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VIOLENCE ENDS, FEAR REIGNS

Few arson cases reported; 2 more bodies found in drain; Councillor booked for killing IB official

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The riot-hit areas of North-east Delhi, which had witnessed the dance of death in the last four days, seemed to be returning to normalcy on Thursday with heavy deployment of the Delhi Police and Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) on roads. Although no violence was reported on Wednesday and Thursday, there was palpable sense of fear in the areas.

The security forces conducted flag march in the areas that saw communal violence over the CAA.

Meanwhile, two more male bodies were found in a drain in Johri Enclave on Thursday. A few case arsons in Maujpur, Bhajanpura and other areas were reported in the wee hours of Thursday. Some vehicles shops were set on fire.

Meanwhile, the Delhi Police booked Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) councillor Tahir Hussain for alleged involvement in communal riots and the murder of an IB official, Ankit Sharma. Reaction quickly, the AAP on Thursday evening suspended its councillor from primary membership of party till completion of probe.

Hussain has been slapped with other charges under var-

ious sections of the IPC, a senior police official said. Police also took possession of all the incendiary materials found from his house and sealed the house. His other premises, including the office and shop, were also sealed, they said.

Police have received the autopsy of the slain Intelligence Bureau staffer whose body was fished out from Chand Bagh drain flowing near the house of Hussain. Ankit was repeatedly stabbed over hours and there was not even a single part of his body that was left without stab injuries, said sources, adding that his intestines were ripped apart and he had suffered unimaginable brutality.

Earlier, in Yamuna Vihar, three to four people were seen burning vehicles on Thursday around 4 am. A few kilometres away, a charred board of a private school in Brijpuri read "Welcome to a very happy school." The 52-year-old Arun Modern Senior Secondary School looks no less than a cemetery, said an official, looking around at the damage which he estimated to be over ₹70 lakh.

Most shops were closed with their shutters bearing marks of the violence that it had witnessed over the last few days and people chose to stay indoors. Some of the residents

in Chand Bagh and Jaffrabad were seen on Thursday cleaning the roads which were littered with stones and sticks.

On Thursday, the Delhi Police transferred the riots probe to the Crime Branch and formed two Special Investigation Teams (SITs). "The situation in the North-east is normal right now and no untoward incident has been reported today. Sufficient force has been deployed at every area and senior officers are monitoring the situation. The numbers of distress call have been reduced. We have received call on the two help lines which we released yesterday," said Mandeep Singh Randhawa, the Additional Commissioner of Police, Crime.

"A total of 48 First Information Reports (FIRs) have been registered for arson, looting and the deaths. Police have evidence and registering FIRs. Police conducted around 350 meetings with Aman Committee in Delhi specifically in North-east district," said Randhawa. "The investigation of the cases is going on and police have received evidence. Police teams are also conducting raids in different areas to nab the miscreants involved in arson and rioting," Randhawa further said.

Continued on Page 4



A Delhi Police official stands guard on a street vandalised in Tuesday's communal violence in North-east Delhi on Thursday

38 deaths so far, 250 severely injured Scene in hospitals distressing, many wait for post-mortem

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The death toll in the North-east Delhi communal riots reached 38 on Thursday with over 250 severely injured receiving treatment, said senior officials.

"Over 215 riot victims have been brought to our hospital and treated since February 24. However, at present only 51 patients are admitted. The condition of almost all patients, except one, is stable," said Sunil Kumar, GTB Hospital Medical Superintendent.

People injured over anti-CAA violence are being treated in three hospitals — GTB, LNJP, and Jag Pravesh Chand hospital. According to hospital authorities, 34 deaths have

been reported from GTB, and three from LNJP, and one from Jag Pravesh Chand hospital.

GTB Hospital authorities said most of the people were brought with very serious

injuries. "At least 25 patients were brought dead and nine succumbed to injuries. Many of them were critically injured with their skulls smashed and beaten "brutally" by kind of an iron rod," a senior doctor of GTB hospital said.

Family members were seen running from pillar to post, enquiring about their loved ones from hospital authorities. Some of them claimed that neither police nor the hospital authorities are telling them exactly when the post-mortem will be conducted.

Kekhsha Begum, a resident of Maujpur, said her husband got injured when he was coming back to home after work.

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Malika, wife of Musharraf (33), who was killed during communal violence in North-east Delhi wailed over the loss of her husband outside the mortuary of GTB hospital in New Delhi on Thursday

Slugfest over judge's transfer

Opp cries foul; Govt says rule followed after SC Collegium recommended transfer on Feb 12

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Government's decision to shift Delhi High Court judge Justice S Muralidhar, hours after he slammed the police for not registering a case against three BJP leaders for their alleged hate speeches, has triggered a major row.

While the Congress said the "midnight" notification was "shameful", the Centre accused the Opposition party of politicising a "routine" shift on the February 12 recom-



Ranjit Vasantrao More of the Bombay High Court and Justice Ravi Vijay Kumar Malimath of the Karnataka High Court. Justice Muralidhar was transferred to the Punjab & Haryana High Court.

The notifications said President Ram Nath Kovind approved the transfers after consulting the Chief Justice of India.

The Supreme Court Collegium, in a meeting on February 12, had recommended transfer of Justice Muralidhar to Punjab and Haryana High Court.

Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said Justice Muralidhar was transferred on the recommendation of the Supreme Court Collegium and accused the Opposition party of politicising a routine transfer.

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Police inaction reminiscent of 1984: SAD MP Naresh Gujral

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Chiromani Akali Dal MP Naresh Gujral said on Thursday that the Delhi Police's "inaction" towards protecting the lives and properties of minorities in the national Capital is "reminiscent" of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots.

The lawmaker, whose party is a BJP ally, said no one wants a repeat of what happened in 1984. Speaking to PTI after shooting off a letter to Delhi Police chief Amulya Patnaik, Gujral, the son of former Prime Minister I.K. Gujral, said that minorities in certain parts of Delhi are "frightened".

Continued on Page 4

Azam, kin shifted to Sitapur jail

PTI ■ SITAPUR

A day after surrendering at a Rampur court and being remanded in judicial custody there, SP MP Azam Khan, his wife and son were on Thursday shifted to Sitapur jail, where party chief Akhilesh Yadav met them. After meeting Khan, Yadav said the Smajwadi party MP has been targeted by the BJP under a "political conspiracy".

"I met Azam sahab. His wife is not well and son also has injury in his hand. I hope the jail administration will provide them due facilities. After the BJP came to power, Azam Khan was targeted. It was a political conspiracy due to which he was sent to jail. The court will help him," he said.

Akhilesh was talking to reporters after meeting Azam Khan, his legislator-wife Tazeen Fatma and MLA-son Abdullah Azam, who were shifted to the district jail here from Rampur on early Thursday morning.

"The three reached Sitapur Jail on Thursday morning. They are expected to be here till March 2," a jail official said.

Asked about the number of cases lodged against him, Khan said, "The entire country knows what is happening to me and my family." On being shifted to Sitapur Jail, he said it was the government's decision.

Khan and his family members surrendered before a Rampur court on Wednesday and were sent to judicial custody till March 2 for their alleged role in securing a fake birth certificate of their former MLA son Abdullah.

The case relates to two birth certificates of Abdullah Azam, who allegedly gave a wrong date of birth while filing his nomination papers for the UP assembly elections in 2017.

Abdullah's election was set aside by the Allahabad High Court last December.

A Rampur BJP leader, Akash Saxena, had lodged an FIR at Ganj police station on January 3, 2019, alleging fraud related to Abdullah Azam's two birth certificates. In April, police filed the charge sheet in court. In one birth certificate, issued by the Rampur municipality, Abdullah's birth date was mentioned as January 1, 1993. The other certificate said he was born in Lucknow on September 30, 1990, according to the charge against him.

Azam's son disqualified from UP Assembly

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In another setback to Samajwadi Party leader Azam Khan family, presently lodged in jail, Uttar Pradesh Assembly on Thursday issued orders for disqualifying his son Abdullah Azam from Suar assembly seat in Rampur district.

The notification was issued by UP Assembly Secretariat stating that on December 16, 2019, the Allahabad High Court, in a case of fake birth certificate of Abdullah Azam, had disqualified the SP member from Suar assembly seat.

The notification said that as the Supreme Court has not stayed the verdict of the HC, the Suar seat has been declared vacant from December 16, 2019. This is the second assembly seat this month to be declared vacant after Bangarmau seat, following conviction of BJP MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar, who was also disqualified. Presently, Abdullah Azam is lodged in Sitapur District Jail.



CM Adityanath Yogi and state BJP president Swatantra Dev Singh offering prayers at the renovated Shri Koneshwar Mahadev Temple in Chowk on Thursday

PM to lay foundation stone of Bundelkhand E-way on Sat

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will on Saturday lay the foundation stone for the 296-km-long Bundelkhand Expressway in Uttar Pradesh's Chitrakoot.

The expressway will be supplementing the nodes of the Uttar Pradesh Defence Industrial Corridor announced by the government in February 2018, a statement from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) maintained on Thursday.

The Uttar Pradesh Government is constructing the Bundelkhand Expressway, which will pass through Chitrakoot, Banda, Hamirpur and Jalaun districts.

The expressway will link the Bundelkhand area to the national capital through the Agra-Lucknow Expressway and the Yamuna Expressway.

The prime minister will also be launching 10,000 farmers' producer organisations all over the country at Chitrakoot on that day.



Nearly 86 per cent of farmers are small and marginal with average land holdings in the country being less than 1.1 hectare. These small, marginal and landless farmers face tremendous challenges during agriculture production phase such as for access to technolo-

gy, quality seed, fertilisers and pesticides, including requisite finances. They also face tremendous challenges in marketing their produce due to lack of economic strength, the statement pointed out. FPOs (Farmer Producer Organisations) help in collectivisation of such farmers in order to give them the collective strength to deal with such issues.

Members of the FPO will manage their activities together in the organisation to get better access to technology, input, finance and market for faster enhancement of their income.

"Though the report of 'Doubling of Farmer's Income' recommended formation of 7,000 FPOs by 2022 towards convergence of efforts for doubling farmers' income, the cen-

tral government announced the creation of 10,000 new FPOs to ensure economies of scale for farmers over the next five years," it said.

In Allahabad, Modi will be distributing assistive aids and devices to senior citizens, under the Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana, and people with disabilities, under the ADIP scheme, at a mega distribution camp.

This is the biggest ever distribution camp being held in the country in terms of the number of beneficiaries covered, number of appliances distributed and value of aids and appliances distributed, the statement said. At the camp, over 56,000 assistive aids and devices of different types will be distributed free of cost to more than 26,000 of beneficiaries. The cost of the aids and devices is over ₹19 crore, it said.

