motivated campaign being launched

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 154 prominent citizens, including former judges, bureaucrats, armed forces officers and academicians, on Monday, wrote to President Ram Nath Kovind, saying a "false and motivated" campaign is being launched against the CAA, NPR and NRC with a sinister design to harm the nation and sought action against trouble-makers.

In the letter to the President, the citizens urged the Central Government to look into the ongoing protests with all seriousness and safeguard the democratic institutions of the country, and take stern action against those people behind them.

The citizens, including 11 former judges of different high courts, 24 retired IAS officers, 11 former Indian Foreign Service officers, 16 retired IPS and 18 former Lieutenant Generals, said "fear" is being spread across the length and breadth of India which appears to be "motivated and with a sinister design" to harm the nation.

They said the campaign is being carried out in a "coordinated manner" leading to violent protests in which public and private property has been destroyed.

The citizens said there has been a "false and nefarious narrative" about the recently enacted legislations like the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the idea of the National Population Register (NPR) and National Register of Citizens (NRC).

They said that while the CAA has been enacted, the idea of NPR and NRC which has been a part of the Indian discourse since Independence remains to be implemented.

"This (protests) has grave security implications and does not bode well for our motherland.

"These protests, while ostensibly claiming to oppose the policies of Government of India, are in effect designed to destroy the very fabric of this country and harm the nation's unity and integrity," they said.

The citizens claimed that they strongly feel that there is also an external dimension to the disturbances being created.

According to CAA, members of Hindu, Sikh, Buddhists, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities who have come from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan till December 31, 2014, facing religious persecution there will not be treated as illegal immigrants but given Indian citizenship.

MHA-appointed panel suggests 1951 cut-off for ILP in Assam

To control movement of people from outside State

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Ministry appointed committee has suggested that 1951 should be the cut-off year for defining the indigenous people of Assam and introduction of the Inner Line Permit (ILP) to control the movement of people from outside the State.

The committee has also suggested two formulas for the reservation of seats for the indigenous people in the Assam Assembly and Lok Sabha constituencies of the State, including 67 per cent quota for them.

The high-level committee was set up by the Ministry to suggest ways to provide constitutional safeguards to Assam's indigenous people.

The sources said the 13-member panel, headed by Justice (Retd) Biplob Kumar Sharma, finalised its report last week conveyed to the Home Ministry that it was ready to submit it to Union Home Minister Amit Shah and sought

an appointment with him. The report is expected to be submitted this week itself.

The committee, according to the sources, unanimously recommended that those who were residents of Assam in 1951 and their descendants, irrespective of community, caste, language, religion or heritage, will be considered as indigenous people of the state.

Besides, the panel suggested that the ILP should be introduced in Assam so that movement of people from outside the State could be controlled.

As per the rules, outsiders have to take permission from designated authorities before entering the areas where the ILP is applicable.

In case of State Government jobs, the committee recommended 80 per cent reservation for the locals. A number of other recommendations were also given for the protection and growth of Assamese and other indigenous languages.

PERMANENT COMMISSION TO WOMEN IN ARMY

Rajnath Singh welcomes SC ruling

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday welcomed the Supreme Court's judgement on Permanent Commission for women in Army and said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has supported the idea of permanent commission for women and announced the change in policy in his Independence Day speech in 2018.

Tweeting this message he also said, "A historic decision to allow women in field operations came earlier when the then Defence Minister Nirmla Sitharaman announced that women will be inducted into

the Military Police. The recruitment process has started in 2019. The plan was to recruit women in roles ranging from probing crime cases to assisting the army in field operations wherever required," Raksha Mantri said.

"There have been instances where certain women officers have been in the job for nearly 20 years, while SSC term terminates in 14 years. In 2019, the Defence Ministry granted a permanent commission to women in all 10 branches of the Indian Army, including Signal Corps, intelligence, aviation, engineering, service corps and ordnance corps," Singh added. Before 2016, women made

up just 2.5 per cent of India's armed forces, working in mainly non-combat roles. As of January 2019, 3.89 per cent of the army personnel comprised women, while 6.7 per cent of the navy and 13.28 per cent of the air force personnel respectively were women as of June 2019. As of June 2019, women were inducted in all branches of the Indian Air Force, with terms and conditions for women officers being issued from time to time.

Singh said, "The Government is working to strengthen the 'Stree Shakti' in our Armed Forces and we stand committed to move forward in this direction."

The Government is working to strengthen the 'Stree Shakti' in our Armed Forces and we stand committed to move forward in this direction



BJP Govt disrespected women by arguing they don't deserve command posts in Army: Cong

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday said that the BJP Government disrespected Indian women by arguing in Supreme Court that women Army officers did not deserve command posts or permanent service because they were inferior to men.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi attack on the Government came after the Supreme Court directed the Centre to grant permanent commission to all women officers in the Army within three months, terming the Centre's argument of physiological limitations and social norms for

denying them command posts "disturbing".

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on her part said the historic judgment of the Supreme Court has given new wings to the flight of women in the country. "Women are capable -- in the Army, in valor, in water, land and sky. This is a befitting reply to the prejudiced Modi Government, which is opposed to women's power," the Congress general secretary said.

Rahul Gandhi, in a tweet, also lauded the women for standing up and proving the Government wrong. "The Government disrespected every Indian woman, by argu-

ing in the SC that women Army officers didn't deserve command posts or permanent service because they were inferior to men," he said.

He also attached a news report that said the apex court asked the government to grant permanent commission to women in the Army. A Bench headed by Justice DY Chandrachud said there will not be any absolute bar on giving them command postings.

It said women officers in the past have brought laurels to the country and change of mindset is required on the part of the Government to put an end to gender bias in armed forces.



The Government disrespected every Indian woman, by arguing in the SC that women Army officers didn't deserve command posts or permanent service because they were inferior to men

Bihar becomes 4th State to have bird tagging station

Other 3 are in Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Odisha

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bihar has become the fourth State in the country to have a bird ringing (tagging) station wherein rings will be placed on legs of winged wonders to study their migration pattern, mortality, territoriality and other behaviour with the help of encrypted codes embedded in the attached tracking device.

The other three ringing stations are in Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan and Odisha. A pact was inked between representatives of the Bihar Government and the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) at Gandhinagar in



A pact was inked between representatives of the Bihar Government and the Bombay Natural History Society at Gandhinagar in Gujarat on the first day of the opening of the CMS — COP13 (conservation of Migratory species — Conference of Parties)

Gujarat on the first day of the opening of the CMS — COP13 (conservation of Migratory species — Conference of Parties) attended by over 2,500 delegates from 111 countries.

"This will be fourth ringing station in India and the first in North India. The pact is for five years in which our

Government will dole out almost ₹5 crore," Bihar Principal Secretary, Environment and Forests, Dipak Kumar Singh said, adding the station will monitor the areas where large no of migratory birds visit such as Nagi Nakti (in Jamui District), Kusheshwarthan (in Darbhanga District), Barailla jheel (Vaishali), Kanwar lake (Begusarai).

He added it is also the first ringing station to be set up with the support of a State Government. The pact was signed by Director BNHS, Pradeep Apte and Bihar's Chief Wildlife Warden, Prabhat Kumar Gupta.

The ringing station will be manned by trained scientists and other technical manpower from BNHS. For monitoring the migratory birds, rings are



Bihar Government and Bombay Natural History Society on Monday signed and exchanged an MoU in presence of Environment Secretary CK Mishra and Bihar Department of Environment, Forest and Climate change Principal Secretary Dipak Kumar Singh, Director BNHS Dr Deepak Apte and Chief Wildlife Warden of Bihar Prabhat Kumar Gupta

used which have chips containing the details about their origin, route taken by them etc.

Bhagalpur will be the main centre as the Ganges and its Diyara are favourite destination

of migratory birds. Significantly, Bhagalpur is also one of the only three known breeding places of Greater Adjutant in the whole world, apart from Cambodia and Assam.

At these stations, rings are placed on legs of birds. The rings come with chips which help in tracking the origin of the birds and the route taken by these during migration.

An official from the BNHS explained that the ring encrypted BNHS code numbers ensure that wherever a ringed bird dies, is shot or is spotted with binoculars or photographed, the data can be sent back to the organisation and the bird's migration is charted. BNHS has ringed over a million birds at different places in the Indian subcontinent, with the initiation of bird ringing study in India in 1950s.

Sabarimala: Law can regulate offerings at religious places if used for terrorism, casinos, says SC

New Delhi: A 9-judge Bench of the Supreme Court observed on Monday that making offerings at places of worship may be a religious practice, but the law can regulate the money donated at such places if it is used for "terrorism" or "running casinos".

The top court said the old practices of "human sacrifices" and 'sati' amounted to murder under law and could not be saved on ground of "essential religious practice".

The Bench is also examining the issue whether a person, who does not belong to a particular faith, can file a PIL questioning the religious practice of another religion or sect of a religion. The questions have arisen out of a judgement in the Sabarimala case.

"The IPC can be read as the guard against the practice of human sacrifices, because it is murder under the IPC. Likewise 'sati' also amounted to murder... Even a religious aspect can be the subject matter of reform," said the Bench which also included justices R. Banumathi, Ashok Bhushan, L. Nageswara Rao, M.M. Shantanagoudar, S.A. Nazeer, R. Subhash Reddy, B.R. Gavai and Surya Kant. PTI

PALANISWAMI JOURNEY

EPS completes 3 yrs in CM office

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

When he was sworn in as Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu on February 17, 2017, even Edappadi Palaniswami would not have thought that he will survive in the chair at least for one year.

Why the post of Chief Minister was thrust on him was because of a Supreme Court verdict which upheld the judgment of the Special Court in Bangalore which had sentenced VK Sasikala, the then general secretary of the AIADMK and her two close relations to four years imprisonment in the Disproportionate Asset Case in which the former Chief Minister Jayalalitha was the prime accused.

Since Jayalalitha went to meet her maker on December 5, 2016, she was saved from the ignominy of being seen as a convict marching to the Parappana Agrahara central jail near Bangalore. Sasikala, who had been elected "unani-

mously" as the Chief Minister after the ouster of O Panneerselvam, instead of driving down to the Centenary Hall of Madras University for the oath taking ceremony had to travel all the way to Bangalore to surrender before the jail officials on her day of reckoning.

But before proceeding to Bangalore to server her term, Sasikala had nominated Edappadi Palaniswami, her long term confidante, as the Chief Minister.

To keep Palaniswami under a tight leash, Sasikala had also nominated TTV Dhinakaran as the deputy general secretary of the party, much to the shock of the AIADMK cadre. Dhinakaran was a non-entity in the party when Jayalalitha was alive but had managed to sneak into Veda Nilayam (Jayalalitha's private residence in Poes Garden) after Amma was admitted to Apollo Hospital in Chennai in an unconscious condition in September 2016.



With Dhinakaran breathing down his neck on a round-the-clock basis, Palaniswami had to perform a tight rope walk in governance and the party.

No one had given him a chance of survival and things worsened further when Dhinakaran decided to contest the election from R K Nagar constituency, a seat held by Jayalalitha at the time of her demise. By the time Dhinakaran won from R K Nagar constituency, Palaniswami had joined hands

with arch rival O Panneerselvam and the duo succeeded in easing out the Mannargudi Mafia (as Sasikala and her relations were known in Tamil Nadu) from the AIADMK.

Though there were tense moments about the majority of the AIADMK in the House as some of the MLAs decided to cast their lots with the Dhinakaran faction, Palaniswami has proved that he is a wonderful survivor. The setback the AIADMK had suffered in the Lok Sabha elec-

tion of 2019 is long forgotten as the party has wrested two assembly seats in by-elections held recently.

"More than Palaniswami, it is Stalin who is tense and nervous now. The DMK has been out of power in the State since 2011 and from the Centre since 2013. If he fails to win the 2021 assembly election, it is going to be the end of the road for Stalin," said T Ramakrishnan, author and commentator.

Tamil Nadu is seeing a resurgence in industrialisation and development over the last two years thanks to the silent manoeuvring by Palaniswami from the Secretariat.

Other than the anti-CAA agitation, the Chief Minister has no major issues haunting his Government for the time being. The question being asked is whether EPS is the person who could resuscitate the AIADMK from its slumber following the demise of Jayalalitha. Remember, the DMK is yet to get a saviour in the mould of M Karunanidhi.

Cong for conditional participation in J&K Panchayat bypolls

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

After National Conference, the State Unit of the Congress party on Monday announced 'conditional' participation in the Panchayat bypolls, being held to fill over 12,000 vacant seats in Jammu & Kashmir.

Since these by-polls are going to take place on party lines the mainstream political parties are keen on taking the plunge to test political waters at the grass roots.

Addressing a press conference here at party headquarters in Jammu, Jammu & Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee Chief, GA Mir told reporters, "The Congress party is ready to participate in the Panchayat bypolls, as they are being held on party lines, but it is not possible for them to contest the same by remaining indoors".

Mir said, "on what basis bypolls are going to be conducted on party lines. He asked, where are the parties. Except BJP, leaders of no other mainstream parties are in the field. He said,

those who want to participate in the polls even they are not being allowed to roam around freely and meet people. "They are being prevented to visit their constituencies and carry out political activity", he alleged.

Seeking immediate release of political leaders, detained since August 5, and freedom to campaign without any roadblocks and security restrictions, GA Mir appealed to the J&K administration to facilitate their participation in the polls by creating conducive atmosphere otherwise they won't be able to participate in these polls.

He said, "the Government is compelling us to boycott the polls but we will not boycott them". "Even if we are not allowed by the Government to participate in the polls i appeal to the common voters to expose evil designs of BJP and elect good candidates to fully empower them at the grass



roots". Earlier, on Sunday National Conference too had appealed local administration to remove "roadblocks" so that it can campaign freely.

In a letter to Jammu and Kashmir Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Shailendra Kumar, NC central secretary Rattan Lal Gupta had stated it is practically impossible for the party to participate in the election when its top leaders, including its president Farooq Abdullah, vice-president Omar Abdullah, general secretary Ali Mohammed Sagar, are in detention under the stringent Public Safety Act.

No rifles missing from SAPB, says Kerala police

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURM

Days after the CAG report found shortage of 25 INSAS rifles and 12,061 live cartridges at the Special Armed Police Battalion here, Kerala police on Monday said a physical verification has found that no rifles were missing.

"As the CAG is a very responsible auditing agency and their allegation has to be taken seriously, a crime has been registered as per their report," ADGP, Crime Branch, Tomlin Thachankery, told reporters here.

He said it was SAPB's responsibility to come clean on the matter since the charge was against them.

The battalion was asked to produce all their rifles for inspection, he said.

The ADGP said a physical examination of the 647 guns brought from 13 locations found no guns had gone miss-

ing. "At least 647 rifles from 13 places were brought to the camp on Sunday and a physical verification and preliminary inspection was held", he said.

The corresponding body numbers of each rifle was physically examined and verified with the records, after which it was concluded that no guns were missing. Thirteen guns are at Manipur I R battalion.

"We held a video conference and their body numbers were checked and matched with records."

When the police personnel return from their training from Manipur in March, it will be examined once again", he said. However, the probe on the missing cartridges was continuing, he said.

The CAG, in a damning report tabled in the state assembly on Feb 12, had found shortage of 5.56 mm INSAS rifles and 12,061 live cartridges from the battalion here.

Goa to get largest super-specialty facility under PMSSY

PTI ■ PANAJI

The country's largest super-specialty medical block under the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY) will be inaugurated within next six months in Goa, State health Minister Vishwajit Rane said on Monday.

The facility is coming up in Bambolim near the Goa Medical College and Hospital and the state will invite Prime Minister Narendra Modi to throw it open for the public, Rane added.

"My dream project for state of Goa Super Specialty Block. I am fortunate to be a health Minister of Goa under the BJP Government and for being able to take further, the vision of our Prime Minister Narendra Modi in providing quality health care to all citizens," Rane tweeted.



He also tweeted, "I am very pleased to have been able to implement his vision under the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana that has made this dream project a reality for every Goa at the cost of Rs 450 crores." "Within the next six months, we will be commissioning this hospital under a unique Public-Private Partnership approved by the NITI Aayog and the Centre," he added. He said he was looking for to the inauguration of the facility at the hands of the prime minister in the presence of state chief minister Pramod Sawant.

Young, educated people give hope in troubling times: Ratna, Naseeruddin

PTI ■ MUMBAI

For actors Ratna Pathak Shah and Naseeruddin Shah, India is their Valentine.

The Shahs, always vocal about their opinions, say they are firm in their belief that the educated young give them hope in troubling times.

The couple was speaking at an event titled "India My Valentine" here on Sunday.

According to Ratna Pathak, the "khalbali" (churning) she saw in the 60s and 70s is back but the young and educated give her hope.

"During that time everyone was thinking about the progress of India. How to make the nation ours, what kind of nation it should be. Because my family has always been associated with performing arts, we used to have discussions on these topics," she said at the event featuring musical performances, stand-up comedy acts and speeches to celebrate love and unity in the country.

Over a dozen artistes, including Naseeruddin Shah, Vishal Bhardwaj, Rekha

Bhardwaj and Swanand Kirkire, came together on one stage at the event.

Ratna Pathak, the daughter of the late actor Dina Pathak, said questions related to nation building were on everyone's mind in the decades past. Now, there is "a possibility of the nation breaking, changing", she said.

"The 'khalbali', the brain-storming of that time, can be seen reflected today. Of course, things have changed, the situation is extremely serious. What I saw and heard today, what I see around me, it definitely increases hope."

Never before has India had so many young, educated people alive at one time. It's making a difference and we are seeing it all over the country," she said.

The churn is not limited to Shaheen Bagh or Mumbai Bagh but spread across, she said, referring to the anti-CAA protests in several places in the country.

"Again, art is showing the way. This kind of 'khalbali' is producing such wonderful

writing, music, performances," she said.

Naseeruddin Shah said he can't help but wonder about the current situation when he looks around at the state of the nation.

"At a time when a lot of us are grappling to understand what's going on around us, I think I'm not alone in agonising over a question: whether all this was always latent and has finally burst forth, not being able to contained any longer."

"Or has there been in the last decade a complete change in our country... I'm not a social scientist, so I don't know the answer."

The actor then read selections from Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's "The Discovery of India" and said the book can shed some light.

"May be it'll show you the direction. I've also in these times felt the need to re-examine, rediscover what it is that is unique about this country, what it is that has always been our pride and has won the admiration of the entire world," he added.

LOCUST ATTACK Central team reaches Raj to assess damage to crops

PTI ■ JAIPUR

A 10-member central team will be visiting locust-affected areas of Rajasthan in next two days to take stock of the damage to crops due to the insects.

Rajasthan Agriculture Minister Lal Chand Kataria had informed the state assembly earlier in the month that crop on over 1.49 lakh hectares was damaged in various districts due to the locust attack since May last year.

The team, which arrived in Jaipur on Monday, will assess the damage in Bikaner and Jodhpur divisions in three parts.

The team held a meeting with Chief Secretary D B Gupta and other officials of the state Agriculture Department.

The state officials urged the Centre to provide an early assistance of ₹200 crore.