STF busts gang of paper solvers; three held

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The sleuths of Special Task Force (STF) claimed to have busted a gang of solvers with the arrest of three members from Kaushambhi on Wednesday. The sleuths also recovered 31 solved copies along with other items. A case was registered and investigations were on.

Giving details, IG (STF) Amitabh Yash said that team members were trailing some unscrupulous elements trying to facilitate cheating or leak of papers in the ongoing Board exams. "On Wednesday, the STF sleuths were tipped off about some gang members active in Pipri locality of

Kaushambhi and that they were solving questions outside a centre and later submitting the same to invigilators. An STF team was immediately rushed to the spot and after the exam of English (Class XII) ended on Wednesday evening, three youths were intercepted," the IG said.

Yash said that the team members recovered 31 solved copies besides mobile phones, cash and other items which were used by the accused to get the papers solved and later submit them at the centre. "The gang charged hefty sums to provide solvers outside the centres" he said.

The accused were identified as Yuvraj Singh Yadav, Rajan Babu Singh of Pipri in Kaushambhi and Pradeep Kumar aka Pappu Pal of Charwa in Kaushambhi. They were taken to a police station where a case was registered and they were later sent to jail by a court.

Anti-CAA protests rock UP Assembly

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The ongoing protests against Citizenship (Amendment) Act rocked the Assembly on Thursday with Parliamentary Affairs Minister Suresh Khanna accusing opposition parties of creating anarchy by supporting the protesters across the state.

"Opposition parties like SP, BSP and Congress are provoking people by spreading lies on the CAA. They have forced people to sit on dharna on an allotment that if they come to power, the protesters will be given pensions," Khanna said during a debate on budget discussion on Thursday.

The minister had a heated exchange of words with Leader of Opposition Ram Govind Chaudhary, which led to pandemonium as members of opposition parties raised anti-government slogans and protested Khanna's statement. The Parliamentary Affairs

Minister made the allegations after Chaudhary said that Khanna had ignored questions raised by him on his budget speech. Khanna, who is also Finance Minister, had earlier finished his reply to the debate on the 2020-2021 budget.

With Chaudhary accusing Khanna of ignoring his question, the minister took a dig at him over his earlier statement outside the House that those sitting on anti-CAA dharna would be given pension.

This triggered a heated exchange between Khanna and Chaudhary with the latter reiterating that pension is given to patriots. "How can you tell people sitting on dharna that they would get pension," Khanna asked.

The Leader of Opposition reacted by saying that those struggling for restoration of democracy are given pension. "We are also getting it as Loktantra Senanis" (those arrested during emergency) and people sitting on anti-CAA dharna are fighting to

Sparks fly over question benefits given to divyangs

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh Assembly on Thursday witnessed a heated debate between Opposition and Treasury benches when a former state minister questioned the BJP government on the benefits given to differently-abled persons or 'divyangs' in the state.

Former UP minister Om Prakash Rajbhar, who was sacked by the Yogi government after the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, alleged that the government was not providing motorised tricycle to 'divyangs', as promised by the Chief Minister.

To this, Divyang Minister Anil Rajbhar claimed that the government had hiked the pension from Rs 300 to Rs 500 per month for over one million 'divyangs' residing in the state and it was the highest in the country.

The minister also contested the charges of his predecessor, saying that the state government was going to hold a programme at Prayagraj on February 29, where over 26,000 'divyangs' would be provided equipment by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

However, noisy scenes were witnessed when Om Prakash Rajbhar shouted, 'Nakkalo se savdhan', (beware of copycats), which was countered by the Treasury bench.

The minister also rejected the demand of members to hike the pension of 'divyangs' to Rs 1,000 per month.

According to Indian citizenship. "This is nothing but pursuing the politics of dividing the society on Hindu-Muslim lines," the SP leader said.

Chaudhary questioned as to why Muslims were kept out of the clause of giving special benefits while

Yogi blames previous government for dip in per capita income

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Continuing his tirade against Opposition parties, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath blamed the previous dispensation for a dip in per capita income in the state which was being worked on by his government for improvement.

Earlier on Wednesday, Yogi had fired a salvo at opposition parties claiming how his government changed the atmosphere in the state by pushing the development agenda on priority and improving law and order situation.

Addressing the Legislative Council on Thursday, the Chief Minister said that a district-wise look at per capita income indicated that it was Rs 6 lakh in Noida and Rs 3,200 in Balrampur.

"Balrampur, Chitrakoot and Chandauli could also have been developed like Noida, but the previous regimes did not try to strike a balance which is the cause of this disparity. The per capita income in the state is almost half the national average. But when our government completes its term in 2022, it will be touching the national average," Yogi asserted.

The BJP government in UP presented a budget of Rs 5,12,860.72 crore for 2020-21 fiscal last week. Yogi also



accused previous regimes of discrimination in extending benefits of development schemes.

"The Central government has selected 112 aspirational districts across the country, of which eight are in Uttar Pradesh. These districts are near the national average on development front," Yogi said.

Detailing works done by his government, the Chief Minister said that a Rs 15,000-crore scheme to provide potable water in every household of Bundelkhand was on the cards. "Medical colleges are

being set up in 16 districts including Amethi. When BJP came to power in the state, there were 16,264 bank branches which has now gone up to 18,869. Earlier there were only 8.62 crore bank account holders in the state which has now spiked to 16.36 crore," he said.

Earlier on Thursday morning, as the House assembled, Congress Legislative Party leader in the Council, Deepak Singh raised the issue of cow deaths, asking that when the government was so concerned, then how was the death rate of

bovines increasing. Singh also asked whether Rs 30 per day to feed cows lodged in 'gaushalas' (cow shelters) was enough to feed the animals.

Samajwadi Party and other opposition party members also supported the Congress leader questioning the government over rise in deaths of cows.

Animal Husbandry Minister Laxmi Narain Chaudhary tried to address the issue, but the Congress members were unsatisfied with his clarification and staged a walk-out.

Meanwhile, BJP member in the Council Vijay Bhadur Pathak also raised the issue of rampant corruption in Azamgarh Development Authority (ADA). Highlighting staff crunch in ADA, Pathak said that the entire district was witnessing illegal construction which was creating a big problem for free flow of traffic. He even alleged that government departments were also engaged in illegal construction. Pathak said that the common man was running from pillar to post to get a map of their houses cleared from ADA. The MLC requested his own government to immediately post more staff in ADA and take necessary action so that illegal constructions were stopped and people did not face traffic chaos.

Maya demands SC-supervised probe into Delhi violence

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati on Thursday demanded a Supreme Court-monitored probe into the communal violence in parts of Northeast Delhi.

She even said that leaders should stop playing dirty politics and instead the Centre and AAP government in Delhi should pitch in together to compensate people for the losses suffered in riots. She said that she would be writing to the President soon in this regard.

The former UP Chief Minister said that police should be given a free hand, without any political interference, to control law and order in the National Capital.

In a statement issued on Thursday, Mayawati said that the recent violence in Northeast Delhi was much like the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. "It is very sad and condemnable," she said.

The BSP chief alleged that under the garb of riots, cheap politics was being played by the parties which should come to an end immediately.

Mayawati said that political parties, including the BJP, must take stern action against its leaders for inflammatory statements.

On Sunday, Delhi was gripped by communal riots in the northeast areas over the Citizenship Amendment Act that claimed over 34 lives and left 200 injured, a majority being the men in uniform.

Atmosphere lucrative for investments in UP: Mahana

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh government informed the Assembly on Thursday that over 3,46,995 small, micro, cottage and medium industrial units have been set up in the state since 2017 while 90 projects out of the total 1,045 MoUs signed during UP Investors Summit have started commercial production by January, 2020.

Claiming that industrial investment atmosphere in the state has turned lucrative for investors, Industrial Development Minister Satish Mahana also announced that the first Global Investors Summit will be held in Lucknow in October/November.

Replying to a series of questions in the Assembly, Mahana said that the summit will focus on investments agreed upon during DefExpo-2020 and to highlight the Defence Corridor manufacturing units.

Among the small and medium industrial units set up in UP, 1,15,785 units with an investment of Rs 14,627.91 crore were in 2017-18, 1,21,654 units with investment of Rs 16,493.09 crore in 2018-19 and 1,09,556 units (till December) in 2019-20. The minister further said that of the total 1,045 MoUs signed during UP Investors Summit in 2018, foundation work of 371 projects has been done in which 90 have started commercial production and work in the rest is underway.

"Uttar Pradesh has emerged as the most attractive destination for industries. The government is acting as a facilitator and providing all facilities to the investors," Mahana said.

When some BJP members asked about investments made during the previous Samajwadi Party regime, Mahana said that a total of 72 MoUs or Intent for Cooperation were signed between 2014 and 2016 — 50 were signed in Mumbai and 22 in Delhi.

Similarly, in 2014-15, a total of 53,242 industrial units were set up in the state with a total investment of Rs 1,267.15 crore and 72,682 units were set up with an investment of Rs 7,830.71 crore in 2015-16.

GRADUATE CONSTITUENCY ELECTIONS

Congress set to field former AAP leader from Varanasi



UP Congress chief Ajay Kumar Lallu giving away joining certificate to Sanjeev Kumar Singh in Lucknow on Thursday

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Failing to find candidates for election to Graduate and Teachers' Constituency for the Legislative Council, UP Congress chief Ajay Kumar Lallu is set to have 'imported' Aam Aadmi Party leader Sanjeev Kumar Singh to contest the poll.

Singh, who joined the party at UPCC headquarters at Mall Avenue in Lucknow on Thursday, is set to be fielded from the Graduate constituency of Varanasi. Interestingly, Brijesh Singh, who is Congress candidate from Lucknow Graduate constituency, also joined the Congress recently and was given a ticket.

Former Congress MP from Varanasi Rajesh Mishra, who facilitated the entry of Sanjeev Singh, said that with the coming of AAP leader, the party would get a new boost in the eastern UP region.

Congress sources, however, admitted that the Congress was hav-

ing difficulty in finding a candidate to field from Varanasi and hence Mishra brought Singh, projecting him as the most potential candidate.

However, the Congress is yet to make Singh's candidature from Varanasi as official.

Welcoming Sanjeev Singh into the Congress, Lallu said that people were fed up with the present BJP regimes at the Centre and UP over lawlessness, rising prices, unemployment etc.

"With young leaders like Sanjeev Singh joining the Congress, the party will fight with more vigour and not just expose the government but also ensure that people get justice by uprooting the present government," Lallu said.