Digital process fulfilled Muslims' haj dream: Naqvi

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The digital/online Haj process Has fulfilled the dream of "Ease of doing Haj" for the Indian Muslims, Union Minister for Minority Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said here on Monday.

Addressing a training programme of Haj 2020 trainers at Haj House in south Mumbai, Naqvi said the unprecedented reforms undertaken by the Modi Government ensured that the entire Haj process has been made digital and transparent and the Haj pilgrimage has become affordable.

Making the Haj process 100 per cent digital/online has removed middlemen ensuring Haj pilgrimage becomes affordable in comparison to the cost incurred in last several decades,

he said. Even after removal of Haj subsidy, no additional financial burden has been put on the pilgrims, Naqvi said.

India has become the first country to make the entire Haj 2020 process 100 per cent digital, he said.

Online application, e-visa, Haj mobile app, E-MASIIHA health facility, E-luggage tagging providing information in India itself regarding accommodation/transportation in the holy cities of Mecca and Medina have been provided to Indian Muslims going for Haj, he said.

For the first time, facilities have been provided for digital pre-tagging of baggages of Haj pilgrims, he said.

Linking SIM card to the mobile app ensures Haj pilgrims immediately get the lat-

est information regarding Haj in Mecca-Medina on their mobile phone, he said.

Haj Group Organisers (HGOs) have also been connected with the 100 per cent digital system which has ensured transparency in their functioning and this has also led to better facilities to Indian Haj pilgrims. A portal (http://haj.Nic.In/pto) for Haj Group Organisers has been developed. It contains details of HGOs and their packages, he said.

India in coordination with Saudi Arabia is working to ensure safety and better medical facilities for the pilgrims during Haj 2020, he said. This year, a total of two lakh Indian Muslims will perform Haj, that too without any subsidy, he said.

About 1.23 lakh Muslims

will go through Haj Committee of India and remaining through Haj Group Organisers, he said. This year over 2100 Muslim women will go to Haj without Mehram (male companion), he said.

A total of 650 trainers participated in the training programme. They will train Haj pilgrims in their respective states regarding the pilgrimage, accommodation in Mecca and Medina, transport, health facilities and safety measures.

The trainers include a large number of women trainers. Officials from the Haj Committee of India, Customs, Air India, Brihan Mumbai Municipal Corporation, various banks and disaster management agencies guided the trainers.

Speeding school bus overturns in UP

14 students injured

PTI ■ GORAKHPUR (UP)

Fourteen children were injured on Monday when a speeding school bus overturned in Shohratgarh area of Siddharthnagar district here, police said.

The incident took place in the morning when the bus carrying 25 children of Saraswati Shishu Mandir lost control and overturned, they said.

The injured students were rushed to the hospital where their condition is stated to be

stable, police said. "A case has been registered against the driver, Prem Sagar, under various sections of IPC, including Section 279 (rash driving or riding on a public way) and Section 337 (causing hurt by act endangering life or personal safety of others)," Shohratgarh SHO Ramashish Yadav said.

Efforts are on to trace the absconding driver, he said. Parents of the students admitted in the hospital told reporters that the bus driver was drunk at the time of the incident, and that they had made verbal complaints against him in the past. District Magistrate Deepak Meena said the driver escaped from the scene after the incident.

3 WB tourists rescued from Ganga in Rishikesh

PTI ■ DEHRADUN

Three tourists from West Bengal were rescued from the Ganga in Uttarakhand's Rishikesh after they were stranded on a dry patch in the river, police said on Monday.

The tourists were stuck there due to a sudden rise in the water level, they said.

Police sprang into action immediately and rescued them with the help of ropes and rafts, Muni ki Reti police station in-charge R K Saklani said.

When the police team reached the spot near the Poonanand ghat, three men were seen stranded on a thin patch of dry land slightly above the surface of the river, he said.

Police personnel wearing life jackets reached the spot on rafts and brought them back with the help of ropes, Saklani said.

When the tourist waded into the river, the water level was low but when they walked downstream for a while, it rose all of a sudden, causing panic.

They somehow reached the dry patch of the land and raised an alarm, catching the attention of passersby who informed police, the official said.

The tourists have been identified as Gautam Majumdar and Sushil Haldar from North 24 Parganas and Konand Chakraborty from Jalpaiguri.

IGNOU holds 33rd convocation ceremony

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Haryana Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' on Monday praised IGNOU for making education accessible to people in all parts of the country and developing analytical ability in students through their research activities.

He was speaking at the 33rd convocation ceremony of the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). Over 2.31 lakh students from throughout India received their degrees across 39 regional centres of the university.

Crediting IGNOU for taking education to every house in the country, the minister said, "I congratulate IGNOU for the excellence achieved by it in developing critical and analyt-

ical ability of students through their research activities".

Gold medals were awarded to over 50 meritorious students during the convocation by the minister.

In his convocation address, 'Nishank' lauded IGNOU for having "unprecedented expertise in developing and launching academic programmes that are needed in the present context and very useful for learning communities".

He also mentioned the skill-oriented curriculum weaved around a conducive environment for learners by the university. Stressing upon the need to develop courses in Indian languages for wider reach, he stressed upon further development of Hindi and Sanskrit in universities.

He appreciated IGNOU for increasing the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), which he said cannot be achieved by the conventional system of education alone. He urged the university to introduce programmes which are employment-centric and help in employment generation.

Prof Nageshwar Rao, the vice-chancellor of the university, said the varsity has introduced 26 new academic programmes including three graduate degree (general), 9 graduate honours programmes under CBCS and 3 online programmes in the last two admission cycles to meet diversified needs in the disciplines of health sciences, vocational areas, tourism, environment change, yoga, development studies, etc.

Naxals raid road work site, torch trucks, machinery in C'garh

PTI ■ BALRAMPUR

Trucks and construction Machinery engaged in road work in Chhattisgarh's Balrampur were set ablaze by Naxals on Monday morning, police said.

Around a dozen armed Maoists raided the construction site near Bandarchua village under Samri police station limits, some 450 kilometres from here, between 10am and 11am and set afire three trucks, two excavators and one concrete mixer machine, an official said.

"The vehicles and machines were deployed for a work under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana. The site is on the border of Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand. The ultras escaped into the jungles of the neighbouring state. A team under Balrampur Superintendent of Police TR Koshima has rushed to the spot," he added.

The arson took place in north Chhattisgarh which incidentally the State Government has earlier claimed to be an area freed from Left Wing Extremism (LWE).

Wanted for 3 murders, man arrested by Mumbai cops from Delhi

PTI ■ MUMBAI

A 38-year-old security guard, accused of murdering three persons since 2000 — two in Uttar Pradesh and one in Mumbai — and carrying a ₹10,000 reward on his head, was arrested by the city police from New Delhi, an official said on Monday. According to the official, the accused, Avinash Kumar Laxmikant Pandey, was nabbed from New Delhi's Kamala Market locality on Sunday in connection with the murder of a fellow security guard in suburban Powai last year.

Pandey has allegedly killed two persons, including his cousin, in Prayagraj (earlier Allahabad) in his native state of Uttar Pradesh, where the police has announced a reward of ₹10,000 for information leading to this arrest, he said.



The 38-year-old also faces a case under the Arms Act in Uttar Pradesh, the official said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Zone X) Ankit Goyal said on October 27, 2019, he brutally killed one Ankit Deviprasad Singh (22) and left his body at the parking lot in Lodha Supreme Apartment at Tunga Village in Powai. "After killing Singh, the accused fled to Pune, then went to Gujarat and finally reached Delhi after spending sometime in Odisha."

"In 2000, he killed one of his friends and in 2002 he murdered his cousin (in Uttar Pradesh). We nabbed him from New Delhi after receiving a tip-off about his presence in the national capital," the DCP said.

He has been booked in the murder case registered by the Powai police, Goyal said, adding further investigation was underway. The accused had been working as a security guard in Mumbai for the last 12 years, he said.

Pandey allegedly stabbed to death Singh, a fellow security guard, following a tiff over a game of ludo, the DCP said. He was produced before a local court, which remanded him in police custody till February 21, Goyal added.

The motive behind the two murders in Uttar Pradesh was not yet known, police said.

Lead from the front

SC allows women officers to get command positions in the Army and quashes use of gender stereotypes as an argument



Thanks to the Supreme Court, women officers in the Army can now get command positions at par with male officers and break the glass ceiling in the forces. In non-combat roles for the time being. However, the sad part is that they had to fight for it legally rather than being naturalised in the just order of things, considering that they were inducted in the Army in 1992, a long 28 years ago. An entire generation has grown up in between. In this sense, the ruling is more than significant, it is a landmark. For it reminded the armed

forces that as part of an institution that codified discipline, values, honesty, decency and honour, their despotic version of patriarchy, preventing women from leading men beyond event parades, was "discriminatory" and "disturbing." In fact, it went against the very principles of equality and fairness that the Army professes from time to time. In the process, the court also underlined the need for a mindset change in the evolutionary flow of changing times, not just in the Army but everywhere. It said that deep-rooted stereotypes, that men are dominant and women are primary caretakers, need to go away. It even dismissed the argument of women being unfit physically and compromised by family duties as creating an "artificial" distinction, considering that they have still not been cleared for active combat. The court demolished all chauvinist arguments that can be used as a precedent in deciding similar cases of gender parity, tersely: "To cast aspersions on gender is an affront to their (the women's) dignity and to the country. Time has come that women officers are not adjunct to their male counterparts. Physiological features of women have no link to their rights. The mindset must change. Women work shoulder to shoulder with men." With these words, Justices DY Chandrachud and Ajay Rastogi upheld the equality of opportunity for all citizens, elevating functionality above gender and treating human resource in any discipline as deserving of respect than either an entitlement or a consolation prize. It also implied that cultural arguments have no place when it comes to the larger duty of protecting the nation. The court, knowing the tendency of institutions to not follow its orders, said permanent commission would be available to all women, regardless of their years of service and that the judgment had to be implemented within three months. What all this means is that service conditions of men and women officers will be exactly the same and that the latter shall also be provided with choices of specialisation like their male counterparts. A woman can rise to the rank of Colonel and even lead battalions. Women officers, who have been retired, will also get pension benefits.

If the court had to admonish one of the highest institutions of the land — one that is expected to rise above societal ills and be progressive and liberal — on gender injustice, then clearly it is confirmation of inherent biases among the privileged, too. Where women officers can be test cases but not decisive enough, where they may be relegated to staff duties but not challenge the male bastion. The Government's regressive stand on limiting women's role in the Army is hypocritical considering its own departments have had all-women marching contingents in Republic Day parades, the Indian Air Force (IAF) allows them to become fighter pilots and the Army has even sent them to tough UN peacekeeping missions globally. Unless they were just tokenism to boost propaganda than really honour winners of the Seva medals and Vishisht Seva medals. The next question, therefore, is should the buck stop with just entrusting greater responsibility to them? Are women just worthy of being included in non-combat roles only? In actuality, like their male counterparts, they, too, give up on all familial commitments to be part of the Army. They, too, undergo the same rigorous selection and training procedures as their male peers. None is arguing that the Army lower its standards. But if women have made it through all kinds of selection criteria, then they should at least be given a chance to prove their mettle. For they are often made a scapegoat for the failure in upgrading standards and changing the status quo. The issue is not only about whether women can be inducted in combat roles but how to make it happen with a radical overhaul of personnel policy. Other nations, including the US, Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany and Israel, allow women to be part of certain combat units. By resisting change, the Army wouldn't want to be out of sync with an India that is resetting itself. Certainly, it doesn't suit its image when the court has to prod it all the time. It needs to be the initiator, not a follower.

Smashing heads

Young people will always find innovative ways of getting hurt for thrills. But the latest game craze is plain stupid



When you are young, you feel invincible. And because death feels so far away, you tend to take physical risks that you never will once you cross the 30s. Nobody is saying that older humans are boring and refuse to take challenges. But the physical ability to take risks is far reduced by simple physiology. There is a reason why an average infantryman is 22 years old; you would not want to go to war with a physically old army. But thanks to young people pulling off crazy stunts, we have seen the proliferation

of adventure sports and some death-defying feats of human achievement. This has been the story ever since human beings gained cognisance of the idea of "self", which after all, separates us from animals. Until the dare tempts death.

From every generation, some activity or the other emerges that the adventure sports X-Games might take up. But the latest challenge by the young, called the "Skull breaker" is downright stupid and has parents across the world in a state of panic. As the name implies, the challenge is not a smart one. It involves a trio of teens, who stand in a line and jump, and when the central participant's feet leaves the ground, his/her companions on either side attempt to knock his/her feet out from under them. The prospect of the central participant making a head-fall backwards, with chances of smacking his/her head besides injuring other parts of the body, looms larger. Some children have already been fatally injured and many are suffering the impacts of a concussion. It is beyond one's rational understanding as to why would anyone want to get a concussion deliberately. However, there are a few things that we must understand: Banning this practice will not end it. The best way to deal with this is to talk to adults at social media firms and actively prevent the widespread sharing of videos. The second way is for parents, teachers and doctors to talk to children and explain what a concussion is and how it can have long-term ramifications. One can get a concussion or an injury while playing sports, particularly contact sports. That is accidental; this stupid activity causes self-harm and it must be classified as such. We must ensure that it is one that is ended and not emulated by future generations while ensuring that the creative physicality of the next generation continues. Just like an army of youth needs a grizzled veteran to maintain discipline and order, this army of children needs some common sense from adults.

opinion 08

Pseudo-Caliphate and India

By throwing his weight behind Islamabad on the Kashmir issue, Erdogan unambiguously signalled his intention to emerge as the imam of the new Caliphate he hopes to lead



SANDHYA JAIN

Even if we overlook the facts about which nation is "occupying" Kashmir, by stating that there is "no difference between Gallipoli and occupied Kashmir", Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan unambiguously signalled his intention to emerge as the "imam" of the new (pseudo) Caliphate he hopes to lead by 2023, the centenary of the Turkish Republic. Addressing a joint session of Pakistan's Parliament (February 14), he lauded sacrifices made by it in the war on terror and the "positive contributions" it made to the Afghanistan peace process and promised support during the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) meet in Paris (February 16-21, 2020). His denunciation of US President Donald Trump's Mideast plan hints at an eventual challenge to Riyadh in the region.

Erdogan's determination to restore the Caliphate has created a visible schism between the Arab States formally led by Saudi Arabia and the non-Arab States led by Turkey. A nascent axis is discernible between Turkey, Malaysia and Pakistan; Iran and Qatar complete the anti-Riyadh alignment. Erdogan declared in February 2018, "The Republic of Turkey is a continuation of the Ottoman Empire... the essence is the same, soul is the same..." Unsurprisingly, Ankara has emerged as the new hub for anti-India activities by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). Unknown to most people, Turkey has universal jurisdiction laws as part of its domestic laws. Article 13 of the Turkish Penal Code states, "Turkish law shall apply to" the crime of torture "committed in a foreign country whether or not committed by a citizen or non-citizen."

Khalistanis tried to invoke these laws. Sikhs for Justice, a group working for a referendum ("Referendum 2020") to create Khalistan, is believed to be funded by the ISI. In October 2018, its legal advisor, Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, filed a case against Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh when he visited Turkey to pay homage at Gallipoli to soldiers from the First Patiala Infantry Regiment (now 15 Punjab), who lost their lives in World War I, on the centenary of the Great War.

Pannun went to Gallipoli to secure an arrest warrant and restrain the Punjab Chief Minister from leaving Turkey. As the Captain was on a non-official trip, he lacked diplomatic immunity as under the Vienna Protocol, only the Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister are "protected persons" when abroad in personal capacity. In Pakistan, Erdogan lauded a 1915 rally in Lahore, led by Allama Iqbal, where people from present-day Pakistan supported the Turkish people and blatantly ignored the sacrifices made by Indian soldiers at Gallipoli (Battle of Canakkale), possibly because the bells tolled for the Ottoman Empire. Turkey's domestic laws explain why ex-



IAS officer Shah Faesal was going to Turkey on August 14, 2019, soon after the Centre abrogated Article 370 and divided the State of Jammu & Kashmir into the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. It is possible that some foreign mentors asked Faesal to invoke these laws in Turkey. He was to file a case of human rights violations against Indian Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, the then Chief of Army Staff Gen Bipin Rawat and others, on behalf of his political party, Jammu & Kashmir People's Movement (JKPM).

Media reports stated that from Ankara, Faesal was likely to try to take the Kashmir issue to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) at The Hague, the Netherlands. But this would not take off for want of jurisdiction; no individual can file a case in the ICJ, only States can. Of course, his arrival in the Netherlands would be embarrassing for India.

But if Faesal really wanted to go to The Hague, he could have taken a direct flight to Amsterdam. His plan was to exploit Turkey's Article 13 universal jurisdiction law. Some human rights NGO would receive him at Ankara, where he would be lionised as a civil service topper (2010) and Harvard alumni who quit a Government job to protest against the activities of the Indian State in Kashmir. Actually Faesal

“ANKARA HAS EMERGED AS THE NEW HUB FOR ANTI-INDIA ACTIVITIES BY PAKISTAN'S ISI. UNKNOWN TO MOST PEOPLE, TURKEY HAS UNIVERSAL JURISDICTION LAWS AS PART OF ITS DOMESTIC LAWS. ITS ARTICLE 13 APPLIES TO THE CRIME OF TORTURE 'COMMITTED IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY BY A CITIZEN OR NON-CITIZEN.' KHALISTANIS TRIED TO USE IT BEFORE

resigned from the service in January 2019 in order to enter politics. However, the sudden split of Jammu & Kashmir and freeze on political activity nixed his unborn political career, leaving NGO activism his only alternative.

Had he reached Ankara, the international media would have splashed Kashmir on the front pages of all important newspapers and magazines and the Indian media would follow suit, thus making Faesal the global face of the anti-India Islamic movement. Once he managed to file a case in Turkey, Islamabad would almost certainly have followed up by filing a case against India at the ICJ, where it has suffered reverses in the Kulbhushan Jadhav case.

However, Faesal's mentors could not anticipate the look-out notices for Kashmiris trying to leave the country; he was caught at the airport, sent back to Srinagar and placed in preventive custody. He has now been booked under the Public Safety Act (February 15).

This argument can be corroborated from Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's tweet on August 15, 2019, where he invoked Srebrenica, site of the 1995 genocide of over 8,000 Bosnians by the Bosnian Serb Army led by Ratko Mladic. Khan tweeted: "Will the world silently witness another Srebrenica-type massacre and ethnic cleansing of Muslims in

IOK? I want to warn the international community if it allows this to happen, it will have severe repercussions and reactions in the Muslim world setting off radicalisation and cycles of violence." The talk of "massacre and ethnic cleansing" of Kashmiri Muslims is, of course, pure bunkum but the tweet suggests an ISI hand in the aborted Turkish escapade.

Meanwhile, Erdogan has been cultivating separatist, religious and business leaders and Islamic groups in Kashmir after the tweaking of Article 370; this goes deeper than his traditional support to Pakistan at the Organisation of Islamic Conference. Previously also, he supported Pakistan in the FATF. While addressing the UN General Assembly on September 25, 2019, he chided the international community for not paying proper attention to Kashmir over the past seven decades.

Interestingly, soon after the FATF and UNGA meetings, the Indian Overseas Congress headed by Rahul Gandhi loyalist Sam Pitroda opened an office in Istanbul in November 2019. Possibly the Congress hopes to recover its once-committed Muslim vote bank by cultivating the emerging Caliphate; the repercussions on India's internal affairs will need careful observation. (The author is a senior journalist. Views expressed are personal)

SOUNDBITE

Erdogan's remarks are completely unacceptable. They reflect neither an understanding of history nor of the conduct of diplomacy.

MEA Spokesperson — Raveesh Kumar



I'm happy that I can now do the work that I've wanted to. I want to continue working all my life because it's difficult as people say that actresses have a shelf-life.

Actor — Kareena Kapoor



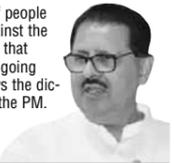
The global community must step up efforts to help bring peace in war-torn Afghanistan. The Afghan people need and deserve peace, prosperity and full respect of their human rights.

UN chief — Antonio Guterres



Lakhs and lakhs of people are up in arms against the CAA. His assertion that there would be no going back on CAA shows the dictatorial attitude of the PM.

Congress leader — Sanjay Dutt



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Corrupt rule the roost

Sir — Interestingly, though the electoral bonds (corporate-sponsored cash money to political parties excluding goods and services tax and without the donor's name) scheme was originally formulated for the Lok Sabha polls, the window for the sale of bonds was opened before the Assembly elections as well. The last instance for this was seen in the just-concluded elections in Delhi.

As per the election watchdog, the Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR), in the run-up to the Delhi Assembly elections, 139 electoral bonds (78 bonds were worth ₹1 crore each, 34 bonds worth ₹10 lakh each while the remaining 27 bonds were worth ₹1 lakh each) worth ₹81.67 crore were sold by various branches of State Bank of India (SBI).

So far, ₹6,210 crore have been donated through this method ever since the scheme began. In the name of election reform, this electoral bond scheme is the invention of the BJP. This is yet another way of concealing facts and encouraging corruption without a trail.

The dark side of Indian politics

If the ever-rising number of criminal cases against politicians is anything to go by, politics and crime seem inseparable in India. At present, over 40 per cent of the Lok Sabha MPs have criminal cases pending against them. The Representation of the People Act, 1951, does not bar politicians from contesting polls. It just states that individuals punished with a jail term of more than two years cannot contest an election for six years after the jail term has ended. Shortcomings in the RPA cannot be ignored. Nevertheless, it's welcome that in a fresh initiative to cleanse the electoral system, the Supreme Court has directed parties to upload details of criminal cases pending against candidates in the poll fray on their respective websites. According to statistics, in 2004, about one in four MPs had criminal cases against them. However, the frequency grew to about one in three between 2009 and 2014. Last year, it was much closer to one in two. If almost every other MP stands accused of a serious crime, something is seriously wrong with the choice made by parties. The apex court has done well to reiterate its concern but it could have drawn the line by exerting moral force on political parties, which are clearly violators.

The top court has repeatedly asserted that it's the voter's democratic right to know about a candidate's criminal antecedents, if any. These details help the citizens



make an informed choice. Despite landmark judgments, parties and contestants are reluctant to do the needful for the obvious reason that such disclosure can harm their poll prospects. This time, too, the onus of cleaning the system has been put on the Election Commission (EC). It has been made responsible for enforcing the court's order so as to ensure "transparency." But at a time when the institution itself is toothless, how can it change the situation on the ground? The EC should be granted the power to disqualify candidates and de-register parties in case of concealment of vital information and other grave electoral offences.

Abhijit Roy
Jamshedpur

Law-abiding citizens believe that the electoral bond is one such corrupt practice that has been made official to benefit the BJP as more than 93 per cent of the bond's amount goes to the party. It's a pity that neither the

Reserve Bank of India, (RBI) or the Election Commission (EC) or the Supreme Court is really bothered with this white-colored corruption.
Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee
Faridabad

Digest the irony

Sir — The appointment of Rishi Sunak as the UK's new Finance Minister is proof of the acceptance of Indian talent. His work is cut

out. It is likely that he will overcome all challenges on account of his vast financial acumen and practical understanding of the issues at hand. Sunak's rise to prominence has not come without undertones. While we feel proud that Indian-origin men and women are gaining prominence, we brand them as "termites" when they come home in search of livelihood. They are viewed as a "danger" to the nation.

Ruchi
Via email

When will we learn?

Sir — Union Home Minister Amit Shah's admission that his party failed to feel the pulse of the people in Delhi makes one feel the country is a "picture hall," where the politicians are the "entertainers" and the citizens cast their vote to rate the level of entertainment. Why can't our leaders realise that people assess their worthiness with reference to the job done?

PP Sen
New Delhi

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

A win-win for Modi and Trump

While India will benefit from stronger defence ties and technology, the US President will gain from his pro-India image in an election year



SIMI MEHTA

On February 24, US President Donald Trump will inaugurate the world's largest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad. He will also be welcomed with resounding calls of "Kern Cho, Trump" while participating in a seven-kilometre long roadshow from the airport to the Sabarmati Ashram accompanied by Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi. Celebrating the close ties between America and India, this will be the first visit of a US President since 2015 and Trump's first foreign tour after his impeachment trial. The palpable excitement over the visit is evident, with Modi underscoring that this would "go a long way in further cementing India-US ties."

The tour is expected to overcome the obvious optics and engage in serious discussions on broad, strategic ingredients that bring India and the US together. On February 25, the Trumps will be accorded a ceremonial welcome in the second leg of their trip to New Delhi. Defence cooperation is expected to occupy the centre stage and India is set to give a final approval for the \$2.6 billion 24 MH-60R Seahawk helicopters equipped with torpedoes and submarine-detection capabilities for the Indian Navy. Additionally, there is a US approval already in place for the sale of an Integrated Air Defence Weapon System (IADWS) or the National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System-II to India estimated at \$1.8 billion. This will strengthen Indian defence capabilities and aid the modernisation process of its armed forces.

This will build upon the Trump Administration's previous decisions to ease the controls for high and sensitive technology product sales to India. This will grant to India the same access as NATO allies through the Strategic Trade Authorisation-1 status, as well as sale of armed drones and integrated air and missile defence technology. India would demonstrate its will to modernise its armed forces and strengthen military capabilities and bilateral defence cooperation through the agreements with the US that guide the sharing of sensitive military and communications technology and reciprocal use of facilities.

Trump's maiden visit to India as the US President will strengthen the respective countries' Indo-Pacific policies and witness a synergy in their pushback strategies against the China-Russia alignment in Asia. It would be of relevance to see if the Blue Dot network finds mention at the leadership level. This network, launched by the US Government in November 2019 is a global certification for projects as market-driven, financially-sustainable and transparent and is a reaction to the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative. It needs to be highlighted that Australia and Japan — the other two members of Quad (apart from the US and India), have already signed up for the network.

In an endeavour to push for deeper trade and business ties, the two countries have been trying to reach a modest trade deal with lower tariffs. But the long-awaited "mini" trade deal may not see the anticipated fruition as talks have run into problems due to concerns over data privacy and e-commerce controls. Add to this the recent withdrawal of India from the list of "developing countries" — a status given in line with the WTO's system of Generalised System of Preferences, on February 10. This would emboss the issues of increased tariff barriers, which could act as an impediment for India getting favourable trade terms. So far, Indian exporters benefited from the tariff-free access to US markets and receiving the "developed country" tag would subject exports to scrutiny regarding the harm they do the US industry. Despite this, Indian Inc is optimistic about higher investments from US companies, demanding exemption from high duties imposed by the US on certain steel and aluminium products from India and greater market access for its agricultural, automobile, auto components and engineering products.

Reflecting the strong personal rapport between Trump and Modi, this visit will be the fifth meeting between the two leaders in the last three years to elevate bilateral strategic relations. It would demonstrate the two countries' affirmation of the shared values of commitment to democracy and rule of law and to a more peaceful and open Indo-Pacific, plus the US' acknowledgement of India as its major partner in maintaining the international global order.

Trump's visit to India is possibly the final major foreign tour before the presidential elections in November 2020. Given the fact that Indian-Americans constitute a huge population and voter base in the US, if Trump reaffirms America's commitment to diversity, inclusion and immigrants, this visit would steer a significant number of their votes his way as it will showcase his close ties with their home country. In fact, Modi already blew the US election bugle at the Howdy Modi event in September 2019 in Texas. Swarmed by Indian-American crowd, he endorsed Trump for a second term saying, "Abki baar Trump sarkar."

(The writer is CEO and Editorial Director, IMPRI)

I BROUGHT THE EAST-WEST METRO TO KOLKATA AFTER MUCH SACRIFICE BUT NOW WHEN ITS INAUGURATION DATE CAME, I WAS KEPT OUT OF IT.

—WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER

MAMATA BANERJEE

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



MAMATA SHOULD STOP MAKING ISSUES OUT OF NON-ISSUES LIKE THIS IN PUBLIC AND CONCENTRATE ON GIVING GOOD GOVERNANCE TO THE STATE.

—STATE BJP PRESIDENT

DILIP GHOSH

Make your choice

If demand doesn't improve, firms might retain the tax cut bonanza instead of investing. It would've been better to put more cash in the pockets of individuals by giving more IT relief



UTTAM GUPTA

Amid an atmosphere of gloom and doom (triggered by growth plunging to a low of less than five per cent during the current year and muted projections for next year), it is necessary to closely scrutinise tax proposals in the Union Budget for 2020-21 to assess whether or not these will generate the much-needed growth impulses.

The four major factors impinging on a surge are private consumption, investment, export and spending by the State. The Modi Government has kept up the tempo of expenditure by way of building infrastructure and spending on welfare schemes. On the export front, given the all-round depressed growth and international trading environment, there is little that it can do in terms of using this lever for providing the much-needed fillip.

Therefore, much of the focus has to be on the first two levers, i.e. private consumption and investment. The big question is whether the tax proposals will help in boosting demand. First, let us look at the changes in personal income tax (PIT).

At present, a person having an income of ₹2,50,001-₹5,00,000 per annum pays a tax of five per cent, those earning more than ₹5,00,000 but less than ₹10,00,000 pay 20 per cent tax whereas, someone having an income higher than ₹10,00,000 pays 30 per cent. Accompanying this are a plethora of exemptions and deductions viz. Section 80C (annual investment, expenses, life insurance premium and so on, up to ₹15,00,000), Section 80D (health insurance premiums), Section 24 (interest on home loans), Section 80CCD (including extra NPS contribution up to ₹50,000), Section 80E (education loan interest) and Section 16 (standard deduction on salary income) and so on.

This Budget, even while retaining five per cent tax for annual income in the ₹2,50,001-₹5,00,000 range, on income higher than ₹5,00,000, proposes a differentiated structure with five slabs against two under the existing scheme of things. The proposed slabs and corresponding tax rates are 10 per cent for ₹5,00,001-₹7,50,000; 15 per cent for ₹7,50,001-₹10,00,000; 20 per cent for ₹10,00,001-₹12,50,000; 25 per cent for ₹12,50,001-₹15,00,000 and for those earning above ₹15,00,000 a tax of 30 per cent. A person who decides to avail lower tax rates under the new scheme will have to forego most exemptions and deductions. In other words, he can either continue with the existing scheme or go for the new regime. No cherry picking is permitted.

For a person availing of most tax breaks, switch-over to the new regime won't yield any savings. He could even be worse off depending on the income profile and deductions/exemptions availed. For instance, a person having an annual income of ₹15,00,000 and availing tax breaks aggregating ₹3,75,000 (Section 80C: ₹1,50,000; Section 80D: ₹25,000; Section 24: ₹2,00,000) or net income ₹11,25,000 will have to pay ₹1,56,000 as tax. In case however, he opts for the new scheme i.e. taxable income remaining at ₹15,00,000 but lower rates, his tax liability will be ₹1,95,000. This being ₹39,000 higher, he would prefer to continue with the old scheme. However, the reality on ground zero is that an overwhelming number of assesses are unable to avail of the tax breaks. This is because people in the early stages of their family life have high expenditure commitment and hence need more cash in hand, leaving little surplus to invest which is necessary for availing deductions. Then, there are people at the fat end, say age 55 years plus, who are



THE BUDGET PROPOSALS (SEPTEMBER 2019 AND NOW) ENTAIL A MAMMOTH GIVEAWAY OF ABOUT ₹1,50,000 CRORE PER ANNUM. THIS SHOULD HELP IN SPURRING INVESTMENT DEMAND. HOWEVER, CONSIDERING THAT AT PRESENT, CONSUMPTION IS SUBDUED AND ALREADY, SURPLUS CAPACITY EXISTS IN SEVERAL SECTORS, ITS IMPACT ON GROWTH IN THE SHORT-TERM MAY NOT BE MUCH

under no compulsion to save (he has already built a house or nearly completed education of the children). Such people who are unable or unwilling to invest — due to economic circumstances facing them — and hence, unable to avail exemptions and deductions would stand to gain by switching over to the new dispensation. In the above example (annual income ₹15,00,000), the tax liability of such a person under the old regime would be ₹2,73,000, which is ₹78,000 higher than under the new regime (₹1,95,000). Without doubt, he/she will be inclined to go for the latter. That apart, the FM's proposals empower assesses to take their own decisions instead of being constrained by available tax breaks. Someone wanting to have more cash in hand can opt for the new scheme whereas another person keen to save more can continue with the old regime.

According to an internal exercise by the Union Finance Ministry, the proposal will entail a loss of ₹40,000 crore to the exchequer, which means that much extra cash in the hand of tax payers which they can spend, thereby giving a boost to demand and in turn, growth.

Another proposal expected to put more cash in the hands of individuals, especially those earning less than ₹10,00,000 per annum, relates to the manner of levying dividend distribution tax (DDT). At present, a company is required to deduct tax (known as DDT) at the rate of 20 per cent (including surcharge and education cess, this comes to 20.35 per cent) from the surplus/profit set aside for distribution of dividend to shareholders. The Budget proposes to substitute this by taxing dividends in the hands of recipients/shareholders.

This substitution means that retail investors, whose earnings are in the ₹500,001-₹750,000 and ₹750,001-

₹10,00,000 range, will stand to gain as they will pay tax on dividend at 10 per cent and 15 per cent respectively, as against 20 per cent they pay currently. This will also be a booster to foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) who will be able to claim offset for the tax paid on dividend received from companies here in their respective jurisdictions (this is not possible under the subsisting dispensation of levying tax before distributing profit).

Implementation of this proposal will entail an annual loss of ₹25,000 crore to the exchequer. This much extra money in the hands of investors will also help augment purchasing power. Coming to corporate tax, on September 20, 2019, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced steep reduction in the rate of corporate tax for "new entities" incorporated from October 1, 2019 in the manufacturing sector and start production by March 31, 2023 from the existing 25 per cent to 15 per cent. Such companies won't have to pay minimum alternate tax (MAT) (levied on book profit of firms which have no taxable profit courtesy, exemptions and incentives).

Furthermore, the tax rate on existing companies was reduced from 30 per cent to 22 per cent (for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) annually with a turnover of less than ₹400 crore. This was reduced from the already preferential 25 per cent to 22 per cent) sans exemptions and deductions. These firms are also exempt from MAT. For companies who decide to continue with the old regime viz. tax at 30 per cent with tax breaks, MAT was reduced from existing 18.5 per cent to 15 per cent. In the Budget for 2020-21, the FM has extended the benefit of 15 per cent rate to "new" power companies. Besides, "cooperatives" are eligible for the 22 per cent rate sans exemptions and deductions. The steep reduction in tax rate

(for new enterprises, it is at 15 per cent. This is lower than other major countries viz the US 21 per cent, China 25 per cent; even for existing firms at 22 per cent, this is comparable) is a major structural reform aimed at making Indian firms more competitive and leaving more resources with them for increasing investment. The FM has given a choice, enabling them to choose either the old regime (higher tax rate with exemptions) or new regime (lower tax rate sans exemptions).

The Budget proposals (September 2019 and now) entail a mammoth give-away of about ₹1,50,000 crore per annum. This should help in spurring investment demand. However, considering that at present, consumption is subdued and already, surplus capacity exists in several sectors (major investment by way of setting up new projects can come only after existing capacities are fully utilised), its impact on growth in the short-term may not be much.

Unless private demand improves significantly, companies might be inclined to retain the tax cut bonanza instead of investing. It would have been better if the Government had put more money in the pockets of individuals by giving extra relief in PIT (say, by applying 10 per cent tax to the entire income range ₹5,00,001-₹10,00,000 instead of limiting this up to ₹7,50,000) as the need for restructuring growth now is far more pressing.

To conclude, tax proposals in the 2020-21 Budget are in the right direction. However, a lot more needs to be done in terms of further reducing and simplifying the PIT. With regard to corporate tax, the Government should aim at 15 per cent rate applicable uniformly to enterprises in all sectors, new and existing (sans exemptions).

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

Pay taxes for a developed nation

The Government needs to proactively create the culture of paying taxes in order to be able to fulfil the dream of us becoming a \$5 trillion economy in five years



RAJEEV AHUJA KEERTI PRADHAN

The Indian Government aspires to take the economy to the \$5 trillion level over the next five years. It is a difficult goal by its own admission but not an impossible one. Given the current economic slowdown, many experts had hoped for a much stronger fiscal stimulus than what is contained in the recent Union Budget. That being what it is, some experts believe that the Government has missed an opportunity. However, the Centre seems to think differently. While acknowledging the need for growth-enhancing measures, the Niti Aayog's Vice-Chairman, Rajiv Kumar, had hinted prior to the Budget on using "alternate" measures in the face of limit-

ed fiscal headroom. Subsequently, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), in its monetary policy, used unconventional tools to give the economy a shot in the arm. Without getting into the debate on what's an optimal dose of economic stimulus and what combination of fiscal and monetary policy could deliver it, Government spending does have an important role in the revival of the economy. The Centre believes that a decent dose of fiscal stimulus is already contained in the Budget.

Be that as it may, growth revival is closely tied to Government spending, which in turn is closely tied to revenues and taxes are an important source of it.

It is startling to note some income tax statistics that have recently been cited: That only 8,600 individuals have reported incomes above ₹5 crore and only 2,200 professionals (doctors, chartered accountants, lawyers and so on) have declared professional income above ₹1 crore in the entire country in the fiscal year 2018-19. These figures don't match well with some other statistics, such

as the number of premium cars sold or the total people travelling abroad. There seems to be significant scope for improving tax compliance, which is essential to India achieving its \$5 trillion goal.

No rationale for tax avoidance: Tax evasion or underreporting may have been justified when corruption in public administration ran high. But now that the Narendra Modi Government has been able to provide a cleaner administration, this justification is no longer valid.

Further, the taxpayers can be reasonably certain that their money is being used responsibly. Indeed, the Modi Government has a vision of creating a "New India" and is focussed on the economic development of the entire country.

The Government's focus on the development of the North-east region, on "aspirational" districts and on Tier-1 and Tier-2 cities is all aimed at unleashing economic development across the entire country. Furthermore, several policies and programmes such as Skill India, Mudra Yojana, Start-up India, dou-

bling of farmers' income with the promotion of agriculture and allied activities such as animal husbandry and so on are aimed at benefiting all sections of society.