Formerly a student leader of Allahabad University, Sanjeev Singh was the co-ordinator of AAP in Purvanchal region and played a key role in Arvind Kejriwal's Lok Sabha poll campaign in Varanasi, which he lost to Narendra Modi in 2014.

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NOTICE

I, Army No. JC-701204 L, Rank-Sub, Narendra Kumar Singh Unit 1TT Wing AMC Centre & College cantt. Lucknow. In my service record my son's name mentioned as Krishan Kumar I have changed his name to Krishna Kumar Singh also mentioned in Adhar Card & Pan Card, his name should be corrected in service records.

NOTICE

I, Army No. 15425561 A, Rank-Sep/AA, Murugan P Unit 1TT Wing AMC Centre & College cantt. Lucknow. In my service record my son's name mentioned as Krishore and Ritheesh I have changed their names to Krishore M and Ritheesh M also mentioned in Adhar Card & Pan Card, their names should be corrected in service records.

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I, Army No. 15414834 X, Rank-Hav, Krishna Sambari Unit 1TT Wing AMC Centre & College cantt., Lucknow. In my service record my wife name mentioned as Rapulu Priyanka I have changed her name to Sambari Priyanka also mentioned in Adhar Card & Pan Card, her name should be corrected in service records.

NOTICE

I have lost my original allotment letter & plot buyer agreement in respect of plot no. 0178, Sector A, Pocket-1, Sushant Golf City, Lucknow, measuring 242 Sqm. in the name of Major Gen (Retd.) Brijendra Cornelius. The same may be not missed on account of Bank Loan purpose in future. Sheeba Rahman, Flat No. 303, Grandeur Apt. 5 Butler Road, Dalibagh, Lucknow.

NOTICE

I, HARISH KUMAR KHESHWANI holding Indian Passport No.: M7254455 issued at DUBAI on 31/05/2015, Permanent Resident of 267 A1 TIWARI PUR JK COLONY JAJMAU DISTT KANPUR and presently Resident of DUBAI UAE do hereby change my name from HARISH KUMAR KHESHWANI to HARISH (GIVEN NAME) KHESKANI (SURNAME) with immediate effect.

NOTICE

It is inform to that in my all the documents my name is wrongly mentioned as Rukaiya Khatoon while my correct name is Rukaiya Rana. In Future I will be known as my correct name Rukaiya Rana for all future purpose. R/o Rukaiya Rana W/o Shvayuddin Syed 17- Firoz Gandhi Colony New See-E Aliganj Lucknow-UP

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DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION, RUDRAPRAYAG
CORRIGENDUM
Please refer to the Tender Notice No-1793 Dated 18/02/2020 for "Disposal (Collection, Segregation and Composting) of Mule Excrete" ON SHRI KEDARNATH CHARDHAM YATRA ROUTE of tender documents is here by amended to the following extent:-
Financial Bid Opening Date and Time: - 11 March 2020, 04:00 PM
Pre Bid Meeting of the Said Tender: - 02 March 2020, 03:00 PM
All other terms and conditions of the tender shall remain unchanged. Further details can be downloaded from our website https://rudraprayag.gov.in/. The duly sealed offer/tender addressed to the, District Magistrate, Rudraprayag must reach this office at Rudraprayag on or before 11 March 2020 up to 12 noon.
No. 1869 District Magistrate Rudraprayag.
Date:- 26.02.2020

Modern Coach Factory, Raebareilly
On behalf of the President of India, Dy. Chief Mechanical Engineer (Fur. Prog., Modern Coach Factory, Raebareilly is inviting open E-Tender (E-Tender Notice No.-M/200/ In House Mfg. Seat & Berth / LWSCN/2019-20, Date:-24.02.2020) based on single packet system online through Indian Railway portal www.ireps.gov.in for following work:-
Description of Work Approx. Value (Rs.) EMD (Rs.)
Work of complete in house manufacturing of Seat & Berth set for LWSCN coaches as per scope of work as per Drg./Spec. no. ML561001 alt.-A with free supply of Rexine to RDSO Spec. No. RDSO/2008/CG-07 Rev. Nil with amendment slip No. 04 and cushioning material to RDSO Spec. No. C-K607 Rev.-02 by MCF.
5,76,99,052.32 4,38,500.00
Cost of Tender document-Rs. 10,000.00
Quantity of work- 100 coach sets.
Work completion period- 03 Months or earlier.
E-Tender submitted through online up to 11:00 hrs. on 23.03.2020. Manual offer will be not considered.
E-Tender shall be opened on 23.03.2020 at 11:30 hrs. through online on http://www.ireps.gov.in
Detailed Tender E-Notice and Terms & conditions are available at Indian Railway IREPS website- http://www.ireps.gov.in. Dy. Chief Mech. Engr./Furnishing Progress
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

भारतीय खाद्य निगम FOOD CORPORATION OF INDIA
Commercial Section REGIONAL OFFICE U.P. T.C./3V, Vibhuti Khand, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow- 226 010 (U.P.)
Phone No. - 0522-4914232, 4914229, Fax: 0522-4914232, 4914264
Website: www.fci.gov.in E-mail: agmcommlup.fci@nic.in, agmcrup.fci@nic.in
NOTICE INVITING FINANCIAL BIDS FOR SALE OF WHEAT UNDER OMSS (D)
Food Corporation of India invites bids from empanelled traders/bulk consumers for sale of Wheat under OMSS (D) lying at various Depot of FCI/SWS/CWC under FCI districts, of UP Region, on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS". The empanelled parties may participate in the tender through E-auction by using login-id and password provided to them by M/s njunction services Ltd.
Schedule of Tenders through E- auction:-
Start Date for deposit of EMD Last Date for depositing of EMD Online Bidding Schedule
06.03.2020 10.03.2020 11.03.2020 from 11.00 AM to 2.00 PM
13.03.2020 17.03.2020 18.03.2020 from 11.00 AM to 2.00 PM
20.03.2020 24.03.2020 25.03.2020 from 11.00 AM to 2.00 PM
26.03.2020 30.03.2020 31.03.2020 from 11.00 AM to 2.00 PM
The Depot-wise offered quantity of wheat as well as MTF is available at http://www.fci.gov.in and http://www.valejunction.in/fci. Empanelment of bulk consumers and traders is a continuous process. Interested bidders may contact help desk provided by M/s njunction on Toll Free No.18001027136 for empanelment and bidding through e-auction. General Manager (Region)

DELHI JAL BOARD GOVT OF NCT OF DELHI OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (EAST) I M. 16 MAYUR VIHAR PKT E PHASE II NEW DELHI 110091
PRESS NOTICE TENDER NIT NO.64 /East-I/ (2019-20)
S. No. Name of Work Estimated Contract Value (ECV)/Amount put to tender Earnest Money/ (EMD) Tender Fees Date of Release of tender in E- Procurement Solution & Tender ID No. Last Date / Time of receipt of tender E- Procurement Solution
1. Replacement of old deep and damaged PSC distribution main from 23 Block BPS to 23 Block Chowk Trilokpur in AC-55 East-I Rs. 25,93,798.00/- Rs. 51,900.00/- 500.00 25.02.2020 2020_DUB_18 8699_7 16.03.2020 At 03:15 PM
Further details in this regard can be seen at (http://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in)
ISSUED BY P.R.O. (WATER) Sd/- EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (EAST-I) Advt. No. J.S.V. 862/2019-2020

CENTRAL ORGANISATION FOR RAILWAY ELECTRIFICATION
1, Nawab Yusuf Road, Civil Lines, Prayagraj-211001
Tender No: ELCORE-OHE-EPC-8 E-Tender Notice Closing Date/Time: 16.06.2020 11.00
CAO/RE acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders against Tender No. ELCORE-OHE-EPC-8 Closing Date/Time 16.06.2020 11:00 Hrs. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids upto closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through online payment modes available on IREPS portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft, Banker's cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed.
1. NIT HEADER
Name of Work EPC TENDER: Request for Proposal for Electrification of Railway Lines of the various sections of Northern Railway Total RKM/TKM 880.04/1024.30 On Engineering, Procurement & Construction (EPC) Mode, (Bid/Package No. EPC-08).
Bidding Type Normal Tender
Tender Type Open Bidding System Two Packet System
Tender Closing Date Time 16.06.2020 11.00 Date Time of Uploading Tender 25.02.2020 19.59
Pre-Bid Required Yes Pre-Bid Query Date Time 19.03.2020 11.00
Advertised Value (₹) 5775896392.73 Tendering Section OHE
Bidding Style Single Rate for Tender Bidding Unit Rs.
Earnest Money (₹) 20000000.00 Validity of Offer (Days) 180
Tender Doc. Cost (₹) 0.00 Period of Completion 900 Days
Contract Type Works Contract Category Expenditure
Bidding Start Date 02.06.2020 Are Joint Venture (JV) firms allowed to bid Yes
Ranking Order For Bids Lowest to Highest Expenditure Type Capital (Works)
PR/249/20 (FA) "Serving Customers with a Smile" website: www.ireps.gov.in

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Konेशwar Mahadev temple finds mention in 'Puranas'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that a person's thought is the mirror of his or her personality and good thinking makes a person great while bad thinking causes downfall.

"While a person of positive thinking can get the respect of others by doing public welfare, negative thinking becomes a reason for chaos in society. This analysis can be found in our religious texts as well," the CM said while speaking at the inauguration of the renovated Shri Konेशwar Mahadev Temple in Chowk on Thursday.

The Chief Minister said that this temple finds a mention in the 'Puranas'. "It also has a connection with Laxman and therefore, the importance of this temple is from 'Treta Yug' he added.

The Chief Minister congratulated Gopalji Tandon (Ashutosh Tandon) and his entire team for giving a grand and new design to mythological tradition.

The Chief Minister said that along with the construction of the temple, its cleanliness is also necessary. "It has been taken care of at this temple, and there should be simi-



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath with Madhya Pradesh Governor Lalji Tandon at the inauguration of the renovated Shri Konेशwar Mahadev Temple in Chowk on Thursday

lar arrangement at other religious places," he said.

"Arrangements have also been made for proper disposal and processing of worship material, including flowers. Following this system, urban life can be improved," the CM said. He added that faith does

not care about terrorism. "People go on Amarnath Yatra irrespective of terror attacks. During 'Savan', when lakhs of Shiva devotees come out chanting 'Bam-Bam Bhole', terrorism disappears. Religion is nothing but duty, which is for the interest of the country and

society. If the country remains safe and prosperous, we also feel protected," he said.

Madhya Pradesh Governor Lalji Tandon, BJP state president Swatantra Dev Singh, minister Ashutosh Tandon and others were present in the programme.