Additionally, the Government is working towards ease of paying taxes. It is simplifying the taxation system and making it citizen-centric. It has taken or is taking several steps such as simplifying laws, reducing the tax burden, making tax assessment faceless, bringing taxpayers' charter and so forth that should instil trust and confidence among tax-payers. But trust and confidence alone are not sufficient to persuade people to pay taxes honestly. The culture of tax avoidance developed over the last few decades will need to be changed consciously.

Promote tax-paying culture: The Government needs to promote the culture of paying taxes in the country. This can be done through a combination of measures. First, the example of clean administration at the national level needs to percolate down to the sub-national level too. Second, it's not enough for the Prime

Minister or Chief Ministers to be clean. Every Minister as an individual tax-payer ought to set an example. Third, the Government needs to run media campaigns to inform the public of their civic duty and also to connect the dots transparently on how their taxes are contributing towards nation-building. Fourth, the Government needs to rope in popular personalities with a large fan following to drive home the message of paying taxes — pretty much the same way as it has been doing for some other social campaigns. The culture of paying taxes honestly has to be instilled consciously and proactively.

India has a rich tradition of people donating to social organisations involved in helping the needy. However, in a well-functioning system, the Government, through its various programmes and initiatives, ought to be taking care of the needy. Although people are free to continue giving private donations, they don't necessarily have to, as long as they are paying their taxes and holding their Government accountable

for its performance, including its welfare role.

Tax culture essential: India is considered to be a lower-middle income country as per the World Bank's country classification which is based on income per person. Even if India becomes a \$5 trillion economy by 2025, it would still be considered as a lower-middle income country as per the World Bank classification.

The changes in the taxation system that the Government has or is introducing can help it generate revenues to fuel economic growth. Achieving a \$5 trillion economy in the next few years is not difficult. India may take a year or two longer but the goal is within reach.

However, to become a truly developed economy, India will need to change the mindset of its people. It will have to consciously and proactively create the culture of paying taxes.

(Ahuja is a development economist formerly with the World Bank and Pradhan is advisor and adjunct professor, Chitkara University, Punjab)



LEND A HAND TO IDLIB REFUGEES

As abrupt as the surge in those fleeing Idlib has been, this is a long-awaited disaster, the end result of decisions made over the years. Only an immediate ceasefire and unhindered flow of aid can offer these desperate civilians any hope of respite: Western powers should be doing everything they can to press for them. This is far less than those now huddled in Idlib are owed — and even this, it seems, may be too much to expect.

(The Guardian editorial)

SC refuses to accept Voda's proposal to pay ₹2,500 cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Monday rejected telecom firm Vodafone's proposal to pay ₹2,500 crore by the end of the day and ₹1,000 crore by Friday against Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) dues, while also refusing its plea that no coercive action be taken against it.

A bench headed by Justice Arun Mishra declined to accept the proposal given by senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for Vodafone, after he mentioned the matter.

Rohatgi said they are willing to pay ₹2,500 crore today (Monday) and another ₹1,000 crore by Friday but no coercive action be taken against the company.

He urged the bank guarantee deposited with the government by Vodafone should also not be encashed.

The top court had on Friday warned of contempt proceedings against top executives of Bharti Airtel, Vodafone-Idea and other telecom firms for failing to comply with its directive to pay an estimated ₹1.47 lakh crore in past dues, and asked whether there was no law left in the country.

With the apex court's rap, the Government came down heavily on telcos following which Bharti Airtel on Monday said it has paid ₹10,000 crore to the telecom department towards statutory dues.

The company said it will



make payment of balance amount after self-assessment exercise.

"The...Amount of ₹10,000 crore has been paid on behalf of Bharti Airtel, Bharti Hexacom, and Telenor," the Sunil Mittal-led company said in a statement.

In the Friday order which will have a far-reaching implications for the telecom sector, the apex court expressed displeasure at the "temerity" of a desk officer in the Department of Telecom for "scuttling" its order by issuing a written directive to not take any coer-

sive action against firms for not depositing dues by the January 23, 2020, deadline.

The Bench, also comprising Justices S Abdul Nazeer and MR Shah, said the companies have violated its order "in pith and substance" and asked them to clear dues before the next date of hearing on March 17.

Following the apex court rap, the Department of Telecom withdrew its January 23, 2020 order that had called for no coercive action against defaulting firms and started issuing notices to telcos asking them to deposit dues before midnight of Friday.

Expressing displeasure over an order passed by the DoT's desk officer, which virtually stayed the effect of its verdict,

the apex court said this is nothing "but a device to scuttle" its judgment and this case projects a "very disturbing scenario". It issued a notice to the officer.

The bench noted that the desk officer "has the temerity to pass the order" to the effect of issuing a direction to another constitutional authority, the accountant general, "not to insist for any payment pursuant to the order passed by this court and not to take any coercive steps till further orders."

The top court made it clear that in case its order is not complied with, the desk officer of the DoT and top executives of these companies "shall remain personally present" before it on March 17.

Airtel pays ₹10K cr to Govt towards AGR dues

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

After Supreme Court rap and the government's stringent deadline, Bharti Airtel on Monday said it has paid ₹10,000 crore to the telecom department towards statutory dues.

The company said it will make payment of the balance amount after self assessment exercise.

"The...Total amount of ₹10,000 crore has been paid on behalf of Bharti Airtel, Bharti Hexacom, and Telenor.

Tata Teleservices pay ₹2,197 crore to settle AGR dues

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tata group firm TTSL on Monday said it has paid Rs 2,197 crore to the government to settle outstanding arising from the Supreme Court ruling on adjusted gross revenue (AGR) dues for telecom firms.

"Tata Teleservices Ltd and Tata Teleservices Ltd have made a payment of ₹2,197 crore to the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) towards license fee and spectrum usage charges," it said in a statement.

Pradhan says does not believe top court's AGR ruling applies to non-telecom PSUs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Monday said he believes non-telecom PSUs are not covered by the Supreme Court order that asked telecom licence holders to pay statutory dues after including non-telecom revenues.

Following the October 24 Supreme Court ruling that non-telecom revenues of telecom firms such as Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea should be included for considering payments of government dues, the telecom department sought ₹1.83 lakh crore from gas utility GAIL India Ltd, about ₹48,500 crore from OIL, ₹21,953.65 crore from Power Grid Corp and ₹15,020 crore from Gujarat Narmada Valley Fertilizers & Chemicals Ltd.

The Government's demand from such companies was many times more than their net worth.

"The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has served notice to Government oil companies due to some communication gap. We have placed our side after doing all legal consultations," Pradhan told reporters here.

He went on to state that neither of the public sector undertakings (PSUs) slapped with huge demand has any core work in the telecom business.

"Telecom is not the core business of either GAIL or OIL or PowerGrid," he said, adding that they came into the telecom business thinking of multi-utility for internal consumption.

"The overall comment by the Supreme Court, I believe, these two-three PSUs do not come under its ambit... We are holding talks with DoT," he said.

Following the Supreme Court ruling of October 24, 2019 that non-telecom revenues should be included for considering payments of government dues by firms holding any sort of telecom license, the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) slapped ₹1.47 lakh crore demand on mobile phone operators such as Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea Ltd, and another ₹2.7 lakh crore on non-telecom firms.

Non-telecom firms such as OIL, GAIL and PowerGrid filed a clarificatory petition on the applicability of the October 24 order on them, but the apex court on February 14 asked them to approach the appropriate authority.

OIL, the nation's second-biggest state-owned oil producer, holds a National Long Distance Service Licence (NLD) with the primary objective of monitoring and operation of its pipeline network.

Telecom AGR crisis: RBI closely monitoring developments

New Delhi: With massive ₹1.47 lakh crore of AGR dues pushing telecom firms to the brink, Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das on Monday said the central bank is "very closely monitoring" the fallout of the crisis on lenders by way of a default, if any, by telecom players.

In an interview with PTI, Das said so far no red flags have been raised but the central bank continues to monitor the situation closely.

The Supreme Court last week rejected a plea by mobile carriers such as Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea Ltd for extension in the payment schedule and asked them to deposit an estimated ₹1.47 lakh crore in past dues for spectrum and licences by March 17.

Some telecom firms are already struggling with mounting losses and debt and the additional liability has raised concerns of them defaulting on existing loans.

PTI

Telecom stocks end in red amid uncertainty over statutory dues

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Vodafone Idea and Bharti Airtel closed marginally lower on Monday even as investors kept their fingers crossed amid uncertainty over statutory dues.

State-owned MTNL was 8.14 per cent down over the previous close of ₹9.35 on the BSE. Vodafone Idea's shares closed 0.58 per cent down to ₹3.42 per unit. Intra-day, the stock gained as much as 18.89 per cent to hit upper circuit at ₹3.78.

The stock lost all its early gains after the Supreme Court rejected Vodafone Idea's proposal to pay ₹2,500 crore by the end of Monday, and ₹1,000 crore by Friday against adjusted gross revenue (AGR) dues.

However, after market hours, Vodafone Idea and Tata group have made part payments of about ₹2,500 crore and over ₹2,190 crore, respectively, to the telecom department towards statutory dues, a government official said.

Market ends lower for 3rd day as macroeconomic worries persist

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Domestic equities clocked losses for a third session in a row on Monday as worries over economic slowdown and financial impact of coronavirus outbreak continued to play in the minds of investors.

At the closing bell, the BSE gauge Sensex was down 202.05 points, or 0.49 per cent, at 41,055.69. The index swung about 390 points during the session.

The NSE barometer Nifty fell 67.75 points or 0.56 per cent to close at 12,045.80.

On the Sensex chart, ONGC led the fall with a 3.20 per cent drop after the company posted halving of its December quarter net profit.

Other top laggards on the index were Sun Pharma, NTPC, Bajaj Auto and HDFC - slipping as much as 2.37 per cent.

On the other hand, Titan, Nestle, TCS, Kotak Bank and Tata Steel emerged as major gainers, rising as much as 1.86 per cent.

Of the Sensex constituents,



19 closed in the red and 11 in the green.

Sectorally, oil and gas index fell the most (2.39 per cent), followed by utilities (2.07 per cent), power (1.76 per cent), realty (1.53 per cent) and healthcare (1.50 per cent).

In contrast, consumer durables, IT and teck emerged as gainers.

In the broader market, BSE Midcap and smallcap indices fell 0.91 per cent and 1.02 per cent, respectively. Further weakening investor sentiment,

Moody's Investors Service has slashed India's growth forecast to 5.4 per cent for 2020 from 6.6 per cent projected earlier on slower-than-expected economic recovery.

Meanwhile, worries over rising death toll and the economic fallout from the novel coronavirus continued to haunt investors globally.

The coronavirus epidemic that emerged in central China has now killed nearly 1,800 people and spread around the world.

BUSINESS CORNER

MMTC'S EXPORTS INCREASED BY 101% IN APR-DEC, 2019
New Delhi: MMTC declared its financial results for the nine months period ended 31st December 2019. During this period, the Company has achieved revenue from operations of ₹20,638 crore. Exports increased by 101% to ₹1,384 crore as compared to ₹687 crore during the corresponding period last year. Imports increased to ₹16,680 crore as compared to ₹16,537 crore during the corresponding period last year. Other income increased to ₹23 crore as compared to ₹12 crore during the corresponding period last year.

THE KANGRA CO-OPERATIVE BANK LTD.
C-29, Community Centre, Pankha Road, Janakpuri, New Delhi-110058
Phone: 011-25611041, 25611042, 25611043, 25611044
E-mail: legal@kangrabank.com, legal@kangrabank.com Website: www.kangrabank.com

APPENDIX IV
[See rule 8(1)]
POSSESSION NOTICE
(For immovable property)

Whereas, The undersigned being the Authorised Officer of "The Kangra Co-operative Bank Ltd.", Head office at, C-29, Community Centre, Pankha Road, Janak Puri, New Delhi-110058, having its registered office at 1916, Chuna Mandi, Pahar Ganj, New Delhi-110055, under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of the Financial Assets & Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, the Bank had issued a demand notice on dated: 28-12-2017, calling upon the borrower Sh. Raj Kumar S/o. Sh. Rajesh Singh R/o. H.No. 224, Gali No. 2, Arjun Mohalla Maujpur, Delhi-110053, and C/o. BSES, VPI (DVB), 35 KV, Dwarakapuri, Sub Station Shardaara, Near Sham Lal College, Delhi-110032 and calling upon the Mortgagor Smt. Pushpa Devi W/o. Sh. Raj Kumar, R/o. H.No. 224, Gali No. 2, Arjun Mohalla Maujpur, Delhi-110053, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being ₹15,66,901/- (Rupees Fifteen Lakhs Sixty Six Thousand Nine Hundred One Only), together with further interest, penal interest and other charges as are applicable to this Loan account from time to time, from the date of the notice till the date of payment, within 60 days from the date of receipt of the notice.

The above mentioned borrower/mortgagor/surety having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the Bank has taken possession of the property described here in below in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(4) of the said Act read with rule 9 of the said rules, on this 15th day of February 2020.

The borrower/mortgagor/surety in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the mortgaged property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of "The Kangra Co-operative Bank Ltd.", for an amount of ₹15,66,901/- together with further interest, penal interest and other charges as are applicable to this Loan account from time to time, from the date of notice till the date of realization together with all the costs incurred by the Bank in realizing the said amount.

DISPOSITION OF THE PROPERTY: The property under consideration is built up property with Roof Rights measuring 25 Sq. Yds.
1. All the part and parcel of the BUILT-UP PROPERTY, AREA MEASURING 25 SQ. YDS. i.e., 20.90 SQ. MTRS., BEARING PART OF PROPERTY NO.224, OUT OF KHASRA NO.78, CONSISTING OF ACCORDING TO THE SITE, WITH THE RIGHTS TO CONSTRUCT UP TO THE LAST STOREY, SITUATED AT VILLAGE MAUJPUR, IN THE ABADI OF GALI NO.2, ARJUN MOHALLA, MAUJPUR, ILLAQA SHAHDARA, DELHI-110053.

All the part and parcel of the BUILT-UP PROPERTY, AREA MEASURING 25 SQ. YDS. i.e., 20.90 SQ. MTRS., BEARING PART OF PROPERTY NO.224, OUT OF KHASRA NO.78, CONSISTING OF ACCORDING TO THE SITE, WITH THE RIGHTS TO CONSTRUCT UP TO THE LAST STOREY, SITUATED AT VILLAGE MAUJPUR, IN THE ABADI OF GALI NO.2, ARJUN MOHALLA, MAUJPUR, ILLAQA SHAHDARA, DELHI-110053. Falling under the Registration of Sub-Registrar -IV-Seleam Pur, New Delhi.

BOUND AS UNDER:-
EAST : OTHER PROPERTY,
WEST : GALI 6 FT WIDE,
NORTH : PROPERTY OF SH. RAJENDER KUMAR,
SOUTH : PROPERTY OF OTHERS.

(HARISH SHARMA)
AUTHORISED OFFICER
THE KANGRA CO-OPERATIVE BANK LTD.
HEAD OFFICE AT, C-29, COMMUNITY CENTRE,
PANKHA ROAD, JANAKPURI, NEW DELHI-58.
DELHI.
DATED : 15.02.2020

Moody's cuts India growth projection to 5.4% for 2020

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Moody's on Monday slashed India's growth forecast for 2020 to 5.4 per cent from 6.6 per cent projected earlier, on slower than expected economic recovery.

In its update on Global Macro Outlook, Moody's Investors Service said India's economy has decelerated rapidly over the last 2 years and economic recovery is likely to be

'shallow'.
"While the economy may well begin to recover in the current quarter, we expect any recovery to be slower than we had previously expected. Accordingly, we have revised our growth forecasts to 5.4 per cent for 2020 and 5.8 per cent for 2021, down from our previous projections of 6.6 per cent and 6.7 per cent respectively," Moody's said.
Moody's growth projec-

tions are based on calendar year and as per its estimates, India's GDP grew 5 per cent in 2019.

The rating agency had in November 2019 projected economic growth in 2020 and 2021 at 6.6 per cent and 6.7 per cent respectively. In its latest update, Moody's said the reduction in India's growth rate reflects domestic challenges rather than external factors.

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION



General public is hereby informed that an unidentified person (depicted in the photo) name: **Unknown**, residence and family: **Unknown about 24 years of age was found dead at BSA Hospital Rohini, Delhi on 25.01.2020 at 16.53 PM.** In this regard a FIR/DD No. 21-A dated 25.01.2020 has been registered at Police Station South Rohini, Delhi.

His physical description is as under:-
Sex: Male, Age: 24 years, Height: 5'5" ft., Complexion: Shallow, Wearing: Green Sweater White & Red Lining Yellow Colour Jackets and Blue Lower.

Any person having any information or clue about the deceased may kindly inform to the undersigned on the following address or Telephone Numbers.

SHO
P.S. South Rohini, Delhi
Ph. No.: 011-27512189
Mob. No: 8750870331

DP/3723/RD/2020

₹ edges 5 paise higher against \$ on stable crude prices

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Indian rupee on Monday settled 5 paise higher at 71.32 against the US dollar, helped by some moderation in crude prices. However, stronger US dollar against key rival currencies and subdued domestic equities kept the rupee's rise in check.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the domestic unit started on a weak note at 71.45 against the US dollar, but kept on reclaiming the lost ground as the day progressed. It swung between a low of 71.48 and a high of 71.24.

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

(See Section 82 Cr.PC)

Whereas complaint has been made before me that Vijay S/o Ramesh Kumar R/o H.No.-669, Jundla Gate, Near Balmiki Mandir, Karnal, Haryana has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. 830/14 u/s 498A/406/34 IPC, P.S. Narela, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused Vijay cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused Vijay has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused Vijay of FIR No. 830/14 u/s 498A/406/34 IPC, P.S. Narela, Delhi is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before 30.03.2020.

By Order
Ms. Swati Sharma
Metropolitan Magistrate-05 (North),
Room No. 104, 1st Floor (North Distt.),
Rohini Courts, Delhi
DP/989/ON/2020

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED

See Section U/S 82 Cr. P.C.

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused Rajbir Singh Maan @ Bero, S/o Jeet Ram, R/o VPO-Khera Khurd, Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case CC No. 3265/17 u/s 138 N.Act, PS Shahbad Dairy, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said Rajbir Singh Maan @ Bero cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said Rajbir Singh Maan @ Bero has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused Rajbir Singh Maan @ Bero of CC No. 3265/17 u/s 138 N.Act, PS Shahbad Dairy, Delhi is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before 14.04.2020.

By Order
Sh. Vaibhav Mehta,
Metropolitan Magistrate-05 (North),
Room No. 114, 1st Floor,
Rohini Courts, Delhi
DP/975/ON/2020(Court Matter)

SEARCH FOR KIDNAPPED GIRL

General Public is hereby informed that one girl (depicted in the photo) namely Prachi D/o Sh. Mukesh Kumar R/o H.No. Hari Chand Pradhan ki Nursery, Rajeev Nagar, Near Police Station, Harsh Vihar, Delhi Aged-about 5 Years has been reported kidnapped since 18.12.2019 from her residence vide FIR No.639/19, Dated 19.12.2019 registered at Police Station Harsh Vihar, Delhi. Her physical description is as under:-



Prachi

Complexion: Fair, Height: 2', Face: Long, Built: Thin, Clothing: Cream coloured Jacket, Blue coloured pant and Blue coloured slipper in feet.