Akhilesh backs Azam, kin; alleges political vendetta

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Throwing his weight behind senior leader and party MP from Rampur Azam Khan, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav met him, his legislator wife Tazeen Fatma and former MLA son Abdullah Azam at Sitapur District Jail on Thursday. Nine SP leaders, along with Akhilesh, went to the jail to meet the Khan clan.

After the meeting, Akhilesh told reporters outside the jail that a political conspiracy was hatched to implicate the SP leader. "We are sure that Khan and his family would get justice from the court. The entire thing is all about political vendetta and cases have been lodged over rivalry. Such type of political vendetta is not justified," he said.

When asked if Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was responsible for the Khans being in jail, the SP chief said, "There are several people behind the entire conspiracy."

Akhilesh also criticised Yogi Adityanath for his language against opposition members in the Assembly. "A CM should use respectful language in public," he said.

Earlier, the SP chief was scheduled to reach Rampur

and even booked a private aircraft for going to Bareilly and then head to Rampur by car to meet the incarcerated Khan, but on being informed that Khan had been transferred to Sitapur jail early Thursday morning, he cancelled his visit and instead went to Sitapur to meet the SP leader.

Upon reaching Sitapur District Jail from Rampur early Thursday morning, Khan told reporters that everyone in the country knew what was happening. "There is nothing secret about how we have been implicated in the case," he said.

Khan, along with his wife and son, had surrendered before a Rampur court on Wednesday and were sent to judicial custody till March 2. But after Rampur police expressed apprehension over deterioration of law and order situation due to the SP leaders being jailed, they were shifted to Sitapur District Jail.

Jail Superintendent DC Mishra told reporters that the SP MP and his son Abdullah had been provided special security while Tazeen Fatma would be kept in women's barrack. The case in which the Khans have been sent to jail pertains to two birth certifi-

cates of Abdullah Azam, who allegedly gave wrong date of birth while filing his nomination papers for Assembly elections in 2017. His election was set aside by the Allahabad High Court last December. He later approached the Supreme Court, which is still hearing the case.

A BJP leader from Rampur, Akash Saxena had lodged an FIR alleging fraud related to Abdullah Azam's two birth certificates. In April, the police filed a charge sheet in court maintaining that Abdullah Azam also had two passports and two PAN cards. In one birth certificate, issued by Rampur Municipality, Abdullah's birth date was mentioned as January 1, 1993 while another certificate said that he was born in Lucknow on September 30, 1990. A case was also registered against Azam Khan and his wife as they had submitted an affidavit buttressing their son's second birth certificate.

Khan represents Rampur in Lok Sabha and his wife is an MLA from Rampur Assembly seat. Their son Abdullah won from Suar Assembly segment in 2017 but his election was set aside by Allahabad High Court.

Leopard remains elusive, Karhara villagers scared



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Even as the Forest department continues its search for the elusive leopard, the scare is writ large on the faces of residents of Karhara village in Sadar tehsil. The villagers suspected that more than one leopard might have crossed over to their side of habitation.

A local resident said that they were scared of the animal on the prowl. "The animal moves in the early hours and we are very scared in the evening. Children go to the school which lies in an isolated area, and it is a big cause of concern for us. We cannot stop the children going to school because examinations are underway," a villager said. He added that they were maintaining constant vigil in the night. However, DFO (Awadh) Ravi Singh said that the animal had shown no movement in the past one week. "We have kept a cage but the animal has not been trapped as yet," he said.

Cancellation of trains leaves passengers high and dry

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Passengers are facing a lot of hardships due to cancellation of trains for which they purchased reserved tickets over three months in advance. Officials of train operation wing said they cannot do anything as it is the decision of top officials in view of track maintenance, infrastructure work and due to other restraints.

Several trains, both from Lucknow division of Northern Railway and North-Eastern Railway — have been cancelled following track maintenance and due to other restraints. The railway officials said the cancellation of trains or reduction in frequency was extended on Thursday again. On the other hand, the railways restored some of the trains which were cancelled due to fog in the past.

As per an official communication, cancellation of trains originating/terminating from/at Varanasi-Gonda, Haridwar-Faizabad, Kanpur-Faizabad, Kanpur-Bareilly and

Lucknow-Mau was extended on Thursday. The Railway also announced reduction in frequency of Gorakhpur-Anand Vihar terminal (up and down), Baruni-Gwalior passing via Lucknow (up and down), Patna-Kota via Lucknow and some other trains. On the other hand, Lucknow-Varanasi (up and down) and Howrah-Mathura (up and down) were partially cancelled and will be restored in time to come.

The cancellation of trains has left the passengers high and dry. SK Sen of Indira Nagar, who had purchased the ticket for a journey to Kolkata by Kumbh Express, said: "When I was busy preparing for the journey, I got a message about cancellation of the train. My plan went for a toss all of a sudden."

"There are several who reached the Charbagh railway station to cancel their tickets to different trains. Many of them had serious reasons to reach their respective destinations," an official at Charbagh railway

station said.

A spokesman said the trains were cancelled due to track maintenance and infrastructure work on different segment in Northern Railways. "These works were proposed already and budget for the same was released recently. A deadline for completion of track maintenance work was issued and thus the trains were cancelled so that the work could be completed in time," he added.

However, the passengers did not seem convinced. "Railways has a wide network, and track maintenance work was already planned and Railways should not have issued tickets. It shows that there was lack of coordination," a passenger said.

Meanwhile, Jammu Tawi, Jharkhand Swarna Jayanti, Harihar Express, Licchawi Express, Jansewa Express, Saldah Anand Vihar Express, Upanasa and Farrakha Express and some other trains cancelled due to fog were restored.

Corporator's nephew succumbs to gunshot injuries

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Nephew of a sitting corporator injured in the February 7 firing incident, in which two groups had a clash in Madaion, succumbed to injuries at KGMU Trauma Centre late on Wednesday night. Heavy police force was deployed in the area as the news reached his village. The family of the deceased performed last rites in the presence of huge police force.

The deceased was identified as Chandan Singh of Kamlabad Badauli village. Police teams were camping in the locality to pre-empt fresh clashes. On February 7, two groups of children had a fight over some issue. On complaint, a group of armed men — led by Sahajram Yadav, Pratap Yadav and Lavkush Yadav — stormed the house of Badauli village corporator Avnish Singh. To counter them, Yogesh (Awnish's brother) and Chandan (Awnish's nephew) came forward. During the brawl,

Pratap opened fire and one bullet hit Chandan in his waist. The attackers fled the scene soon afterwards. Later, Chandan was admitted to KGMU Trauma Centre where he died late on Wednesday night. On the day of incident, the police had claimed that Chandan had suffered minor injuries. The police had also claimed that his condition was improving. The police had arrested all the above-named accused and also claimed to have recovered the weapon from which the shot was fired.

A spokesman said the police would alter the section of IPC from a case of murderous assault to that of murder. "The police have been asked to expedite the investigation," he said. Sources said the police were apprehensive that supporters of Chandan might plan to avenge his murder. "In view of this, security in the locality has been beefed up and last rites were performed in the presence of police," the sources said.



Police conducting a vehicle checking drive at Polytechnic crossing on Thursday

Kidnapping of businessman's son foiled; two persons held

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Alertness on the part of a loader driver and its owner foiled the kidnapping of a Class III student in Madaion on Thursday. The boy is the son of a businessman, Kamal Kishore, who deals in stationery items. The police arrested two persons, including servant of the businessman.

The accused were identified as Mahaveer (servant) and his cousin Ashish, both of Sitapur. They owned up their crime before the police and disclosed that they had plans to hold the boy hostage at their house for a ransom of Rs 50,000. As per reports, Mahaveer had gone to pick the boy from his school but did not reach home by afternoon. At this, Kamal called him to know about his location but his phone was found switched off.

Kamal went straight to the school and was told that his son, along with Mahaveer, left the school. He called the police for help. On the other hand, Mahaveer lured the boy for an outing and took him to Jankipuram where he booked a loader for travel to Sitapur.

The loader driver smelt the rat after he saw Mahaveer along with the minor boy who apparently belonged to some elite family. But the loader driver hid his apprehension and called loader's owner, Rajesh who reached the scene. On reaching the scene, Rajesh quizzed Mahaveer and Ashish, and this made them nervous.

Identity of girl found murdered identified

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

The identity of the girl, who was found murdered in Malihabad police station area on Tuesday, was ascertained on Thursday. The police identified the deceased as Noorie of Wazirganj, and she was married to one Sultan of Kaiserbagh. The police succeeded in ascertaining the identity after her parents reached Wazirganj Kotwali following her disappearance and showed her photographs to police.

The police matches the photographs with the body of a woman recovered near railway tracks in Faridpur village of Malihabad. "The identity of the woman was ascertained on Wednesday night after we got a call from Wazirganj police station and the family was shown the body of the woman and her belongings," Malihabad circle officer said.

It surfaced that Noorie had left the house on February 24 for some work but did not return home. The police did not recover her scooter and her mobile

phone was also found missing. It further surfaced that her husband was sent to jail four months after her marriage following his involvement in a theft case. Since then, Noorie was staying with her parents.

The police said they were working on the call detail records of Noorie's phone to crack the case.

Meanwhile, an 18-year-old mechanic was found hanging at his house in Kakori on Thursday morning. Police said they were finding out the reason due to which the youth committed suicide. The body was sent for autopsy.

Residents said the youth, identified as Ashish Rawat of Durgaganj, was in love with some girl and he took the step due to this.

Around 3 am on Thursday, Ashish's brother Pankaj went to his room for some work and was shocked to see him hanging. The police said no suicide note was recovered from the scene and therefore, it was not clear as to why he ended his life.

LU to introduce student exchange programme with foreign univs

LUCKNOW (PNS): Lucknow University is working in the direction of student exchange programme with foreign universities.

Prof Nishi Pandey, who heads the international area in Lucknow University, said they will formally launch the programme shortly.

"It will be possible once the choice-based credit system (CBCS) begins and they have an academic programme matching international standards. We have been able to take 20 teachers over a period of last five years for training and exposure. The students from abroad have come as visitors to LU. One batch of six foreign students had come for one semester where we had to create a special programme for them," she said. She added that now the university is going for CBCS and semester system in undergraduate and in Masters programmes. "What helps here is that once it starts, students from abroad can come here and our students can go there. We can have credits on both sides which can be given to the students," she said. Pandey said that earlier, they were carrying it out in an informal manner wherein they had to make modules for foreign students. "We were having an annual system and our students did not get credit for going and studying abroad," she said. "Once the courses are uploaded by the EC, we can see what are the parallels which can be introduced for such programmes. We are also looking into how we can teach in virtual mode. We are also looking at the possibilities of foreign professors coming here," she said.

Skywalk, sky-cycling facilities at Kukrail soon; Forest department to float RFQ

SHARMILA KRISHNA ■ LUCKNOW

The Forest department will be shortly floating an RFQ (request for quotation) for establishing a skywalk and sky-cycling facilities in view of adventure tourism at the Kukrail Forest Reserve.

Principal Chief Conservator Forest Rajiv Garg told this reporter that that with the skywalk and sky-cycling facilities, the tourists would be able to walk on infrastructure connecting the top of the trees. "In sky-cycling and sky-walk, ropes are used to connect tall trees and tourists can walk or cycle on them. A height of 20-22 feet of the trees can also suffice. The canopies are connected and it gives a 'Laxman Jhula' kind of feel," he said.

The senior official pointed out that it was the need of the hour with the tourists of today preferring many entertaining areas at the same point and Kukrail would be like a full-day destination for the tourists. "The tourists today have very little time and they want change of scenery very fast," he said. Garg said that they were planning to introduce this on the public-private partnership (PPP) basis and would only contribute in terms of providing the land and regulatory clearances required for the project. "We have already identified the area where this infrastructure could be installed and we will float an RFQ in the next two days to get the proposals from various companies that have a certain minimum qual-

ification of experience. Once shortlisted by a panel of experts, these proposals will be taken forward for all regulatory clearances. We will also have discussions with the Ministry of Forest and Environment," he said.

He added that the Forest department would be acting only as an enabler and the work would be done by the private agency," he said.

Asked if they do not get the nod from the authorities concerned, he said they would take up a mix of ideas so that there was no problem in terms of clearances. He added that they were going in for activities which take a shorter time in clearance.

Garg said that with this kind of PPP, they would not have to put any funds. He said they were selecting adventure tourism which would not impact the natural resources but would help in inclination towards nature and environment.

"Excessive tourism impacts the sanctity of a place and if we keep the area too restricted and cordoned off, we will keep people away from nature," he said. He added that the objective was also to bring people out of the

sedentary lifestyle. The forest official said that they were also mulling and carrying out discussions on having a biodiversity park at the Kukrail Reserve Forest where they would make a provision of the land area and go for regulatory clearances.

"We are planning to go with PPP to establish the

biodiversity of seven continents and five oceans, which will require proper infrastructure. For that, we need repeated visits by high-end tourists. The workforce and food for the animals will be managed by private agencies," he said.

NATIONAL SCIENCE DAY

Programme

Popular Lecture by:

Dr Swati Subodh

Co-founder, 1 Million for 1 Billion

Friday, February 28, 2020 at 11:00 AM

Popular and Scientific Lectures by:

Professor Shubha Tole

TIFR, Mumbai

Saturday, February 29, 2020 at 10:00 AM

Workshop on Vigyan Samachar

February 28-29, 2020

by

Vigyan Prasara, New Delhi

(ALL ARE INVITED)

Venue: S.H. Zaidi Auditorium

CSIR-Indian Institute of Toxicology Research

Vishwagyan Bhawan, 31, Mahatma Gandhi Marg,

Lucknow-226001, (U.P.) India, Tel: +91-522-2628228,

Fax: +91-522-2628227, ; Website: www.iitrindia.org

DELHI VIOLENCE

Sonia-led team meets Prez, seeks Shah's resignation



Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh addresses media after a delegation led by Congress party president Sonia Gandhi met President Ram Nath Kovind to seek normalcy and peace in violence-hit Delhi at Rashtrapati Bhawan in New Delhi on Thursday

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress chief Sonia Gandhi on Thursday urged President Ram Nath Kovind to call for Home Minister Amit Shah's resignation over his failure on Delhi communal violence and remind the Centre of its "raj dharma". Sonia led a delegation of party leaders including former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and submitted a memorandum to Kovind.

"We call upon you and the constitutional office you hold, that the life, liberty and property of the citizens is preserved, secured and protected. You should immediately call for the removal of the home minister given the gross ineptitude, abdication of duty and his inability to contain the situation. We owe this to the citizens who have lost their loved ones, their homes and their livelihood and most of all their long cherished amity and brotherhood. We hope you will take decisive action on this matter,"

Sonia told the reporters outside Rashtrapati Bhawan after meeting the president.

Reading out parts of the memorandum that the party submitted to the president, Sonia said both the Delhi Government and the Centre remained "mute spectators" instead of trying to take remedial measures to control the situation.

The delegation included Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad, Ahmed Patel, P Chidambaram, KC Venugopal, Mallikarjuna Kharge, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Anand Sharma, AK Antony, Kumari Selja and Randeep Surjewala.

Questioning Shah's role, Sonia Gandhi asked where he was as the violence spread across northeast Delhi. "What was he preoccupied with since last Sunday that he was unable, apparently, to give his attention to these grave events? For that matter, the Delhi chief minister, and the newly elected Delhi government were also completely missing from the scene,"

CPM requests for all-party meeting

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CPI(M) on Thursday urged Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to take action against AAP councillor Tahir Hussain for his involvement in the riots in the national Capital.

In a letter to the CM, CPI(M) leaders Brinda Karat and KM Tewari also asked Kejriwal to call an all-party meeting in Delhi to bring communal harmony in the capital.

"We write to assure you of our Party's cooperation in efforts to bring peace and communal harmony to Delhi. We request you to urgently convene an all-party meeting in Delhi to decide how we can unitedly ensure communal

harmony and peace in the Capital," said the CPI(M) leaders.

"In this context, video images in the public domain of an AAP councillor standing on the roof of his house while petrol bombs and stones are being thrown by people on the roof in his presence, are extremely disturbing. Immediate action must be taken against him by the police. Sanjay Singh, MP has made a welcome statement that no one involved in violence should be spared regardless of political colour or religion. It would also send a strong message to the people of Delhi if you as the head of AAP also took action against him at the organisational level.

she asked.

Manmohan Singh, in his remarks to the media, said the Congress leaders conveyed to the president that what had happened in the last four days in the national capital was a matter of deep concern and national shame.

Sonia also said it was a "shameful indictment" of the Central government, the Home ministry and the Home minister himself, that the Delhi High Court had to step in (on Wednesday). It had to remind the Home ministry and the police of their principal duty to act against instigators, the rioters and those engaging in the acts of targeted violence, she said.

BJP accuses Cong, AAP of 'politicising' riots

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Thursday accused the Congress and the AAP of "politicising" the riots in the national Capital and linked Congress president Sonia Gandhi's "aar yaa paar" (fight to finish) comment in December last as the starting point of deliberate provocation for violence in the city.

Addressing a Press conference at the party office, senior BJP leader and Union Minister Prakash Javadekar said the Congress's demand for Union Home Minister Amit Shah's resignation was "petty politics" as several steps have already been taken to restore law and order in the Capital on the express instructions of Home Minister. He asserted that peace was restored in two days due to Shah's effective handling.

He accused Congress of instigating passions for violence and quoted Sonia and Priyanka Gandhi's comments on anti-CAA protests and also referred to senior Congress leaders' visits to Shaheen Bagh, the venue of 'dharma' against CAA for over 70-days.

The senior BJP leader also saw a pattern in Congress leaders' "unwillingness" to condemn controversial speeches of the likes of AIMIM leader Waris Pathan.

He said other political parties were silent on the attack on the policemen and on the death of Intelligence

Bureau staffer Ankit Sharma. "In such a situation, the duty of all political parties should be to consolidate peace," he said.

Taking on the AAP, which governs Delhi, Javadekar said that its MLAs should have worked for peace, but Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal identified riot victims by religion in the Assembly.

He alleged that attempts to instigate violence had been made for the last two months since Sonia Gandhi gave the call for 'fight to the finish' at a rally.

Javadekar said the BJP was working to restore peace and condemned the Congress, the AAP for doing politics over the violence that claimed 34 lives in northeast Delhi and left over 200 injured.

Govt should ensure peace in Delhi: Suresh Bhaiyyaji

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In the backdrop of violence in Delhi which has, so far claimed 38 lives, RSS general secretary Suresh Bhaiyyaji Joshi on Thursday sought the Government to ensure peace in Delhi. Talking to reporters in Nagpur, Joshi also said that nobody has the right to take law into their hands and that necessary action should be taken to restore law and order in the national capital. "The government should instill peace in areas where there is 'ashanti' (unrest)," the RSS functionary said.

Ministry rejects US Commission, Islamic body's remarks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Taking exception to comments by a US Commission expressing grave concern over violence in Delhi and asking India to protect Muslims, New Delhi on Thursday termed such statements as "irresponsible" and said the remarks by the commission are "factually inaccurate, misleading and an attempt to politicise the issue." The external affairs ministry also hit out the Organisation of Islamic Organisation which also expressed concern over

Delhi violence.

The Indian reaction to the comments by the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) came a day after it expressed "grave concern" over the violence in Delhi and asked the Indian government to provide protection to people irrespective of their faith.

US presidential candidate Bernie Sanders and a number of other leading American lawmakers have also expressed concern over the clashes in several parts of Delhi in which

at least 32 people have been killed.

"We have seen comments made by USCIRF, sections of the media and a few individuals regarding recent incidents of violence in Delhi. These are factually inaccurate and misleading, and appear to be aimed at politicising the issue," external affairs ministry spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said here.

Though the ministry did not clarify the individuals being referred to, it is being seen as a reference to US lawmakers critical of India on the

issue of the Delhi violence.

Kumar said law enforcement agencies are working on the ground to prevent violence and ensure restoration of confidence and normalcy. "Senior representatives of the government have been involved in that process. The prime minister has publicly appealed for peace and brotherhood. We would urge that irresponsible comments are not made at this sensitive time," said Kumar.

The US Commission on Wednesday said in Washington "the ongoing vio-

lence we are witnessing in Delhi and the reported attacks against Muslims, their homes and shops, and their houses of worship are greatly disturbing."

"One of the essential duties of any responsible government is to provide protection and physical security for its citizens, regardless of faith," the USCIRF chair Tony Perkins said in a statement.

The Commission Commissioner Anurima Bhargava said the "brutal and unchecked violence" across Delhi cannot continue.

HC judge transfer aimed at saving some BJP netas: Cong

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday alleged that the transfer of Delhi High Court Judge S Muralidhar was aimed at saving some BJP leaders in the Delhi violence case and exposed the Modi Government's "intimidation and vendetta politics" against the judiciary.