Any person having any information/Clue about this kidnapped girl, may inform SHO, Harsh Vihar, Delhi at E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in or website: <http://cbi.nic.in>
Tele No. : 011-24368638 or 24368641 Sd/-
FAX No. : 011-24368639 SHO, Harsh Vihar, Delhi
DP/7535/NE/2020 Tel.: 011-22342074, 22342073

BeSmart

Researchers have developed a smart jumpsuit that accurately measures the spontaneous and voluntary movement of infants from the age of five months — data that can help in assessing abnormal neurological development, among other things



DOCYARD
DR ARUN KUMAR VERMA

Senior Oncologist

MAX HOSPITAL,
NEW DELHI



Oral cancer can be prevented

Oral cancer is a major problem in the Indian subcontinent where it ranks among the top three types of cancer in the country. Age-adjusted rates of oral cancer in India is high, that is, 20 per 100,000 population and accounts for over 30 per cent of all cancers in the country. The variation in incidence and pattern of the disease can be attributed to the combined effect of ageing of the population, as well as regional differences in the prevalence of disease-specific risk factors.

Oral cancer is of significant public health importance to India. First, it is diagnosed at later stages which result in low treatment outcomes and considerable costs to the patients who typically cannot afford this type of treatment. Second, rural areas in middle and low-income countries also have inadequate access to trained providers and limited health services. As a result, delay has also been largely associated with advanced stages of oral cancer. Earlier detection of oral cancer offers the best chance for long term survival and has the potential to improve treatment outcomes and make healthcare affordable. Third, oral cancer affects those from the lower socioeconomic groups, that is, people from the lower socio-economic strata of society due to a higher exposure to risk factors such as the use of tobacco. Last, even though clinical diagnosis occurs via examination of the oral cavity and tongue which is accessible by current diagnostic tools, many cases present to a healthcare facility at later stages of cancer subtypes, thereby reducing chances of survival due to delays in diagnosis.

Causes: Mouth cancers form when cells on the lips or in the mouth develop changes (mutations) in their DNA. A cell's DNA contains the instructions that tell a cell what to do. The mutations changes tell the cells to continue growing and dividing when healthy cells would die. The accumulating abnormal mouth cancer cells can form a tumour. With time they may spread inside the mouth and on to other areas of the head and neck or other parts of the body. Mouth cancers most commonly begin in the flat, thin cells (squamous cells) that line your lips and the inside of your mouth. Most oral cancers are squamous cell carcinomas.

Prevention: There's no proven way to prevent mouth cancer. However, you can reduce your risk of mouth cancer if you: Stop using tobacco or don't start. Drink alcohol only in moderation, if at all. Avoid excessive sun exposure to your lips.

See your dentist regularly. As part of a routine dental exam, ask your dentist to inspect your entire mouth for abnormal areas that may indicate mouth cancer or precancerous changes.

Treatment: Surgery: Tumour present in lips, mouth, tongue can be removed with surgery. Surgical excision leads to disfigurement of face, drooling of saliva from angle of mouth, partial or complete loss of tongue and voice, reduced mouth opening in case of lip cancer. Disfigurement can be corrected cosmetically by plastic surgery. Functional losses may persist.

Radiation therapy: Treatment of cancer by rays (gamma, electron, photos and protons) is called radiation therapy. IMRT, IGRT are advanced form of radiation therapy that have the ability to spare surrounding organs as well as precisely deliver accurate dose to tumour. Post-surgery radiation therapy is called adjuvant therapy and reduces possibility of locoregional recurrence.

Chemotherapy: Chemotherapy is a medicine which is given in form of injections or tablets under supervision of oncologist. Mostly, it is given on a weekly basis during radiation therapy to enhance effects. Common side effects are hair loss, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, constipation and reduced blood count.

WARMFOODS

BLUEBERRY: Blueberries contain a plant compound called anthocyanin. This gives them the blue colour and is known for many health benefits. Blueberries contain iron, phosphorus, calcium, magnesium, manganese, zinc, and Vitamin K. Adequate intake of these minerals and vitamins help in maintaining bone structure and strength.

They are also rich in Vitamin C which makes them a good option for healthy skin and reduces the damage caused by the external agents. Blueberries can also improve the heart health and help in managing Diabetes. They also help in boosting body's immunity and thereby keeping cough and cold at bay. They also aids in digestion, helps in weight loss by making you feel full.



BELLY OH BELLY

Food poisoning and stomach flu are common ailments. However, most people get confused between the two. DR SK MUNDHRA tells you how to tackle both

Food poisoning and stomach flu are often confused due to their similar symptoms. Food poisoning is caused by eating food that contains bacteria, viruses, or parasites, which can get into food at various points during production. While stomach flu is caused by a viral infection that attacks the digestive system and is highly contagious and spreads rapidly.

A stomach flu has a few common symptoms that can last for up to 10 days. They include:

- Diarrhea that may be watery or bloody
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea or vomiting
- Stomach cramps, muscle aches, or weakness
- Low-grade fever
- Headaches
- Light-headedness or dizziness
- There are a few things that people can do at home while recovering from a stomach virus:
 - People with a stomach virus should avoid food for a while to let their stomach settle.
 - Let the stomach settle: Try not to eat any solid foods for several hours.
 - Take small sips of water: People should drink plenty of liquids to not get dehydrated. Avoid juice or other beverages which can make diarrhea worse.
 - Ease back into eating: Start with bland easy-to-digest food such as soda crackers, toast, and rice. Stop eating if nausea returns.
 - Avoid certain substances: These include dairy, caffeine, alcohol, sugar, and fatty or highly seasoned foods.
 - People should be cautious of over-the-counter medications as some can make the infection worse. Even anti-diarrhea medications can make the situation worse if the cause of the infection is certain bacteria. The stomach flu typically goes away within 24 to 28 hours, but home care is vital for a speedy recovery. See a doctor if you have any of the following symptoms:
 - Bloody stool or vomit
 - Unable to keep liquid down for at least 24 hours
 - Dehydration
 - Fever above 104°F.

Better safe than sorry

Some foods are more likely to cause of food poisoning because of the way they're produced and prepared. Meat, poultry, eggs, and shellfish may harbor infectious agents that are killed during cooking. If these foods are eaten in their raw form, not cooked properly, or if hands and surfaces are not cleaned after contact, food poisoning can occur.

Always wash your hands before cooking or eating food. Make sure that your food is properly sealed and stored. Thoroughly cook meat and eggs. Anything that comes in contact with raw products should be sanitised before using it to prepare other foods. Make sure to always wash fruits and vegetables before serving.

The following may be the reasons to cause food poisoning and infections. Dirty utensils, hands and kitchen area: If the utensils and the kitchen area is dirty, the food you prepare is prone to infections and cause food poisoning. Wash your hands properly to avoid the spread of bacteria and contaminating the food.

- Keeping raw material and ready-to-eat food together: Ready to eat food are not cooked and if kept along with raw meat, it is vulnerable to pick up germs even after cooking process.
- Keeping cut fruits and vegetables outside: Warm place is a breeding ground for bacteria. Cut fruits or vegetables need to be kept in refrigerator immediately.
- If the leftovers are not cooled: Nobody wants to waste the delicious food prepared. Cooling leftovers within 90 minutes of being prepared, then making sure they go straight in the fridge is the best

way to ensure that your delicious leftovers will still be good for the next few days. Reheating meat more than once: If you've got something meaty in your leftovers, ensure that you don't heat it up more than once. Continuously heating and then cooling meat allows bacteria to grow and multiply, potentially causing food poisoning. If you've got a lot of leftovers, the best thing to do is to only heat up the portion you're planning to eat, rather than the entire dish.

The symptoms of food poisoning occur more quickly than those of a stomach virus.

Cross-contamination is often the cause of food poisoning. This is when harmful organisms transfer from one surface to another. Raw foods and ready-to-eat foods like salads are particularly at risk of contamination.

Bacteria can also grow rapidly when foods such as meats, dairy products, and sauces are not kept at the right temperature. The bacteria and other harmful organisms can produce poisonous substances that cause inflammation of the intestines when eaten. Symptoms can vary depending on the source of the infection. Common cases of food poisoning will typically include at least three of the following symptoms — abdominal cramps, diarrhoea, vomiting, loss of appetite, mild fever, weakness, nausea and headaches.

The best way to prevent food poisoning is to handle your food safely and to avoid any food that may be unsafe. The writer is HOD, Internal Medicine, Saroj Super Speciality Hospital, New Delhi

Always wash your hands before cooking or eating. Make sure that your food is properly sealed and stored. Thoroughly cook meat and eggs

DadiKaKehna

The season is changing and with it comes the usual problems — sore throat, cough and cold. ROSHNI DEVI tells you how home remedies can help ease the pain, itchiness and irritation of the throat



Is there irritation in the throat? Is their pain when you swallow? In all probability you have a sore throat — a common ailment during change of season. While the itchiness and the irritation in the throat can be painful, there are several ingredients that we have in our kitchen that can bring relief. Gargle. Make a saltwater solution by putting half a teaspoon of salt in a glass of warm water. Just like salt, lemons, which are packed with Vitamin C help to boost the immune system and give it more power to fight infection. Mix one teaspoon of lemon juice into a glass of warm water and drink for quick relief. They say prevention is better than cure. If you sense a sore throat coming, dilute one-two tablespoons of apple cider vinegar in one cup of water and gargle with it. Do this on an hourly basis. Do drink plenty of water in between the gargling sessions.



TIPTOP

Gynaecological cancers or women's cancers are largely preventable if screened early. This was stated by Dr Amita Nathani and Dr Leena Dadhwal, two gynecology experts from Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Institute and Research Centre, Nitibagh South Delhi. The two doctors were speaking at a conclave attended by Moradabad based gynecologists in large numbers.

The conclave was organised by Moradabad Obstetrics Gynecological Society (MOGS), Moradabad. Dr Leena Chauhan, Dr Saba Asad and Dr Shazia Monis, President, Hony Secretary and Treasurer of MOGS presided over the function.

Speaking on cervical cancer, Dr Amita Nathani, Consultant — Gynaecology, RGICRC argued in favour of early screening of cervical cancer which can be easily

tested by a simple PAP Smear test. It can even be detected in the pre-cancerous stage thus preventing the development of cancer. Cervical cancer, though most prevalent amongst women in rural India is one of the most preventable cancers," she said.

Regarding the treatment, Dr Amita Nathani said: "In 80 per cent of the cases, cervical cancer is caused by HPV virus infection for which vaccine is available. Between nine-14 years of age, vaccine can be given in the form of two injections and between 14 to 26 years of age, three injection need to be given."

Cervical vaccine programme has been introduced in several states in the country including Sikkim and Punjab. School girls are going to get vaccinated under this programme.

SLIMLINE

In a rare turn of events, 19-year-old Mukul was rushed to the emergency department of Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals as he was stabbed over right area of the chest leading to fatal injuries and loss of blood.

On November 15, 2019, Mukul was stabbed with the iron rod which was about 15 cm of which six-seven cm entered in the lower part of the back of left side of chest after he got into a fight which resulted in puncture of the posterior chest wall. Dr Priyadarshini Singh, Head of

Department — Emergency — Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals said: "The emergency team rushed to attend the patient with immediate attention within five minutes of the patient being admitted. Our mission is to give patients the appropriate care in the fastest, most efficient manner possible."

Mukul underwent thoracotomy through which the blood clot on the aorta was removed. All the wounds were sealed. He improved gradually and was discharged on November 18, 2019.

SECRET TO GOOD SLEEP



A safe, non-toxic mattress determines whether your child sleeps well.

PANKAJ GUPTA tells you things to look out for

One of the most important decisions a parent can make is choosing an organic kids mattress. Sleep is critical to your child's health and well-being, and since kids spend more than one third of their lives in direct exposure to their mattress materials it's crucial to their health that those mattress materials be safe, organic and non-toxic.

A safe, non-toxic mattress can determine whether your child sleeps well or not. Kids are more vulnerable to the toxins in mattresses since their fragile organ and elimination systems are developing and they can't easily detoxify. During sleep, children's bodies work to recover from the accumulation of toxins and stress from their day. The cells attempt to regenerate and the body tries to eliminate toxins. The last thing you want to do is introduce more toxins from your child's mattress.

The way to ensure a non-toxic sleep environment is to avoid polyurethane foam, memory foam and other synthetic materials. Also avoid mattresses with fire retardants. Your kids need a mattress with good quality organic, non-toxic materials.

While firm support for your child is the most important feature in a safer mattress for kids, comfort counts too! Many mattresses contain conventional cotton fiber (treated with pesticides), synthetic filling materials made with harmful chemicals, or polyurethane foam for comfort.

Pay attention to how your child sleeps to help you select the ideal comfort and support levels needed in the best organic mattress for their needs.

Side Sleepers: If your child sleeps on their side, they need a little more cushion to reduce tension and pressure on their developing skeletal system. Check out the Naturepedic Verse with encased coil support if your child is older or a side sleeper. You can also get a quilted mattress pad to provide extra comfort.

Tummy Sleepers: For kids who sleep on their stomachs, a firm mattress is important to help reduce pressure on the back and shoulders.

Back Sleepers: If your big kid sleeps on their back, this is the best position for spinal health! Medium or cushion firm support is great for back sleepers, but remember that kids need a little more firmness than adults.

Be careful of what you pay for. A cheap bend may not necessarily be the safest option for your child. When buying a bed for your toddler, it is important to consider their weight and age. The changeover from cot to a regular bed should occur between 18 and 36 months.

One of the most important things that matter for a sleeping child is their spine support. Both the neck and spine must be in a neutral position. This reduces stress and encourages spinal growth.

The spine of a toddler can grow up to 1.5 cm at night, and this comes from filling of the intervertebral discs between the vertebrae with water. This means the mattress should be soft enough to make them comfortable, yet stable enough to prevent sinking in.

It can be tempting to save money by going with the smallest mattress for a small child, but consider the big picture. Children grow quickly, and the ideal mattress will be one with a long lifespan that can adjust to a child's needs as he or she gets bigger. To avoid having to go through the process again in just a year or two, it's best to buy the highest quality you can afford with the long-term in mind.

The writer is Director, RP Foam Home India Pvt Ltd

STUDYCENTRE

On Valentine's Day, international dating service OkCupid made an annual check in with millennials in India about love, romance and relationships in the 21st century. The app reviewed findings from user responses to hopefully find the answer to what men and women really want!

While the Indian millennial today are evolved, well-travelled and like to live life king-size, they still love those old-school coffee dates. A large majority of both men and women report a preference to chat over a steaming cup while out on a first date, even now. And despite what every other generation is saying about millennial, most of them truly believe in the beautiful serendipity of falling in love and want to live 'happily ever after' rather than exploring multiple relationships. Funnily, the most interesting finding is that unlike popular perception, men are actually hopeless romantics at heart and like to go all guns blazing on planning Valentine's Day celebrations. No judgement, but love deserves to be celebrated and most people did agree that love is not overrated or over celebrated.

According to the survey, while most millennials have an unquenchable thirst for knowledge (46 per cent), love is not far behind with over 30 per cent men and women saying that they are still driven by the idea of true love. The survey also revealed that 61 per cent of women and 53 per cent of men consider love as a true stroke of serendipity and want it to just happen to them by chance.

CORONAVIRUS

99 more cases on Japan cruise ship: Media

Tokyo: An additional 99 people have tested positive for coronavirus on a cruise ship off the Japan coast, Japanese media said on Monday, citing new figures from the health ministry.

That would take the total number of positive cases on the Diamond Princess to 454. The health ministry declined to confirm the reports immediately.

It was also not clear whether the figures included 14 US citizens who tested positive for the virus but were allowed to board evacuation flights home.

The Diamond Princess vessel moored in Yokohama near Tokyo has become the second-largest cluster of coronavirus cases outside the epicentre in China.

Passengers have been largely confined to quarters since

February 5 with only brief and occasional breaks to take air on deck — with face masks.

The quarantine period is over on Wednesday but many countries have decided to repatriate their citizens after an

alarming climb in cases on board. The US was the first country to evacuate its citizens from the ship but Australia, Canada, Italy and Hong Kong have indicated they will follow suit.

On land, cases in Japan have risen to 65, with authorities warning that the outbreak is entering a "new phase" and advising people to avoid large gatherings.

A public celebration of the new emperor's birthday on Sunday has been scrapped and organisers of the Tokyo Marathon scheduled on March 1 are reportedly considering cancelling the amateur part of the race.

WHO experts join field inspections in China

Beijing: Top WHO experts, including from the US, have joined the fight against the novel coronavirus in China that has claimed 1,770 lives, as Beijing stepped up its efforts by deploying 30,000 more medical staff in the worst-affected Wuhan city to contain the spread of the epidemic.

China's National Health Commission (NHC) said on Monday that 105 people died of the virus on Sunday while 2,048 new cases of infection have been confirmed, taking the total number of COVID-19 infected cases to 70,548, the state run

Xinhua news agency reported. Of the new deaths, 100 were reported from the central Hubei province, three in the central Henan province, and two in the southern Guangdong province. The efforts to combat coronavirus picked up pace with the global experts mobilised by the World Health Organisation (WHO) joining hands with their Chinese counterparts.

China has confirmed that the WHO team reportedly comprising 12 members includes experts from the US, which has been a major demand from Washington. PTI

China asks recovered patients to donate plasma for virus treatment

Beijing: Chinese health officials on Monday urged patients who have recovered from the coronavirus to donate blood so that plasma can be extracted to treat others who are critically ill.

Drugmakers are racing to develop a vaccine and treatment for the epidemic, which has which killed 1,770 people and infected over 70,500 people across China.

Plasma from patients who have recovered from a spell of pneumonia triggered by COVID-19 contains antibodies that can help reduce the virus

load in critically ill patients, an official from China's National Health Commission told a press briefing Monday.

"I would like to make a call to all cured patients to donate their plasma so that they can bring hope to critically ill patients," said Guo Yanhong, who heads the NHC's medical administration department.

Eleven patients at a hospital in Wuhan received plasma infusions last week, said Sun Yanrong, of the Biological Center at the Ministry of Science and Technology. AFP

Trading quarantines, Americans from cruise land in US

Travis Air Force Base: One of two charter flights carrying cruise ship passengers from Japan landed at a California air force base early Monday, starting the clock on a quarantine period to ensure passengers don't have the new virus that's been spreading in Asia.

A plane carrying American passengers touched down at Travis Air Force Base in northern California just before 2:30 a.m., local time. Another flight was headed to Lackland Air Force Base in Texas.

Japan's Defence Minister Taro Kono had tweeted earlier that Japanese troops helped transport 340 US passengers on 14 buses from Yokohama port to Tokyo's Haneda airport. About 380 Americans were on the cruise ship. AFP

Donald Trump calls for Russia to stop backing Syrian 'atrocities'

Washington: President Donald Trump has called for Russia to end its support for the Syrian regime's "atrocities" as he expressed US concern over violence in the Idlib region, the White House said.

In a call with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Trump "expressed concern over the violence in Idlib, Syria and... Conveyed the United States' desire to see an end to Russia's support for the Assad regime's atrocities."

President Bashar al-Assad's forces made new gains Sunday in their offensive against the last major rebel bastion in the northwest region of Idlib.

Backed by Russian air strikes, Syrian government forces have kept up the assault in Idlib and areas of neighbouring Aleppo and Latakia provinces since December.

On Sunday, after clashes and air strikes, regime forces "were in control of all the villages and small towns around

Aleppo for the first time since 2012," the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

The Russian-backed offensive has triggered the largest wave of displacement in Syria's civil war, with 800,000 people fleeing since December, the United Nations says.

In the Saturday phone call with Erdogan, Trump also "reiterated that continued foreign interference in Libya would only serve to worsen the situation."

Libya has been mired in chaos since a 2011 NATO-backed uprising killed long-time dictator Moamer Kadhaafi, with two rival administrations vying for power.

States including Russia, France, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt support strongman Khalifa Haftar, while the UN-recognised Government of National Accord is backed by Turkey and Qatar. AFP

Armed gang steals toilet rolls in panic-buying Hong Kong

Hong Kong: A gang of knife-wielding men jumped a delivery driver in Hong Kong and stole hundreds of toilet rolls, police said Monday, in a city wracked by shortages caused by coronavirus panic-buying.

Toilet rolls have become hot property in the densely packed business hub, despite government assurances that supplies remain unaffected by the virus outbreak.

Supermarkets have found themselves unable to restock quickly enough, leading to sometimes lengthy queues and shelves wiped clean within moments of opening.

There has also been a run on staples such as rice and pasta, as well as hand sanitiser and other cleaning items.

Police said a truck driver was held up early Monday by three men outside a supermarket in Mong Kok, a working-class district with a history of "triad" organised crime gangs. AFP

German far right arrests reveal 'shocking' mosque attack plot

Berlin: Members of a German extreme right group arrested last week were believed to have been plotting "shocking" large-scale attacks on mosques similar to the ones carried out in New Zealand last year, a government spokesman said Monday.

Officials said that investigations into 12 men detained in police raids across Germany Friday had indicated they planned major attacks, following media reports over the weekend the group aimed to launch several simultaneous mass-casualty assaults on Muslims during prayers.

"It's shocking what has been revealed here, that there are cells here that appear to have become radicalised in such a short space

of time," interior ministry spokesman Bjoern Gruenewald told reporters at a Berlin press conference.

"It is the task of the state, and of course of this government, to protect free practice of religion in this country, with no reference to what religion it might be," Chancellor Angela Merkel's spokesman Steffen Seibert said.

"Anyone practising their religion in Germany within our legal order should be able to do so without being endangered or threatened." According to media reports, the group planned to use semi-automatic weapons to ape last March's attacks in Christchurch in New Zealand in which 51 people were killed at two mosques. AFP

Church pastor among 24 killed in Burkina Faso attack

Ouagadougou: Gunmen killed 24 men, including a church pastor, and kidnapped three others on Sunday in Burkina Faso, an official said. It was the latest attack against a religious leader in the increasingly unstable West African nation.

The mayor of Boundou commune, Sihanri Osangola Brigadie, said the attack occurred in the town of Pansy in Yagha province. The roughly 20 attackers separated men from women close to a

Protestant church. At least 10 other people were injured.

"It hurt me when I saw the people," Brigadie said after visiting some of the victims in the hospital in Dori town, 180 kilometers (110 miles) from the attack. The gunmen looted oil and rice from shops and forced the three youth they kidnapped to help transport it on their motorbikes, he said.

Both Christians and Muslims were killed before the church was set on fire, said a

government security official in Dori who spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak to the media.

Attacks have targeted religious leaders in the area in the past. Last week, also in Yagha province, a retired pastor was killed and another pastor was abducted by gunmen, according to an internal security report for aid workers seen by The Associated Press.

Extremist violence has dra-

matically escalated in once-peaceful Burkina Faso. Analysts are concerned that attacks against civilians, including against Christians, are increasing "at an alarming rate," said Corinne Dufka, West Africa director for Human Rights Watch. "Perpetrators use victims' links to government or their faith to justify the killings, while others appear to be reprisal killings for killings by the government security

forces," she said.

More than 1,300 civilians were killed in targeted attacks last year in Burkina Faso, more than seven times the previous year, according to Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, which collects and analyzes conflict information.

The insecurity has created a humanitarian crisis. More than 760,000 people are internally displaced, according to the government. AP

Rwandan dissident singer found dead in custody: police

Kigali: A popular Rwandan singer whose music was banned by the ruling regime "committed suicide" in custody, police announced Monday, three days after he was caught trying to flee the country.

Kizito Mihigo, a survivor of the Rwandan genocide whose songs angered the government of strongman President Paul Kagame, was found dead in a police cell in the capital Kigali around 5am (0200 GMT).

Mihigo, who was sentenced to 10 years' jail in 2015 for conspiracy against the government but later released on pardon, was captured trying to cross the border in Rwanda's south.

Police spokesperson John Bosco Kabera said he was visited by family members and his lawyer during his detention.

"Investigations have begun to ascertain why he committed suicide," he said.

Mihigo fell foul of the ruling RPF in 2013 after composing songs that questioned the government's tight control of the legacy of the 1994 tragedy.

His music, once popular by ruling elites, was swiftly banned. Two years later he was accused of terrorism and raising support for an opposition political movement and sentenced to 10 years in prison.

His lawyers said prosecutors had little evidence to jail him. He was released on presidential pardon in September 2018.

Mihigo is not the first figure to die in mysterious circumstances under police custody in Rwanda. AFP

Eight killed in suicide bombing in Balochistan

Karachi: A powerful suspected suicide bombing at a religious rally in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province killed at least eight persons, including policemen, and injured 23 others on Monday, according to media reports.

The bombing took place during the religious rally at the Quetta Press Club near the Shahrah-i-Adalat road. Several vehicles parked in the vicinity have also been damaged due to the impact of the blast, Dawn newspaper reported.

The attack came the same day UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who is in

Pakistan, termed the improved security situation in Pakistan as "absolutely remarkable".

Security personnel have cordoned off the area and are conducting a search operation. Officials added that the nature of the blast has not yet been ascertained.

At least eight persons, including policemen, were killed and 23 others injured in the incident, Duniya News reported.

No group took responsibility of the attack but Baloch nationalists and the Taliban militants were involved in such attacks in the past. PTI

Taliban kill five Afghan soldiers despite violence reduction hopes

Kabul: At least five Afghan soldiers were killed when Taliban fighters stormed their base in northern Afghanistan, officials said Monday, as the country waits for an expected "reduction in violence" before a US-Taliban deal.

The attack happened in Shora Khak area of volatile Kunduz province on Sunday, days after US Defense Secretary Mark Esper said an agreement with the Taliban was in place for a "conditions-based" seven-day reduction in violence.

"Unfortunately, five army soldiers were martyred and three wounded," the Afghan defence ministry said in a statement, adding that Taliban fighters also suffered casualties. Enhamuddin Rahmani, a spokesman for Kunduz police, told AFP the fighting lasted several hours and both sides suffered casualties.

The Taliban's official spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid claimed on Twitter that the militants had killed 19 security forces in the attack. AFP

GLOBE TROTTER

LARGEST MASS GRAVES UNCOVERED IN BURUNDI

Nairobi: Authorities in Burundi say they have opened six mass graves containing more than 6,000 bodies from unrest that occurred decades ago, the largest such discovery in years of work. The East African nation has been unearthing such graves from a past that includes massacres along ethnic lines.

QUAKE RECOVERY: ALBANIA HOPES FOR 400 MM EUROS

Brussels: Prime Minister Edi Rama warned Monday that Albania will be "in trouble" if a donor conference does not pledge at least 400 mm euros to help it recover from a powerful earthquake. The impoverished Balkan State was hit by a 6.4-magnitude quake in Nov, killing 51 people, leaving 17,000 homeless and creating a recovery bill of more than a billion euros, according to an official assessment.

DEATH PENALTY URGED OVER JAPAN CARE HOME MASSACRE

Tokyo: Japanese prosecutors on Monday called for a 30-year-old man to be executed for allegedly murdering 19 disabled care home residents in one of the country's worst mass killings. Satoshi Uematsu, a former care home employee, did not dispute his involvement in the 2016 stabbing rampage during his first court appearance last month in Yokohama.

DHFL DEWAN HOUSING FINANCE CORPORATION LIMITED. DEMAND NOTICE. Under Section 13(2) of the Securitisation And Reconstruction of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with Rule 3 (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. The undersigned is the Authorised Officer of Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Ltd. (DHFL) under Securitisation And Reconstruction of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (the said Act).

UK issues severe flood warnings, storm injures 9 in Germany. London: Britain issued five severe flood alerts on Monday, warning of a danger to life after Storm Dennis dumped weeks worth of rain in some places. It is expected to peak on Tuesday.

Edelweiss RETAIL FINANCE LIMITED. POSSESSION NOTICE CUM PRE SALE NOTICE (for immovable property). Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of Edelweiss Finance Ltd (ECLF) under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, Demand Notice(s) issued by the Authorised Officer of the company to the Borrower(s) / Co Borrower(s) mentioned herein below to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

Trend Blazer

Kangana's first look as pilot released

Actor KANGANA RANAUT's first look as an Air Force pilot in her forthcoming flick *Tejas* has taken the internet by storm.

Ronnie Screwvala's production house RSVP movies shared the look. The tweet reads, "Soaring high into the sky! Presenting the first look of #KanganaRanaut as an Air force Pilot in #Tejas."

Kangana's sister Rangoli Chandel tweeted, "*Tejas* is not only a fighter jet but also Kangana's name in the film. She always wanted to play a soldier and her dream came true. After *Manikarnika*, another war film but this time action will be in the sky, *Jai Hind*."



It's my dream to become India's pop icon. That dream is going to be fulfilled

through non-film songs. It also gives me a chance to feature in my own videos and the song

is associated to my face and name instead of being a voice for someone else's face. I have never let success get into my head. I think that's how a person can grow.

—Dhvani Bhanushali



A special screening of filmmaker Anubhav Sinha's *Thappad* starring TAAPSEE PANNU will be held today in the capital by director Vishal Bhardwaj.

The makers says that they are very confident about the film and hence, hosting a special screening 10 days before the official release.

Given the industry's competitive environment, for Sinha, it is a breath of fresh air to see other directors come forward to support their contemporaries and back up films with strong social messages.

I smell like a crayon: Robert

Actor ROBERT PATTINSON says he smells like a crayon. Pattinson was then asked, "Like you're made of wax?" To which, he said, "Yes! Like I'm embalmed."

Pattinson was recently described as the "most handsome man" in the world according to science.

Asked what's it like to be superlatively hot, he said, "It's weird. My character in *Harry Potter* was of a good-looking guy. It was quite a shock that it was easy to get. Then *Twilight* happened too."

Pattinson will next be seen playing Bruce Wayne in Matt Reeves' *The Batman*. Last week, the director shared the first image for the film, showing the actor in his Batman mask and suit. The look went viral on the net.



ONE LOVE IS ALL WE NEED

Designer duo ABU JANI SANDEEP KHOSLA's collection at *Blenders Pride Fashion Tour* was a passionate call to action for inclusivity and the celebration of difference. By TEAM VIVA

What was this year's theme for *Blenders Pride Fashion Tour*?

The milestone 15th edition of *Blenders Pride Fashion Tour* unveiled a new face of fashion by bringing the universe of pride to life, with 'My Blend, My Pride' being the theme for the Delhi chapter of the tour. The concept represents our creative and spiritual vision. Blend is an amalgamation of multiple textiles, techniques, embroidery, colours and silhouettes, each one distinct and a reflection of the rich and living cultural, historical, art and craft legacy of India. With India as muse, we have imagined this new collection as an original style standard for now and for the future. Blend is also an ode to the concept of 'One Love'. And it's many, many forms. It is a passionate call to action for inclusivity and the celebration of difference.

How did you blend modern silhouettes and Indian traditions and aesthetics through your designs?

The proof of the pudding is in the tasting. The collection revealed its ability to carry traditions and classical sensibilities in a thoroughly modern avatar. We believe in breaking boundaries, in crossing borders when it comes to creativity.

What inspired the collection?

Our collection is always inspired by multiple influences and is essentially a celebration of the sheer diversity, that is India. We have always worked intensively with Indian textiles, be it block printing, khaki or cotton. Our intention is to elevate these crafts to works of art. Natural fabrics, weaves, dyes were used as a canvas for the finest embroideries and accents. Multiple motifs, too, inspired by flora, fauna and architecture. Every range is distinct and blends multiple elements together in decidedly original silhouettes to create a tribute to crafts-



Every range features signature colours, inspired by the ones found in both nature and in our tradition. From whites, beige and nudes to rust, brown, green and red'

manship and design at their highest level.

Some of your collection seems to be inspired by Indian architecture. How did you weave architecture in your designs?

Architecture has always played an important role as a personal passion and creative inspiration. Be it Mughal monuments or South Indian temples, we have used these extensively as motifs in our collections. We also designed collections of architectural furniture. We incorporated gothic and art deco architecture in our fashion and interior designs.

This has been your signature style. How has it evolved over the years?

One's core sensibilities and aesthetics remain the same. As artists and designers, we have always committed ourselves to creating original, possibly refined, exceptional and timeless pieces. We believe in constant experimentation and in challenging ourselves to break our own bar. We are always learning, striving to dream and achieve bigger. The circle of creativity may always expand. Each time we fashion a

new dream, with new eyes.

Fabrics, initially seen as hierarchical symbols, have evolved to be accepted and recognised as an art form. What is your take on this? Which fabric did you use?

Our textile legacy is an art form. It is labour and skill-intensive. From weaving to block printing, we are beyond blessed in India to have artisanal quality within our reach. These 33 years have seen us work with myriad fabrics and textiles. Our mission has always been to make these textiles high fashion — the standard of couture. *Bandhani*, *khadi*, *ajrak*, silk, georgette, satin and cotton feature extensively in this collection.

Can you tell us in detail about your colour palette this time?

The colour palette as always is extensive. Every range features signature colours, inspired by the ones found in both nature and in our tradition. From whites, beige and nudes to rust, brown, green, Indigo. The palette included even the jewel hues like fuchsia, orange, emerald and red.



Photo: Pankaj Kumar

The show must go on

Climate change activists brought flares, wore gas masks, stopped traffic with a street protest as they demanded the cancellation of the five-day style extravaganza, London Fashion Week

Climate change activists stole the show on the opening day of London Fashion Week, stopping traffic with a street protest as they demanded the cancellation of the British capital's five-day style extravaganza. Dozens of protesters from the Extinction Rebellion group drew attention — and anger from some drivers — as they fired colorful smoke flares into the air and blocked busy intersections in central London near the fashion events. Some protesters wore gas masks and dresses made from chains, while others carried placards reading "no fashion on a dead planet."

They called on the British Fashion Council to take more action to lobby for environmental policies. It was an eventful day at London Fashion Week, which brings crowds of style editors, photographers, models and celebrities to the city twice a year. Burberry, Victoria Beckham, Tommy Hilfiger, Erdem and Christopher Kane are among the leading fashion houses and designers showcasing their latest fall and winter creations over the next few days.

Organisers of London Fashion Week have said they want to help promote sustainability and create positive change within the industry. This season, the trade show is featuring a "Positive Fashion" exhibition and a "swap shop" where visitors will be able to exchange used clothes for donated items.

Most fashion week attendees, however, will have their eyes firmly trained on new season offerings. On Saturday, Temperley London staged four catwalk shows that were open to the public as part of a wider drive to make the displays — traditionally only accessible to fashion insiders and VIPs — more public-facing and instantly available to the masses.

The brand, adored by fans for its romantic evening and bridal wear, showcased summer dresses



with bold prints and an array of opulent and ultra-feminine evening gowns featuring plenty of ruffles, jeweled embellishments, sheer fabrics and show-stopping sequins.

Gale force winds and a deluge of rain may be causing havoc to much of Britain, but for the fashion crowd the show must go on. Storm Dennis didn't stop models, celebrities and fashion insiders from donning their finest to attend the fashion week. American streetwear designer Tommy Hilfiger also made a guest appearance, showing neon yellow track-suits and luxury sportswear in a collaboration collection with Formula One racing driver Lewis Hamilton.

Cameras flashed as the Beckham family turned out in style to support Spice Girl-turned-designer Victoria Beckham, who staged her catwalk show at central London's grand Banqueting Hall. Her sons Romeo and Cruz shared the front row with father and former soccer star David Beckham, while 8-year-old Harper got a comfy seat in her father's lap.

On the catwalk, models wore checked shirts, smart tailored coats, culottes and velvet blazers, all paired with skin-tight, thigh-high leather boots in shades from blue to bright red. Beckham said "we're using the boot to throw things off in a little bit of a strange way."

Elsewhere, French designer Roland Mouret turned to 1980s London under Margaret Thatcher for inspiration. There were double-breasted blazers, exaggerated shoulders and androgynous suits; a sugary pink boxy blazer, worn with matching culottes, stood out in a mostly austere palette of greys, khakis and monochrome.

The fashion industry has come under increasing scrutiny from green groups, and Mouret — who counts Meghan, the Duchess of Sussex, among his celebrity fans — was keen to respond to calls for more transparent and environmentally-friendly practices. Sustainable fashion "is at the heart of my collection in a time where the process of creating clothes carries with it a personal responsibility," he said, and emphasised that he aimed for the brand to be carbon neutral within the year. —AP



SOCIAL MEDIA WAR ON FILMFARE

The latest Filmfare Awards have disappointed some netizens. People have taken to social media to express their dissatisfaction with the winners and #BoycottFilmfareAwards has been trending on Twitter since Monday.

Some argue that the earthy song of the pro-Right *Kesari* should have been chosen over *Gully Boy*, which celebrates protest poetry against social inequity, others cried nepotism. Luckily, the war played out in the social media that allows a democracy of opinions. Unluckily, it also gave vent to political biases.

While fans tweeted their ire, lyricist Manoj Muntashir declared that he is heartbroken over not winning an award for penning the heart-wrenching track *Teri Mitti* from *Kesari*. He took to Twitter to announce that he would not be attending any award ceremonies for the rest of his life. Manoj penned an emotional note, "Dear Awards, even if I try all my life, I won't be able to write a better line than *Tu Kehti Thee Tera Chaand Hoon Main Aur Chaand Humesha Rahta Hai*. You failed to honour the words which made millions of Indians cry and care for their motherland. It would be a great disrespect to my art if I still continue caring for you. So here I bid you a final good bye. I officially announce that I

won't attend any award show till I breathe my last. *Alvida*."

Netizens came up in support of him because *Teri Mitti* is a song that touched hearts of almost all Bollywood buffs, especially due to its lyrics. Commenting on his post, a user wrote, "@filmfare and @jiteshpillai, you literally killed faith of many Indians and lyricist by not giving award to #TeriMitti. This song is best of the decade."