Congress said it seems those doing justice in country will now not be spared and the party alleged the government was "waging a battle of revenge" against the judiciary. Calling the transfer a classic case of "hit-and-run injustice" by the BJP Government, Congress chief spokesman Randeep Surjewala said the saffron party's "politics of revenge" has been exposed. He accused the BJP of attacking the impartiality of the judiciary.

Taking a dig at the government over Muralidhar's "sudden" transfer, former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi also tweeted, "Remembering the brave Judge Loya, who wasn't transferred." Special CBI judge BH Loya, who was hearing the high-profile



Justice S Muralidhar

Sohrabuddin Sheikh fake encounter case, died in allegedly mysterious circumstances on December 1, 2014.

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra hit out at the government over the transfer, saying the Centre's attempts to "muzzle" justice and "break people's faith in an upright judiciary are deplorable."

"The midnight transfer of Justice Muralidhar isn't shocking given the current dispensation, but it is certainly sad and shameful," Priyanka Gandhi tweeted.

"Millions of Indians have faith in a resilient and upright

CPM terms Muralidhar's transfer selective response to his court orders

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CPI(M) on Thursday said Justice S Muralidhar's transfer from the Delhi High Court was a "selective response" to his court orders in which he rapped the city police for "trying to shield" BJP leaders who made "hate speeches".

The CPI(M) Polit Bureau in statement demanded the government to keep the transfer order, notified late Wednesday night, in abeyance to reinforce the confidence of the people in the judicial system.

judiciary, the government's attempts to muzzle justice & break their faith are deplorable," the Congress general secretary said.

The notification of Justice

Justice Muralidhar was transferred to the Punjab and Haryana High Court, on a day a bench headed by him expressed "anguish" over the Delhi Police's "failure" to register FIRs against the alleged hate speeches made by BJP leaders Parvesh Verma, Kapil Mishra and Anurag Thakur. The CPI (M) said in a statement that the transfer was recommended by the Supreme Court collegium, but it has been protested against by the Dei High Court Bar Association for well-argued judicial-administrative considerations.

Muralidhar's transfer to the Punjab and Haryana High Court came late Wednesday evening, on a day when a bench headed by him expressed "anguish" over Delhi

Cong playing politics on routine transfer: BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Accusing the Congress of politicising a "routine transfer", the BJP on Thursday rubbished speculations on the transfer of High Court judge S Muralidhar saying it was done on the recommendations of the Supreme Court.

Stating this at a press conference here, Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar said the transfer orders were firmed up in February with the consent of the Judge.

Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad also rejected the allegation saying Justice Muralidhar was transferred

on the recommendation of the Supreme Court collegium and accused the Congress of politicising a routine transfer.

He added that a "well-settled process" was followed in the transfer of Justice Muralidhar to the Punjab and Haryana High Court.

"By politicising a routine transfer, Congress has yet again displayed its scant regard for the judiciary," Prasad said in a series of tweets. His reaction came after the Congress alleged that Justice Muralidhar was transferred by the Government to save BJP leaders in the Delhi violence case.

"Transfer of Justice Muralidhar was done pursuant to the recommendation dated February 12 of the Supreme Court collegium headed by Chief Justice of India," the minister said.

He said a judge's consent is taken before transferring him or her. Continuing his attack on the opposition party, Prasad said the people of India have rejected the Congress and "hence it is hell bent on destroying the very institutions India cherishes by constantly attacking them".

Referring to a tweet by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on the death of Judge Loya, the Union minister said the Loya judgement has been well-settled by the Supreme Court.

country has ever seen.

"Mr Prasad at the instance of Prime Minister Modi is hell-bent on destroying the independent institution of judiciary."

Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad accused the opposition party was politicising a routine transfer, Surjewala hit back at Prasad, describing him as the "most lawless minister" this

Police's failure to register FIRs against alleged hate speeches by BJP leaders Parvesh Verma, Kapil Mishra and Anurag Thakur.

Responding to Union Law

ENVIRONMENT-FRIENDLY BATTERY

Govt's draft on battery waste management ready

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As demand for environment-friendly battery-operated vehicles is all set to rise in the near future in India as a measure to cut down carbon footprints, the NDA Government has prepared draft rules for battery waste management that will make it mandatory for manufacturers and dealers to collect used batteries against the new ones they sell.

The proposed draft rules the 'Battery Waste Management Rules 2020' brings under its ambit all kind of batteries such as. The notification was issued by the Union Environment Ministry recently which has uploaded it on its website, seeking objection and suggestions from the stakeholders.

The Batteries (Management and Handling) Rules, 2001, had mentioned only lead-acid batteries.

The draft rules put the responsibility of collection of batteries and their safe transport to the recyclers on the manufacturers and dealers.



They will need to ensure that used batteries are sent only to the registered recyclers and that environment is not harmed during their transportation, as per the notification.

Under the new rules, battery dealers will have to issue purchase invoices (when they collect used batteries). Earlier, dealers were obliged to register with the state pollution control boards, but there was no mention of issuing purchase invoice for old batteries.

According to various reports, an estimated 2.7 billion

The notification was issued by the Union Environment Ministry recently which has uploaded it on its website, seeking objection and suggestions from the stakeholders

The draft rules put the responsibility of collection of batteries and their safe transport to the recyclers on the manufacturers and dealers

Under the new rules, battery dealers will have to issue purchase invoices

pieces of dry cell batteries are consumed annually in India, but there is no collection mechanism to ensure that these batteries are safely transported to recyclers. Unsafe disposal of batteries can cause harmful metals like mercury and cadmium to leak out and enter the soil and water.

Discarded batteries, meanwhile, can be a valuable resource to recover highly useful metals in an environmentally-friendly manner.

However, these regulations will not be applicable on batteries used in equipment con-

nected with the protection of the essential security interests such as arms, ammunitions and war material, and intended specifically for military purposes; equipment designed to be sent into space (space exploration), emergency and alarm systems, emergency lighting and medical equipment.

As per Kenneth Research, the Indian electric vehicle infrastructure market is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CARG) of over 40 per cent during a forecast period 2019-2025.

CBI brings back toddler, kidnapped by her own father, from Dubai

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Thursday brought back a three-year-old girl from Dubai who was taken there by her father in violation of orders of Delhi High Court that is hearing a custody battle between the baby's parents.

The girl's father, Aman Lohia, had taken Baby Raina to Dubai amid a custody battle with his wife Kiran Kaur Lohia in the High Court that had asked him to deposit his passport with authorities to prevent him from leaving the country.

In a case against a High Court order, the Supreme Court had directed the CBI to visit Dubai to bring back the girl to India.

A team of CBI officials had recently gone to Dubai where it coordinated with local authorities to ensure the safe return of the girl and her father, officials said.

After the agency team arrived on Thursday morning, the CBI informed the apex court about the compliance of

its orders, officials said adding the girl will be produced before the SC on Friday. The child is presently at her mother's home under the agency's care.

The dramatic developments of Thursday were a culmination of a six-month long trail of a defiant father who in a desperate move escaped to Dubai with his daughter claiming he was a "victim of gender bias" of courts and that it was the "love for his daughter" which directed his actions.

Aman Lohia, son of a noted businessman, was fighting a custody battle for his daughter Raina in the HC after separating from his wife, a Delhi-based dermatologist.

The high court had granted Raina's custody to the mother with a parenting plan, according to which, Aman Lohia could meet his daughter for some hours on three days of a week. The court also asked him to deposit his passport, which he complied, the officials said.

On August 24 last year, when the girl had come to

meet Aman Lohia as per the parenting plan, he took her along with family confidant Pawan Kumar and maid Shiuratia Debi to Dubai using a circuitous route via Nepal and other gulf countries.

Considering "international ramifications", the Delhi High Court had handed over the probe to the CBI which had registered a case.

The Interpol had issued a 'Yellow Notice' for the girl on a CBI request. Yellow Notices are issued by the Interpol on the request of member countries to locate missing persons. The CBI had also filed a charge sheet on December 19 last year before a special court against Aman Lohia, his mother Meena Lohia, alleged accomplice Pawan Kumar and maid Shiuratia Debi Mahto, officials further said.

The agency has invoked Indian Penal Code provisions pertaining to criminal conspiracy, kidnapping from India and kidnapping from lawful guardianship among others against the businessman.

INSHORT

JUSTICE SATYARANJAN RESIGNS

New Delhi: The Govt has notified the resignation of Justice Satyaranjan Dharmadhikari who was the second senior-most judge of the Bombay High Court. The Law Ministry has notified his resignation, saying it is effective from February 15. He had tendered his resignation, saying he does not want to be transferred out of Maha due to his "personal & family" reasons.

SIX-FOLD INCREASE IN URBAN EXPENDITURE: MIN

New Delhi: Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs Hardeep Singh Puri on Thursday said, "Between 2004 and 2014, the expenditure incurred in urban infrastructure was 1,75,000 crore. However, from June 2015 onwards, there has been a six-fold increase in urban expenditure which is around ₹ 9,70,000 crore today." Puri said at a national conference on "Future of Urban Sanitation in India". Secretary, Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Parameswaran Iyer, Dr. Rajesh Tandon, Founder-President, Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), and Manahar Valjijbhai Zala, Chairperson, National Commission for Safai Karamcharis were also present.

PLEA ON OFFENSE OF HATE SPEECH

New Delhi: A plea was filed in the Supreme Court on Thursday seeking direction to the Centre to implement a Law Commission's report which suggested changes in penal and procedural laws to effectively deal with the offense of hate speech.

SC UPHOLDS COMPULSORY RETIREMENT OF 2 JUDGES

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Thursday upheld the decision of Jharkhand HC granting compulsory retirement to two judicial officers including one who had used "highly sexist" remarks during his lectures to civil services probationers. The top court said the standard of integrity and probity expected from judicial officers, Arun Kumar Gupta and Raj Nandan Rai, is much higher than that that expected from other officers.

CAREER COUNSELOR PROGRAM UNVEILED

New Delhi: iDreamCareer, India's largest, unbiased, full-stack career solution and guidance platform, has unveiled an updated version of its career counselor certification program which has since produced 850+ certified counselors spread across 105 districts in India and in 6 countries globally.

Malegaon case: Pragma appears before special court in Mumbai

PTI ■ MUMBAI

BIP MP Pragma Singh Thakur on Thursday appeared before a special NIA court here in connection with the 2008 Malegaon blast case, in which she is one of the accused. This came a day after special court judge VS Padalkar directed all the accused in the case to take note of his

order (passed in May last year) directing them to appear before it at least once a week. The Bhopal MP appeared before the court around 1 pm. After taking note of her appearance, the judge allowed her to go. While interacting with reporters outside the court, Thakur said whenever the court summons her, she will appear before it.