The mood has been similar for many fans. Accusing the awards of propagating nepotism and awarding actors and filmmakers who are star kids, a user wrote, "They have to promote betis some renowned people Akhtar, Bhatt and Pandey. Nepotism rules in Bollywood. It's so sad that quality cinema does not matter. #BoycottFilmfareAwards."

Another user wrote, "Worst filmfare awards. Some splendid films were ignored. It was never expected from such a jury. Was it only to please the boss Karan Johar or Ranveer Singh. *Teri Mitti* song, *300* film ignored. #BoycottFilmfareAwards. Another tweet reads, "#BoycottFilmfareAwards they simply ignored Sushant Singh Rajput who gave two powerful performances in *Sonchirya* and *Chhichhore*. The songs of these films are far better than *Gully Boy*."

—JANS

Man needs colour to live; it's just as necessary an element as fire and water," said the great Fernand Léger in *The Aesthetics of the Machine, Geometric Order and True* (1923).

The quaint and curious little space at the Akar Prakar Contemporary, showcasing minimal colour field landscapes by the great master from Bengal, Ganesh Haloi, reminds one of this. Haloi has been brought into the limelight by director Reena Lath. His solo will be unveiled at the Asia Art Week, New York in March.

In these landscapes, the modernist you see suffuses fertile pastures tinted by tiny strokes of colour, the splendour of which, all of a sudden, transforms into a bouquet of earth songs. It's one of the reasons why Haloi was handpicked by Documenta 14 curator Adam Szymczyk in 2014.

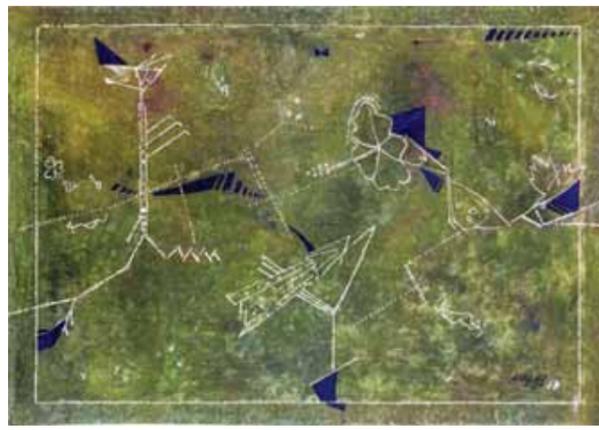
TRANQUILITY OF COLOUR FIELDS

Haloi plays with the tranquility of colour fields as he creates a study of his homeland, which is intense, in-depth and unexpected. In one of them, one could spot a golden yellow rapture, while in another, a vigorous tenor of mud brown. One can also find a voluminous ochre that could belong to a paddy field or an autumnal evening in Shantiniketan. Whatever the case maybe, Haloi creates a counterpoise, aptly balancing space and volume.

In a life that has found the graceful gravitas of pure abstraction, Haloi's works at Akar Prakar are both joyful and dynamic. In 2006, at his home in Kolkata, he said in an interview, "Colour is not just a vital necessity in the hands of an artist. It is like a raw material, which is primary as well as essential in life. It is like air, water and fire. If I am thinking of my experiences and memories, I cannot imagine it without the mood of the atmosphere. When you look at a pond, at the plants, fishes and birds around you, you are also thinking of all that is natural in colour tones. When we look at nature in its purest form, we are recording what is linked to light. The memory becomes an intensity which we can either strengthen or soften. This process for me is the abstraction that I engage in."

FRAGMENTED HOMOGENEITY

His tiny strokes look as though light is vibrating and moving along the rhythms of the wind. Musical breadths and deeper understandings of abstract expressionism — all come into play in



MEMORIES ON CANVAS

For artist GANESH HALOI, working on a piece is like cultivating crops on a part of land. It's the reason why nature's true essence can be found in his works, says UMA NAIR

Haloi's works. He is a scholar, who is content to create something within the orbit of his own oasis. He is the reflective traveller content within the conventions of time and space and happy to venture into terra incognita. His canvases speak a language, where each portion takes on a novel, fresh and moving meaning.

One morning in 2006, in the silence of his flat and company of artist Sudip Roy, Haloi said, "A work of art is like a land I cultivate. It grows progressively but quietly. Abstraction is neither a technique nor geometry. It is born of one's own residue of memory and experience. The stories, events and spectacles I saw in my childhood come back to me. The sadness of the Bengal famine and the helplessness of people, engulfs me. The sunset at the pond in the village... everything accumulates as associations with the past. When I put paint to paper or canvas, I want to create something that



is fresh and full of the sap of fertility. Like the poet who sits down to write, I gaze at my canvas or paper for some time. Yes, I want the trigger of a vital energy and a zest. The beginning is quiet but once the first swish of the plant brush or the pen touches the canvas, it flows. Some stimulus must accumulate

within me so that I can create the unexpected symphony. It's like one of the compositions from the *Gitabitan* — moody, rhythmic and full of resonance. That resonance must happen."

When asked if he likes to be alone when he paints, Haloi said his wait in front of his canvas or sheet of Nepali

paper is a combination of silent patience and the gesture of poise. These landscapes are tinged with grace and dreaminess, populated by strokes that resemble the rustling of leaves or just riverine tributaries, bathed in harmonies of green or tan or an indigo. They are rooted in the ethos of his own world.

In the density of depth and the melody of motion, Haloi's exhibition is a paean to poetic patterns, prismatic haikus that lull the senses long after we have gone through an immersive experience of dulcet tunes of the yesteryear. It would be intriguing to know how New York responds to India's resonant master even as he brings alive the words by Aldous Huxley: "There are things known and there are things unknown, and in between are the doors of perception."

(Form & Place will be shown in New York at the Fuller Building from March 12th to 19th.)

Sotheby to unveil private collections

Commemorating the 25th anniversary of Modern and Contemporary South Asian Art sales at Sotheby's, this season features a selection of rare and never-seen-before works emerging from private collections. Led by two 1960s paintings by pioneer Indian abstractionists Nasreen Mohamedi and Vasudeo S Gaitonde, the auction also features an important work by Indian National Treasure artist Raja Ravi Varma; a selection of sculptures led by modernist works by Amarnath Sehgal and Adi Davierwalla; a curated selection on Neo-Tantra, including works by Biren De, GR Santosh and a diverse selection from the Bengal School of Art as well as Modern and Contemporary art from Pakistan.

Anu Ghosh-Mazumdar, head of Sotheby's Indian and Southeast Asian Art Department in New York, commented, "We are thrilled to continue our strength in presenting fresh material to collectors worldwide. Our entire March sale features material that is either newly discovered or has remained in esteemed private collections for decades."

Manjari Sihare-Sutin, head of Sotheby's Modern and Contemporary South Asian Sales in New York, noted, "Twenty-five years ago, Sotheby's held its first dedicated auction of Modern and Contemporary Indian Art, featuring the legendary collection of Chester and Davida Herwitz. I am immensely proud to continue to bring fresh and exciting property to the market. From Gaitonde's works with a connection to Dr Homi Jehangir Bhabha to an alluring Mohamedi work, previously owned by Peggy and Robert Matthews, and a fantastic collection of art acquired by Marcia Gilmartin including rare works by Zarina, this sale offers a variety of riches for the discerning collector."

(The art auction will be held in New York on March 16.)



In trying to articulate the thoughts about artist Ajit Seal's works, one examines not only them but also the relationship the artist has with the works. It's after all a long process — from their fabrication till the time they get their final shape. The exhibition, *Idioms & Images*, directs the viewers to understand the variety in his artworks by dividing them into different phases. First, the regional periphery, and second, the idioms and images where Ajit's printmaking process has much to say about the route, conceptual diversion and the process of growth an artist undergoes.

The images also usher the audience in three directions — of complex metaphysical ideas, towards the path of simplicity, and towards an artistic quest, where the artist's works represent how man and society can perpetually renew and transcend themselves by the self-transcending meanings, values and purposes in life. Ajit's experiments and display of the different media of printmaking such as lithography, wood engraving, etching, plate lithography and enamel paintings showcase his journey of 40 years of art practices and how he has experienced many transformations in his artistic journey.

His works have gone through many artistic phases and the show portrays the different varieties of the printmaking process. On the face of it, the works show a versatile technique and imagery for which Ajit has been known well. They also seem to have a unique feature in the unconcealed reference to the Indian mythology and auspicious symbols which he derived from religious conviction. He had said earlier, "Although there are mythological references in my works, they are predominated from my personal experiences." It is on this wider background that his

The illusion of reality

Through different media of printmaking like lithography, wood engraving, etching and enamel paintings, artist AJIT SEAL showcases his journey of 40 years of art practises and how he has experienced many transformations over time. By TEAM VIVA



works echo at the very heart of contemporary art practices and the issues of self-identity.

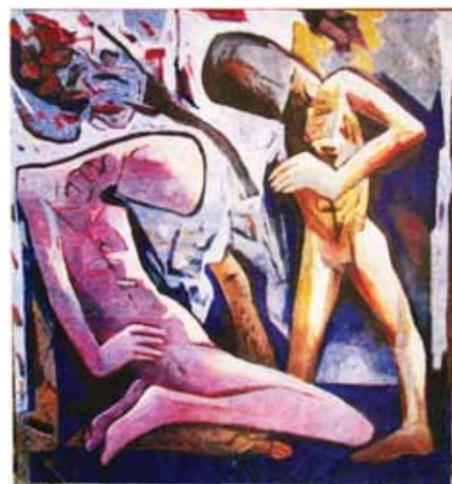
There are three major objectives that Ajit explores. First, the visual language that he uses. Second, the thought-process he uses to guide the making of his artworks. Third, the wider chronological framework through which he both produces his works as well as thinks the work will occupy a significant place.

At the very first sight of Ajit's printmaking works, one becomes aware of his images and they speak volumes about his thoughts and beliefs. With the help of strong narratives, his

works reflect his own musings which keep transforming, sometimes static, veiling, unveiling and changing as he progresses.

The images and prints are the silhouettes of his inner self. His works communicate expressions of everyday experiences, along with the belief that its identity is made up of a body, of thoughts, feelings, ambitions, plans, ideas, values, impulses, desires, actions, qualities, and so on.

Ajit's works are an approach where he presents a traditional and spiritual morality into visual perspective. His works emerge from a personal quest,



for which the most suitable media and materials that express his 'self' are lithographies, wood engraving as well as etching. His work process goes with the flow of his thoughts. He says, "Sometimes ideas emerge gradually through the everyday things I am engaged in and other times, it takes a long thinking process for days before I start exploring the visual concepts on different printing media."

The illusion of reality is one of Ajit's prime objectives and he seems to be moving around the circumference of a time circle for which his art is governed by much aesthetic austerity. He

tries to communicate with the viewers through his private emotions and sensations — not so much as his eyes see, but rather as the effect on his inward being when he looks at particular things. His works forsake representational images but aim to communicate personal sensations. His works certainly need to be looked into deeply because his narratives act as a way for the viewers towards a course of perseverance.

He says, "I am inspired by the movements of the flora which surround me and the movements of life, be it of the inner self or the outer world."

The art of fostering relationships

Musicians from Goa have always been at the forefront and now artists from the state are more confidently stepping into new festival spaces

With a view to build upon the community of creative people residing in Goa, the maiden edition of the *Goa Open Arts Festival* aimed to foster collaborations and relationships among participants, who may not have previously known each other but are all living and making work in the state.

Talking about the public festival, Sitara Chowfla, independent curator and spokesperson of the festival recalled that the idea was prompted by the idea that there are a significant number of creative people — artists, writers, designers, poets, musicians, who had come from around the country and the world to make Goa their home.

"The intention was also to encourage and provide a platform for creating new work and for artists to retain control over what and how they show. This is a point of difference from many other festivals that it is organised by artists and the content is driven by the selected artists and not by curators," she said.

Stressing that the underlying thought behind the three-day festival was premised on the idea of "openness", Chowfla elaborated that they have included a diverse range of practices in the arts — music, performance, visual arts, poetry — and also opened up different interpretations of art. "For example, we had chefs who used food to awaken sensory experiences and a mental health initiative that used creative design to reach out to adolescents. There was artists conducting workshops for children



Chowfla, Dheer Kaku, Mustafa Khanbai and Rajaram Naik. There were also many interactive projects including the Travelling Library by Bookworm trust, a special exhibit on mental health by Goa-based NGO Sangath in collaboration with Quicksand Design Studio, and a polaroid photo studio set up by photographer Bharat Sikka.

The main stage witnessed acoustic music and poetry acts by the likes of Rochelle D'Silva, Shyamant Behal, Govez, and late-night music ranged from Sufi music by HAWA, jazz and funk by the Coffee Cats, and a Fado concert by Sonia Shirsat. "We also created a lot of opportunities for local schools to interact with our programme — clay-making, theatre and printmaking workshops for students in the area," said Sitara and added, "Our focus was on deepening the engagement with the community with more sustained programmes through the year and through fostering cross-collaboration between our current participating artists."

Talk to her about Goa's growing popularity among artists from across the country, and she said, "The state's inherent natural beauty, culture and people — there is a particular energy here that attracts creativity. It seems to be a natural fit perhaps that's why more and more cultural events are being planned in Goa. Goan musicians have always been at the forefront and now Goan artists are more confidently stepping into these new festival spaces."

—IANS

Raza Foundation and Vadehra Art Gallery presents *Known Unknown*, an exhibition of contemporary artists curated by Amitava Das. The show opens with a book launch by Ambassador of France HE Emmanuel Lenain titled, *I Will Bring My Time*, containing English versions of love letters by Raza. **WHEN:** Till February 29 **TIME:** 11 am to 8 pm **WHERE:** Shridharani Gallery, Triveni Kala Sangam.

Bruno Art Group presents *Shining Brightly*, a group exhibition by Israeli and international artists, which celebrates 28 years of diplomatic relations between India and Israel. **WHEN:** February 23 to 29 **TIME:** 10 am to 8 pm **WHERE:** Visual Arts Gallery, India Habitat Centre.

India International Centre presents *Derakht-e-Doosti, The Shahnameh of Fredowsi & Iranian Identity*, that unveils a new edition of the *Shahnameh*, features miniature paintings, Iranian handicrafts and hosts programmes like live Persian calligraphy. **WHEN:** February 20 to 27 **TIME:** 11 am to 6.30 pm **WHERE:** Art Gallery, IIC Annex.

Nature Morte presents *Everyday Extraordinary*, a solo exhibition of works by artist Suhasini Kejrival, which features her errands of Chitpur of north Kolkata and Chor Bazaar in central Mumbai. **WHEN:** Till March 14 **TIME:** 10 am to 6 pm **WHERE:** A1, Neeti Bagh, Khel Gaon Marg.

Alturaash Art by Asif and Zoya Kamal, presents *Aarambh*, which will exhibit works by a group of emerging as well as established modern and contemporary artists from India. **WHEN:** Till February 29 **TIME:** 11 am to 7 pm **WHERE:** Alturaash Art Gallery, DLF South Court, Saket.

WATCH OUT

ITALY RECEIVE NEW SMS

Lazio topple Inter 2-1 to go 2nd behind Juventus

AFP ■ ROME

Lazio coach Simone Inzaghi gave warning his side are ready to fight for their first Serie A title since 2000 after moving into second in Serie A on Sunday, just one point off leaders Juventus after a come-from-behind 2-1 win over Inter Milan at Stadio Olimpico.

Juventus reclaimed pole position thanks to Paulo Dybala and Juan Cuadrado's goals as the Turin giants rediscovered their winning form 2-0 at home against Brescia.

Inter Milan dropped from top spot to third — three points behind the eight-time reigning champions — after falling to just their second defeat of the season.

"We need to stay humble and focused but I'm sure we will succeed. We have nothing to lose," said Inzaghi.

"We know that Juventus and Inter are two great teams and we will do everything to fight to the end, knowing that it will be very difficult."

In a fiery clash in the Stadio Olimpico defender Ashley Young broke through just before the break with his first Serie A goal for Inter Milan after his move from Manchester United.

The 34-year-old got his foot to tap-in off a rebound after Thomas Strakoska had cleared from former Lazio player Antonio Candreva.



Sergej Milinkovic-Savic celebrates with Lazio teammate Lucas Leiva after scoring his side's second goal. AP



Ciro Immobile scores Lazio's opener against Inter Milan from penalty spot at Stadio Olimpico. AP

A Stefan de Vrij foul on **CIRO IMMOBILE** allowed the Serie A top scorer to slot in his 26th goal in 24 games this season, five minutes after the break.

Sergej Milinkovic-Savic snatched the winner after 69 minutes amid confusion in front of goal.

"We gifted Lazio two goals," said Inter coach Antonio Conte as the northerners fell to their second defeat after Juventus in October.

Lazio extended their unbeaten run to 19 games as they target their second Scudetto, with a return to Champions League football on the cards for next season.

MERTENS LIFTS NAPOLI

In Sardinia, Napoli got back to winning ways with a Dries Mertens' 65th-minute goal sealing a 1-0 success over Cagliari.

The Belgian completed a give-and-go with Elseid Hysaj with the ball curling in with a deflection off the post.

It was the 32-year-old's 120th goal for Napoli, one short of Marek Hamsik's all-time record, and five ahead of club legend Diego Maradona.

"Dries is a phenomenon, a champion who makes difficult things seem simple," said coach Gennaro Gattuso. Gattuso's side overtake Cagliari, moving up to eighth.

Dortmund defence key against PSG



AFP ■ DORTMUND

Borussia Dortmund coach Lucien Favre says how his team defend against Paris Saint-Germain stars such as Neymar and Kylian Mbappe will be the deciding factor in today's Champions League clash.

Dortmund host PSG in the last 16, first leg at Signal Iduna Park.

"They're a dangerous team," Favre said in Dortmund on Monday.

"When you lose the ball, they move very fast up front. The key will be how we defend."

"It's important that we're very strong on winning the ball and then, when in possession, that we stay calm."

Under former Dortmund coach Thomas Tuchel, PSG are looking to break their last-16 jinx having failed to progress past the first knock-out stage for the last three seasons.

Dortmund are looking to emulate their run to the 2013 Champions League final and have some serious attacking prowess of their own.

New signing Erling Braut Haaland, 19, has scored nine goals in six

games and forged a successful partnership with England winger Jadon Sancho, also 19.

The teenagers are set to lead Dortmund's attack with Germany pair Marco Reus and Julian Brandt both out injured.

Dortmund's Belgian midfielder Axel Witsel has positive memories from his last game against Neymar — in the quarter-finals of the

Neymar returns from injury

AFP ■ DORTMUND

Neymar has been named in the Paris Saint-Germain squad for today's Champions League last-16 first leg at Borussia Dortmund, despite missing the French club's last four games through injury.

The world's most expensive player has been struggling with a

rib problem, but was expected to be fit in time for the game at Signal Iduna Park.

The Brazilian missed last season's surprise last-16 loss to Manchester United with a foot injury, while he also sat out the second leg of the defeat at the same stage of the competition by Real Madrid in 2018.



2018 World Cup.

"It's a good memory because we (Belgium) won (2-1), but tomorrow (Tuesday) will be different," he said.

"If he plays, we'll have to pay attention to him, but not only to him, because Paris has a lot of qualities in attack."

"We'll have to be very compact, we'll have to defend together as a team and be very strong."