She had last appeared before the court in connection with the case in June 2019. Seven persons, including Thakur and Lt Col Prasad Purohit, are facing trial in the case. Six people were killed and over 100 injured when an explosive device strapped on a motorcycle went off near a mosque in Malegaon, a town about 200 km from here in north



Maharashtra, on September 29, 2008. According to police, the motorcycle was registered in Thakur's name and that led to her arrest in 2008. The Bombay High Court had granted bail to her in 2017. Thakur was given a clean chit by the National Investigation Agency (NIA), but the trial court refused to discharge her from the case. The court had dropped

the charges against her under the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA), but she is being tried under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and other relevant laws. The accused are facing trial under various sections of the UAPA, the Indian Penal Code and the Explosive Substances Act. They have been charged

under UAPA sections 16 (committing terrorist act) and 18 (conspiring to commit terrorist act). They are also facing charges under IPC sections 120(b) (criminal conspiracy), 302 (murder), 307 (attempt to murder), 324 (voluntarily causing hurt) and 153(a) (promoting enmity between two religious groups).

U.P. RAJYA VIDYUT UTPADAN NIGAM LTD. Anpara Thermal Power Project, Anpara E-TENDER NOTICE 1. E-Tender No.: 902/EPD-II/BTPS/2019-20, Office: Superintending Engineer, MM&MPC-IV 2X500MW, BTPS, Anpara. **Supply:** Supply of various mechanical items for 2x500MW, BTPS Anpara. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 30,000.00 (Rs. Thirty Thousand Only). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 1,000.00 + 18% GST, **Last date for submission of e-bid (Technical & Financial) at E-procurement website** <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 13.03.2020, **date of opening e-bid Part-I:** 16.03.2020. **For participation and detailed information log in to website** <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 2. **E-Tender No.:** 15/CHD-II/ATPS/2019-20, Office: Superintending Engineer, CHC, ATPS, Anpara. **Work:** Manufacturing & machining of rider rings and their shrink fitting on old spindlers and drilling new holes & shifting the stiffener on feed & reject end of primary crusher of CHP, ATPS, Anpara. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 80,000.00 (Rs. Eighty Thousand Only) (Refundable). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 1000.00 + 18% GST, (Non Refundable). **Earnest money deposit & tender cost to be deposited through NEFT/RTGS of DY.C.A.O., CFA&BO, ATPS, Anpara. Last date for submission of e-bid (Technical & Financial) at E-procurement website** <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 13.03.2020, **date of opening e-bid Part-I:** 16.03.2020, **Part-II:** Shall be intimated later. **Period:** 12 Months. **For participation and detailed information log in to website** <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 3. **E-Tender No.:** 387/EPD-II/ATPS/2019-20, Office: Superintending Engineer, O&M MMC-VII, 3X210MW, ATPS, Anpara. **Supply:** Supply, installation, testing and commissioning of numerical generator, generator transformer & UAT protection relays retrofit. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 1,00,000.00 (Rs. One Lac Only). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 2,000.00 + 18% GST, **last date for submission of e-bid (Technical & Financial) at E-procurement website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 23.03.2020, **date of opening e-bid Part-I:** 24.03.2020. **For participation and detailed information log in to website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 4. **E-Tender No.:** 384/EPD-II/ATPS/2019-20, Office: Superintending Engineer, O&M MMC-VII, 3X210MW, ATPS, Anpara. **Supply:** Supply of miscellaneous consumables. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 20,000.00 (Rs. Twenty Thousand Only). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 500.00 + 18% GST, **Extended last date for submission of e-bid (Technical & Financial) at E-procurement website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 28.02.2020, **Extended date of opening e-bid Part-I:** 02.03.2020. **For participation and detailed information log in to website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 5. **E-Tender No.:** 05/ETD/DTPS/2019-20, Office: Superintending Engineer, O&M MCC-I, 2X500MW DTPS, Anpara. **Work:** Preventive & breakdown maintenance of (14-Ton) hydra and JCB (Robot-135) of ETD, 2X500MW, DTPS, Anpara. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 3,000.00 (Rs. Three Thousand Only) (Refundable). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 500.00 + 18% GST, (Non Refundable). **Earnest money deposit & tender cost to be deposited through NEFT/RTGS of DY.C.A.O., CFA&BO, BTPS, Anpara. Last date for submission of hard copy of requisite documents:** 02.04.2020, **date of opening e-bid Part-I:** 06.04.2020, **Part-II:** Shall be intimated later. **Period:** 12 Months. **For participation and detailed information log in to website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 6. **E-Tender No.:** 230/EPD-II/ATPS/2019-20, Office: Superintending Engineer, O&M MMC-VII, 3X210MW, ATPS, Anpara. **Supply:** Supply of Spares of ash slurry pumps for 3x210MW, ATPS, Anpara. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 22,000.00 (Rs. Twenty Two**********

Thousand Only), **Tender Cost:** Rs. 500.00 + 18% GST, **Extended last date for submission of ebid (Technical & Financial) at E-procurement website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 05.03.2020 **Extended date of opening e-bid Part-I:** 06.03.2020. **For participation and detailed information log in to website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 7. **E-Tender No.:** 233/EPD-II/ATPS/2019-20, Office: Superintending Engineer, O&M MMC-VII, 3X210MW, ATPS, Anpara. **Supply:** Supply of Medicines/items for project hospital Anpara. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 14,000.00 (Rs. Fourteen Thousand Only). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 500.00 + 18% GST, **Extended last date for submission of e-bid (Technical & Financial) at E-procurement website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 05.03.2020, **Extended date of opening e-bid Part-I:** 06.03.2020. **For participation and detailed information log in to website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 8. **E-Tender No.:** 16/ECMD-2X500MW/ATPS/2019-20, Office: Superintending Engineer, O&M MCC-VI, ATPS, Anpara. **Work:** Renovation of filter media of BTPS Filters at permanent filtration plant of Anpara Thermal power project, Anpara. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 30,000.00 (Rs. Thirty Thousand Only) (Refundable). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 1000.00 + 18% GST, (Non Refundable). **Earnest money deposit & tender cost to be deposited through NEFT/RTGS of DY.C.A.O., CFA&BO, BTPS, Anpara. Last date for submission of e-bid (Technical & Financial) at E-procurement website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 21.03.2020, **date of opening e-bid Part-I:** 24.03.2020, **Part-II:** Shall be intimated later. **For participation and detailed information log in to website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 9. **E-Tender No.:** 15/ECMD-2X500MW/ATPS/2019-20, Office: Superintending Engineer, O&M MCC-VI, ATPS, Anpara. **Work:** Annual maintenance contract for drinking water distribution network in temporary colony, CISF Colony, rehabilitation area, office shed & power house area of Anpara Thermal power project, Anpara sonebhadra. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 16,000.00 (Rs. Sixteen Thousand Only) (Refundable). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 500.00 + 18% GST, (Non Refundable). **Earnest money deposit & tender cost to be deposited through NEFT/RTGS of DY.C.A.O., CFA&BO, BTPS, Anpara. Last date for submission of e-bid (Technical & Financial) at E-procurement website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 28.03.2020, **date of opening e-bid Part-I:** 31.03.2020, **Part-II:** Shall be intimated later. **Period:** 12 Months. **For participation and detailed information log in to website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 10. **E-Tender No.:** 260/EPD-III/BTPS/2019-20, Office: Superintending Engineer, MM&MPC-VI, BTPS, Anpara. **Supply:** Supply of Teeth segment for clinker grinder in 2x500MW, BTPS, Anpara. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 28,000.00 (Rs. Twenty Eight Thousand Only). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 1000.00 + 18% GST, **Extended last date for submission of ebid (Technical & Financial) at E-procurement website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 18.03.2020 **Extended date of opening e-bid Part-I:** 20.03.2020. **For participation and detailed information log in to website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 11. **E-Tender No.:** 265/EPD-III/BTPS/2019-20, Office: Superintending Engineer, MM&MPC-VI, BTPS, Anpara. **Supply:** Supply of Rubber bellows for generating transformer, UAT & Excitation transformer of 2x500MW, BTPS, Anpara. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 10,000.00 (Rs. Ten Thousand Only). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 500.00 + 18% GST, **last date for submission of e-bid (Technical & Financial) at E-procurement website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 01.04.2020, **Date of Opening e-bid Part-I:** 03.04.2020. **For participation and detailed information log in to website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 12. **E-Tender No.:** 02/OG&ChD/BTPS/2020-21, Office: Superintending Engineer, O&M MCC-I, 2X500MW, BTPS, Anpara. **Work:** Work of sample collection and preparation for coal & oil lab; Express lab slurry pumps, WTP Lab and pollution monitoring of 2x500MW, BTPS, Anpara. **Earnest Money:** Rs.************************