Celta put brake on Real

AFP ■ MADRID

Real Madrid's winning streak ended when they conceded a late goal to draw 2-2 at home to Celta Vigo and finish the weekend with their lead over Barcelona down to one point.

Real manager Zinedine Zidane was philosophical.

"There's nothing to explain, it's just the way things are, it's football," he said.

"I'm not worried about it, but I'm disappointed, as always when you drop two points at home."

On Sunday they welcomed back Eden Hazard, who had been out since November. Coach Zinedine Zidane also recalled his other 100 million euro player Gareth Bale to complete an all-star attack with Karim Benzema.

Yet Celta leapt into the lead after seven minutes. A pass from Iago Aspas sent Fedor Smolov galloping clear up the middle and he shot low past Thibaut Courtois.

"There were mistakes, especially for the first goal," said Zidane.

"We were not well positioned, it happens, and it'll happen to us again."

Real levelled in the 52nd minute, Marcelo, not for the first time, found space on the left. His low cross deflected to Toni Kroos following the attack. The German drilled in the equaliser. It was the sixth straight season Kroos had scored against Celta.

In the 65th minute, goalkeeper Ruben



Sergio Ramos celebrates after scoring from spot. AP

Blanco pulled down the impressive Hazard. Ramos slammed the penalty into the bottom corner of the net.

However Celta responded by rediscovering their attacking nerve.

With four minutes left, a sharp pass from Denis Suarez, who had come on in the 71st minute, caught the Real back four rigid on the edge of their own area. Santi Mina, who had been on for just two minutes, raced onto the ball and drilled a shot past Courtois.

Boult back for India Tests

PTI ■ WELLINGTON

Fit-again senior pacer Trent Boult has been named in the 13-member New Zealand squad for the first Test against India starting at Basin Reserve on February 21.

According to a media release issued by New Zealand Cricket, the 6 feet 8 inch giant pacer Kyle Jamieson, who made his ODI debut against India in the recent series, has also earned his call up in the Test squad, which will have slow left-arm orthodox Ajaz Patel as the only spinner.

Boult's comeback is a big boost for the New Zealand side as he missed the entire limited overs leg due to a fractured right hand.

"It's terrific to have Trent back with us and we're looking forward to the energy and experience he adds to the group alongside his obvious class with the ball in hand," head coach and chief selector Gary Stead said.

Jamieson, on the other hand, has been included in a pre-series Test squad for the first time.

"We're excited to welcome back Ajaz (Patel) who has done a great job for us overseas and has a

proven domestic record in New Zealand conditions," the coach said.

Daryl Mitchell of Northern Districts is also in the squad as a batting all-rounder.

"Daryl showed his batting prowess in his Test debut against England in Hamilton and he naturally offers us great versatility with the different roles he can play," Stead said.

Tom Blundell will continue to open the batting along side Tom Latham following his breakthrough century in Melbourne.

The Wellington Test will also be Ross Taylor's 100th Test, joining ranks with his former teammates Brendon McCullum, Daniel Vettori and Stephen Fleming.

Taylor will become the first cricketer in the world to complete 100 games across three international formats.

"To play 100 Tests for your country is an incredible achievement and a testament to his work ethic and complete professionalism," Stead said of Taylor.

"We'll have to be very compact, we'll have to defend together as a team and be very strong."



It's going to be very big if we win T20 WC: Harman

PTI ■ SYDNEY

The void left by legends such as Mithali Raj and Jhulan Goswami is not easy to fill, India captain Harmanpreet Kaur conceded on Monday but also asserted that her young side has grown substantially to be a top contender for this month's women's T20 World Cup.

Mithali retired from T20 cricket last year while Goswami previously played in the format before the 2018 edition. The average age of India's squad in Australia is 22.8 with Harmanpreet being among the seasoned ones.

"We already miss the experience they share with us, but these young girls and showing their talent and ability," said the 29-year-old, while speaking at the captains' media day at



The captains of the 10 countries participating in the Women's T20 World Cup pose for a photo. AP

Taronga Zoo.

The ICC Women's T20 World Cup will open with a mouth-watering

clash between India and defending champions and hosts Australia in Adelaide on February 21.

"In the last two years...I've gone from being the youngest one to one of the oldest in the team," she said.

"They (her teammates) never show us that they're young, they can always do what we expect of them. The team is looking in really good shape and showing what they can do with extra responsibility," she added.

She is still not over the disappointment of missing the ODI world title in 2017 and Harmanpreet said the T20 World Cup trophy would go a long way in making up for that debacle.

"Our team is growing day by day, everyone is looking so positive," Harmanpreet said.

"It's going to be very big if we win, I was very surprised at all the reaction from 2017. My parents didn't tell me, they didn't want us to feel the pressure. If we win, it's going to be very big for

us. We will try to give our best."

Harmanpreet is well aware of what a long run in an ICC tournament can do for her country.

"Over the last two years, we have already had a few games as part of the Women's T20 Challenge and this year we are looking forward to more," said the aggressive batter, who became the first Indian cricketer to join an overseas league by signing up with Women's Big Bash League side Sydney Thunder in 2016.

"If we win the World Cup, there's no doubt things will change. That tournament would bring a lot of confidence to the girls."

"If we get a women's IPL that will be really good for us. If we win the World Cup, it's going to be very big for us as a team, so we will try to give our best," she said.

New selectors by end of NZ tour

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

BCCI's Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC) member Madan Lal says two new selectors will be in office by the time the national team's tour of New Zealand winds up early next month.

"We have received a list of 44 applicants and we should have the two selectors appointed by the end of New Zealand tour," Lal said, referring to the ongoing tour, which will end on March 5 after a two-Test series starting Friday.

The national selection panel also includes Devang Gandhi, Jatin Paranjpe and Sarandeep Singh, all of who have one more year left in their tenure.

"Out of the applications, how many applicants we will call for the interview is not yet decided," he added.

The applicants include former India pacers Ajit Agarkar and Venkatesh Prasad among others.

Faf quits as SA captain



Faf du Plessis & Mark Boucher. CSA/Twitter

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

Senior batsman Faf du Plessis on Monday stepped down as captain of South Africa's Test and T20 teams with immediate effect, citing "the

need to facilitate the emergence of next generation of leaders."

The 35-year-old Du Plessis, who stepped aside from the ODI captaincy to make way for Quinton de Kock during the recent series against England, said he took the decision to help South Africa start a new era.

"In a perfect world I would have loved to lead the team in the Tests for the rest of the season as well as the T20 World Cup," du Plessis said in a statement.

"But sometimes the most important attribute of a leader is to be selfless. I am healthy, fit, energised and motivated and certainly see myself playing an important role in the squad for as long as I continue putting in winning performances for the team," he added.

"As the team heads into a new direction with new leaders and a young crop of players, I feel it will be in the best interests of South African cricket to relinquish the captaincy in

all formats."

Du Plessis termed the decision as one of the toughest but said he remains fully committed to help de Kock in the transition phase.

"This was one of the toughest decisions to make, but I remain fully committed to supporting Quinton, Mark (Boucher) and my teammates as we continue to rebuild and re-align as a group," said the 35-year-old.

RABADA RETURN FOR T20+

Faf du Plessis and fast bowler Kagiso Rabada will return to the South African squad for a three-match T20I series against Australia, starting at the Wanderers on Friday.

Fast bowler Anrich Nortje, one of South Africa's successes in a losing Test series, has also been included in the squad.

Temba Bavuma's selection is dependent on a scan of his right hamstring after he was injured during final match against England.

SINGLES

KOHLI SLIPS TO 10TH IN T20 RANKINGS

DUBAI: India skipper Virat Kohli slipped to the 10th position but KL Rahul and Rohit Sharma remained static at the second and 11th place respectively in the latest ICC T20I rankings. Bating mainstay Kohli (673 points) dropped down as England captain Eoin Morgan (687), who scored 136 runs including two fifties against South Africa moved to the ninth place.

CASILLAS TO RUN FOR RFEF PRESIDENCY

MADRID: Spain's World Cup-winning captain Iker Casillas confirmed he will run for the presidency of Spanish Football Federation (RFEF). The date of the election has not yet been decided but Casillas said he has informed his current club Porto of his decision, with the 38-year-old now expected to retire from playing the game. "Yes, I will run for the presidency of the RFEF when the elections are called," Casillas wrote. "Together we will put our federation at the top of the best football in the world, the football of Spain."

HARSIMRAN INVITED TO NBA GLOBAL ACADEMY

NEW DELHI: India's Harsimran Kaur has been invited to participate in a multi-week training camp at The NBA Global Academy at Basketball Australia's Centre of Excellence in Canberra. The training camp started on Monday and will end on March 3. This will be her second stint at the NBA Global Academy after attending a camp from November 7 to 24 last year.

INDIA WILL HOST FIH JR MEN'S WC IN 2021

LAUSANNE: International Hockey Federation (FIH) on Monday announced India as the hosts for next year's junior men's World Cup. This is the second time that India will be hosting the prestigious tournament, having staged it in Lucknow in 2016, where the hosts lifted the coveted trophy. FIH said that the competition will be played towards the end of 2021 but exact venue and dates for the tournament will be announced at a later stage. The junior men's World Cup will see 16 teams compete for the title, out of which six will be from Europe, four from Asia, including hosts India, two from Africa, two from Oceania and two from Pan America.

JR WEIGHTLIFTERS WIN 5 SILVER, 6 BRONZE

NEW DELHI: India claimed five Silver and six Bronze medals at the ongoing 2020 Asian Youth & Junior Weightlifting C'ships in Tashkent. KVL Pavani Kumari (45kg) won Silver medals in both youth girls and junior women section, while Sidhanta Gogoi (61kg) claimed Silver in youth boys and junior men events after lifting a total of 145 and 269kgs respectively. Mukund Aher (49kg) then clinched a Silver in youth boys category with a lift of 189kgs. Harshada Goud (45kg) clinched two Bronze medals with a lift of 139kgs in youth girls and junior women events. Other lifters to win Bronze medals are Boni Manghikya (55kg), Ch Nirmala Devi (59kg), S Gurunaidu (49kg) and Golom Tinku (55kg).

TOKYO MARATHON CANCELLED FOR 38K RUNNERS

TOKYO: Organisers said on Monday they are cancelling the amateur portion of the Tokyo marathon, affecting around 38,000 runners, on fears about the spread of the new coronavirus in Japan. "We reached the conclusion that unfortunately it is difficult to organise the event... After several cases (of the virus) were confirmed in Tokyo," the Tokyo Marathon Foundation said. The decision will not affect elite runners, including elite wheelchair participants, the organisers said. But they only account for around 200 of the tens of thousands of people who had registered for the March 1 race.

MAREGA WALKS OFF AFTER MONKEY CHANTS

LISBON: Porto's Mali striker Moussa Marega walked off the pitch in disgust after being subjected to a torrent of monkey chants in a stormy Portuguese league game at Vitoria Guimaraes on Sunday. The 28-year-old had scored a 60th-minute winner for Porto against his former club which sparked the home fans to aim even more vitriol at the France-born player which had started as early as the pre-match warm-up. In the 71st minute, Marega signalled to the bench that he was walking off in protest even though teammates, Porto coach Sergio Conceicao and Vitoria players tried to get him to stay on the pitch. As he walked off, an angry and upset Marega gave a thumbs-down signal with both gloved hands to the home fans.

AGENCIES

PUNIA, VINESH LEAD INDIAN CHALLENGE

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Defending champion Bajrang Punia will look to retain his 65kg freestyle title while six-time medallist (3 Silver and Bronze each) Vinesh Phogat will aim to upgrade the 53kg Bronze she won in the 2019 edition at Xi'an, China to Gold when the Asian Wrestling Championship begins here at Indira Gandhi Arena today.

The six-day event at the KD Jadhav Wrestling Stadium will act as a platform for the Indian wrestlers to test their skills against the best in Asia ahead of the Tokyo Olympics.

The championship has been classified as a ranking tournament for the Tokyo game by the United World Wrestling.

Besides Punia and Vinesh, the 30-member India squad will also feature Deepak Punia, Ravi Kumar Dahiya and 2016 Rio Olympic Bronze medallist Shakshi Malik.

Anshu Malik, Ashu and Sonam Malik are the three youngsters who would look to make a mark in the tournament.

The tournament will be played in three categories — men's freestyle, Greco-Roman and women's wrestling. The first two days will see Greco-Roman competition, followed by women's wrestling (next two days) and men's freestyle (last two days).

There was initially uncertainty over the participation of four Pakistani wrestlers and two officials due to political tension but they have been cleared by the government to take part in the championship.

However, a 40-strong Chinese contingent will not be taking part in the championships as they have not been granted visas by the government due to the novel coronavirus outbreak there.

The Senior Asian Championship is returning to India after a gap of two years. India last hosted the championship in 2017. In the 2019 edition, India had won 16 medals, including the lone Gold from Punia in 65kg category.

World No 2 and India's leading medal hope, Punia said, "It is a great opportunity for all



Indian wrestler Bajrang Punia (red) in action during 2019 World Wrestling Championship match in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan

PTV/File Picture

Asian Wrestling C'ship
Live from 11:30am IST
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of us. We will be playing in front of our home fans. Though to many it might seem as pressure, but I believe it will work as an advantage and I am hopeful that large numbers will be coming in to fill the stands and support us." Dahiya, who has already qualified for the Olympics courtesy his Bronze medal-winning performance at the 2019 World Championships, echoed Bajrang's feelings.

"We are excited about the tournament. I am personally looking at ensuring that in my weight category I end up winning Gold. 57 kg is a tough weight category and has probably the stiffest competition but



losing is not an option when you are playing in your home ground," he said.

Fresh from her Gold medal at the Ranking Series in Italy, Vinesh is India's brightest medal prospect in the women's category.

"We have a strong contingent in both men and women's category. Asia has a very good set of wrestlers and being the Olympic year everyone will be looking to get as many wins as possible heading to the Tokyo Games. Personally, I am looking at this competition as a launchpad for my upcoming competitions," said Vinesh.

One of the dark horses of the tournament will be Sakshi (65 kg) who has not done anything of note last year. While she is not competing in her regular weight category, she could utilise the tournament to redeem herself.

Sakshi had won a Bronze in 62kg in the last edition. Apart from the Indians, there will be a number of top international wrestlers as well, like Kenichiro Fumita, Gold medallist at 2019 World Wrestling Championships, and Nurislam Sanayev from Kazakhstan in freestyle.

In Greco-Roman, wrestlers like South Korea's Ryu Han Su

Coronavirus impact: No entry for Chinese wrestlers in Delhi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Chinese wrestlers will not compete in the Asian Championships beginning here today as they have not been granted visas by the government due to the novel coronavirus outbreak there, a top official of the national federation said on Monday.

Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) assistant secretary Vinod Tomar said that the government has denied visas to the 40-strong Chinese contingent.

"We have got to know that the government has not granted visas to the Chinese contingent and so they are not taking part in the Championships," Tomar said.

"The world is grappling with the issue of coronavirus and so health of the athletes is the primary concern now. It is understandable why the government has not given visas to them," he added.

(a two-time world champion) and Uzbekistan's Elmurat Tasmuradov (a five-time Asian Championship Gold medallist) will be in action.

Aisuluu Tynybekova of

Asked what could be United World Wrestling's reaction on the denial of visas to the Chinese wrestlers, Tomar said, "We do not see any issues here, it is not something which happens in normal times. We are dealing with a grave health issue facing the world."

"It is not happening just in this championship, other countries have also done the same to Chinese athletes in other sporting events. Moreover, the UWW has not told us anything or given any direction about the Chinese wrestlers in the past week or so."

Talking about the granting of visas to the Pakistani wrestlers, Tomar said, "There could be issues had we not granted visas to the Pakistani wrestlers. So, we tried hard to get it done. But in case of Chinese wrestlers, it is for the health and safety of the participating athletes."

Kyrgyzstan, Gold medallist at 2019 world championships and a three-time Asian Championship winner, will be headlining the women's wrestling category.

Saina, Srikanth chase Olympic berth

PTI ■ BARCELONA

Seasoned Indian shuttlers Saina Nehwal and Kidambi Srikanth will look to keep their Olympic hopes alive when they compete at the \$170,000 Barcelona Spain Masters starting here today.

The Indian duo has been inconsistent in 2019 and didn't enjoy a good start to the new year.

While Saina has crossed the first round in only one of the three events in 2020, Srikanth has lost in the opening round in all three tournaments that he has played so far this year.

Saina and Srikanth are currently ranked 18th and 15th respectively, while being placed 22nd and 26th in the Race to Tokyo rankings, which takes into consideration only the points accumulated from the tournaments played in the last one year.

According to the BWF Olympic qualification rules, only two players from each singles category can qualify if their ranking is within the



top-16 by April end.

Among the Indians, world champion P V Sindhu and B Sai Praneeth and men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty have almost secured their berths for the Tokyo Games.

With the Olympic qualification cut-off date ending in April, there are only seven tournaments, including the Barcelona Spain Masters, left in the calendar and the Indian duo will have to produce consistent performances to earn a ticket to Tokyo.

London Bronze-medallist Saina, who is looking to make her fourth Olympics, will begin her campaign here against Germany's Yvonne Li.

Third seed Srikanth, on the other hand, will face fellow Indian Subhankar Dey, who notched up a morale-boosting win over world No 20 Indonesian Shesar Hiren Rhustavito in the Asia Team C'ships on Saturday.

Srikanth, who was also a part of the team in Manila, won two of his singles matches and lost one last week and he would hope to go deep in the draw in the tournament.

Sania returns to action in Dubai

PTI ■ DUBAI

Indian tennis star Sania Mirza will return to action at the ongoing Dubai Open on Wednesday after recovering from a calf injury which had cut short her campaign at the Australia Open in January.

The 33-year-old Indian will pair up with her French partner Caroline Garcia and they face Russia's Alla Kudryavtseva and Slovenia's Katarina Srebotnik in the opening round of the women's doubles event.

"Quitting off a grand slam tournament due to an injury is a sad experience. Especially, when you are back into the game after a long break. But thanks to my physio for making me fit for the tournament. I have started practicing and look forward to a great tournament," she said.

'United by Emotion': Tokyo 2020 unveils Games motto

AFP ■ TOKYO



is *Citius, Altius, Fortius* or *Faster, Higher, Stronger*, but each host city chooses its own motto to accompany that edition of the Games.

London's motto in 2012 was *Inspire a Generation*, whereas Athens in 2004 went for *Welcome Home* — a nod to the birthplace of the Games in Olympia.

Tokyo 2020 organisers on Monday rolled out the motto for this year's Olympics, *United by Emotion*, which they said reflected the "universal values" and "unifying power of sport". "Crowds of spectators who do not know each other prior to the Games will come together and learn that there is more that unites them than divides them," Tokyo 2020 said as it unveiled the motto.

The official Olympic motto

Less well-received was Sochi, which plumped for *Hot. Cool. Yours*, sparking derision in some quarters.

Tokyo said the motto would be beamed onto the Skytree tower in the Japanese capital to raise awareness as it will be seen for miles around.

The opening ceremony will be on July 24 and organisers have stressed there is no discussion about changing this date despite the coronavirus crisis hitting global transport.

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