24,000.00 (Rs. Twenty Four Thousand Only) (Refundable). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 1000.00 + 18% GST, (Non Refundable). **Earnest money deposit & tender cost to be deposited through NEFT/RTGS of DY.C.A.O., CFA&BO, BTPS, Anpara. Bid Submission end date:** 20.03.2020, **date of opening e-bid Part-I:** 23.03.2020. **Part-II:** Shall be intimated later. **Period:** Months. **For participation and detailed information log in to website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 13. **E-Tender No.:** 01/OG&ChD/BTPS/2020-21, Office: Superintending Engineer, O&M MCC-I, 2X500MW, BTPS, Anpara. **Work:** Rubber lining / Re-rubber lining and epoxy painting of pipes, vessels, acid/alkali storage tanks and structure of water treatment plant, waste water tank, CPP of 2x500MW, BTPS, Anpara. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 54,000.00 (Rs. Fifty Four Thousand Only) (Refundable). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 1000.00 + 18% GST, (Non Refundable). **Earnest money deposit & tender cost to be deposited through NEFT/RTGS of DY.C.A.O., CFA&BO, BTPS, Anpara. Last date for submission of e-bid (Technical & Financial) at E-procurement website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 09.04.2020, **date of opening e-bid Part-I:** 14.04.2020, **Part-II:** Shall be intimated later. **Period:** 12 Months. **For participation and detailed information log in to website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 14. **E-Tender No.:** 23/AHMD/BTPS/2019-20, Office: Superintending Engineer, O&M MCC-I, BTPS, Anpara. **Work:** Preventive and breakdown maintenance of ash water HPLP pumps, make: Bombas tur spain and mather platt, & other associated equipments pertaining to ash water pumps house of unit 4 & 5, 2x500MW, BTPS, Anpara. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 9,400.00 (Rs. Nine Thousand Four Hundred Only) (Refundable). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 500.00 + 18% GST, (Non Refundable). **Earnest money deposit & tender cost to be deposited through NEFT/RTGS of DY.C.A.O., CFA&BO, BTPS, Anpara. Last date for submission of e-bid (Technical & Financial) at E-procurement website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 28.03.2020, **date of opening e-bid Part-I:** 31.03.2020, **Part-II:** Shall be intimated later. **Period:** 12 Months. **For participation and detailed information log in to website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 15. **E-Tender No.:** 24/AHMD/BTPS/2019-20, Office: Superintending Engineer, O&M MCC-I, BTPS, Anpara. **Work:** Preventive and breakdown maintenance of H.P/L.P. water pipe lines and transition pipes for ESP/FG duct/PAH hoppers of unit No. 4&5 of BTPS, Anpara. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 16,850.00 (Rs. Sixteen Thousand Eight Hundred Fifty Only) (Refundable). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 1000.00 + 18% GST, (Non Refundable). **Earnest money deposit & tender cost to be deposited through NEFT/RTGS of DY.C.A.O., CFA&BO, BTPS, Anpara. Bid submission end date:** 28.03.2020, **date of opening e-bid Part-I:** 31.03.2020, **Part-II:** Shall be intimated later. **Period:** 12 Months. **For participation and detailed information log in to website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 16. **E-Tender No.:** 506/EPD-II/BTPS/2020-21, Office: Superintending Engineer, MM&MPC-VI, BTPS, Anpara. **Supply:** Supply of Break shoe key & suspension coil spring for BOBR wagons. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 5,000.00 (Rs. Five Thousand Only). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 500.00 + 18% GST, **last date for submission of e-bid (Technical & Financial) at E-procurement website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 12.03.2020, **Extended date of opening e-bid Part-I:** 14.03.2020, **Part-II:** Shall be intimated later. **For participation and detailed information log in to website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 17. **E-Tender No.:** 138/CF-1009/EPD-II/DTPS/2019-20, Office: Superintending Engineer, MMC, 2X500MW, DTPS, Anpara. **Supply:** Supply of Neoprene rubber gasket for ash slurry & bottom ash pipe lines for 2x500 MW, DTPS, Anpara. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 2,000.00 (Rs. Two Thousand Only). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 200.00 + 18% GST, **last date******************

for submission of hard copy of requisite documents: 20.03.2020, **date of opening e-bid Part-I:** 24.03.2020. **For participation and detailed information log in to website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 18. **E-Tender No.:** 15/C&IMD-II/BTPS/2020-21, Office: Superintending Engineer, O&M MCC-III BTPS, Anpara. **Work:** To provide maintenance support services by a firm having qualified and experienced engineers for the control and protection system highly sophisticated Toshiba make Toshiba C60 processor of main turbine and its auxiliaries including T-BFPs Hitachi make control system EHG or up graded Toshiba make TOSHMAP-DS/LX control system of main turbine and its auxiliaries including T-BFPs of 2x500MW, units BTPS Anpara (excluding C&I field equipments)". **Earnest Money:** Rs. 37,000.00 (Rs. Thirty Seven Thousand Only) (Refundable). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 1000.00 + 18% GST, (Non Refundable). **Earnest money deposit & tender cost to be deposited through NEFT/RTGS of DY.C.A.O., CFA&BO, BTPS, Anpara. 3rd Time Extended last date for submission of hard copy of requisite documents:** 05.03.2020, **3rd Time Extended date of opening e-bid Part-I:** 05.03.2020, **Part-II:** Shall be intimated later. **Period:** 12 Months. **For participation and detailed information log in to website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 19. **E-Tender No.:** 05/MMD-II/ATPS/2020-21, Office: Superintending Engineer, O&M MCC-I, ATPS, Anpara. **Work:** Major repairing of inner & outer casing and repairing & rebuild up of pump spares of ash slurry pumps of 3x210MW, ATPS, Anpara. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 30,000.00 (Rs. Thirty Thousand Only) (Refundable). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 500.00 + 18% GST, (Non Refundable). **Earnest money deposit & tender cost to be deposited through NEFT/RTGS of DY.C.A.O., CFA&BO, ATPS, Anpara. Last date for submission of hard copy of requisite documents:** 06.04.2020, **date of opening e-bid Part-I:** 07.04.2020, **Part-II:** Shall be intimated later. **Period:** 12 Months. **For participation and detailed information log in to website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 20. **E-Tender No.:** 246/EPD-III/ATPS/2019-20, Office: Superintending Engineer, O&M MMC-VII, ATPS, Anpara. **Supply:** Supply of Hydrant post, valves, tyton rubber etc. for ATPP, Anpara. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 20,000.00 (Rs. Twenty Thousand Only). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 500.00 + 18% GST, **Extended last date for submission of e-bid (Technical & Financial) at E-procurement website:** 16.03.2020, **Extended date of opening e-bid Part-I:** 17.03.2020. **For participation and detailed information log in to website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 21. **E-Tender No.:** 20/AHMD/BTPS/2019-20, Office: Superintending Engineer, O&M MCC-I, BTPS, Anpara. **Work:** Providing the consultancy service for preparing of DPR & technical specification for installation of DFAES in 3x210MW, ATPS, Anpara and renovation work of DFA system of 2x500MW, BTPS, Anpara. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 36,000.00 (Rs. Thirty Six Thousand Only) (Refundable). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 1000.00 + 18% GST, (Non Refundable). **Earnest money deposit & tender cost to be deposited through NEFT/RTGS of DY.C.A.O., CFA&BO, BTPS, Anpara. Last date for submission of e-bid (Technical & Financial) at E-procurement website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 12.03.2020, **Extended date of opening e-bid Part-I:** 14.03.2020, **Part-II:** Shall be intimated later. **For participation and detailed information log in to website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 22. **E-Tender No.:** 385/EPD-II/ATPS/2019-20, Office: Superintending Engineer, O&M MCC-I, 3X210MW, ATPS Anpara. **Work:** Insulation, refractory & removal of fly ash debris from pressure part, ducts, hoppers & port of pent house etc. during overhauling of unit#3 of 3x210MW, ATPS, Anpara. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 20,000.00 (Rs. Twenty Thousand Only) (Refundable). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 500.00 + 18% GST, (Non Refundable). **Earnest money deposit & tender cost to be deposited through NEFT/RTGS of DY.C.A.O., CFA & BO, ATPS, Anpara. Extended E-Bid submission end date:** 23.03.2020, **Extended date of opening e-bid Part-I:** 25.03.2020, **Part-II:** Shall be intimated later. **Period:** 1 Month. **For participation and detailed information log in to website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 27. **E-Tender No.:** 27/BMD-II/ATPS/2019-20, Office: Superintending Engineer, O&M MCC-I, 3X210MW, ATPS Anpara. **Work:** Repairing and internal cleaning including one coal of primer of cold end heating element baskets of air pre-heater for overhauling of unit no. 03 of 3x210MW, ATPS, Anpara. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 20,000.00 (Rs. Twenty Thousand Only) (Refundable). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 500.00 + 18% GST, (Non Refundable). **Earnest money deposit & tender cost to be deposited through NEFT/RTGS of DY.C.A.O., CFA&BO, ATPS, Anpara. Extended E-Bid submission end date:** 23.03.2020, **Extended date of opening e-bid Part-I:** 25.03.2020, **Part-II:** Shall be intimated later. **Period:** 12 Months. **For participation and detailed information log in to website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 26. **E-Tender No.:** 24/BMD-II/ATPS/2019-20, Office: Superintending Engineer, O&M MCC-II, 3X210MW, ATPS Anpara. **Work:** Deployment of radiography team with remote operated gamma radiography camera and taking radiography shots, processing of the films and interpretation of HP joints of pressure parts during of overhauling of unit-3 of 3x210MW, ATPS, Anpara. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 20,000.00 (Rs. Twenty Thousand Only) (Refundable). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 500.00 + 18% GST, (Non Refundable). **Earnest money deposit & tender cost to be deposited through NEFT/RTGS of DY.C.A.O., CFA & BO, ATPS, Anpara. Extended E-Bid submission end date:** 23.03.2020, **Extended date of opening e-bid Part-I:** 25.03.2020, **Part-II:** Shall be intimated later. **Period:** 12 Months. **For participation and detailed information log in to website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 31. **E-Tender No.:** 386/EPD-II/ATPS/2019-20, Office: Superintending Engineer, O&M MMC-VII, ATPS, Anpara. **Supply:** Supply of PVC Insulated armoured loudophone cable. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 9,000.00 (Rs. Nine Thousand Only). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 500.00 + 18% GST, **last date for submission of e-bid (Technical & Financial) at E-procurement website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 23.03.2020, **date of opening e-bid Part-I:** 24.03.2020, **For participation and detailed information log in to website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 32. **E-Tender No.:** 02/EMD-III/ATPS/2020-21, Office: Superintending Engineer, O&M MCC-IV, ATPS, Anpara. **Work:** The routine trimming of trees and cleaning of jungles which comes below the line of 11KV, LT lines & street light poles under the area of permanent colony, CISF Colony, Temporary colony etc. of ATP, Anpara. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 8,500.00 (Rs. Eight Thousand Five**********************

Hundred Only) (Refundable). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 250.00 + 18% GST, (Non Refundable). **Earnest money deposit & tender cost to be deposited through NEFT / RTGS of DY.C.A.O., CFA&BO, ATPS, Anpara. Last date for submission of hard copy of E-bid technical & Financial:** 23.03.2020, **Extended date of opening e-bid Part-I:** 25.03.2020, **Part-II:** Shall be intimated later. **Period:** 12 Months. **For participation and detailed information log in to website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 28. **E-Tender No.:** 08/ECCD-IV/DTPS/2019-20, Office: Superintending Engineer, O&M MCC-IV, 2X500MW, DTPS Anpara. **Work:** M&R of water supply and sanitary system of 2x500MW, DTPS, Anpara. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 14,000.00 (Rs. Fourteen Thousand Only) (Refundable). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 1000.00 + 18% GST, (Non Refundable). **Earnest money deposit & tender cost to be deposited through NEFT / RTGS of DY.C.A.O., CFA&BO, DTPS, Anpara. E-Bid submission end date:** 31.03.2020, **date of opening ebid Part-I:** 03.04.2020, **Part-II:** Shall be intimated later. **Period:** 12 Months. **For participation and detailed information log in to website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 29. **E-Tender No.:** 03/MMD-II/ATPS/2020-21, Office: Superintending Engineer, O&M MCC-I, ATPS, Anpara. **Work:** Round the clock routine maintenance (mechanical maintenance) of ESP bottom ash system of all the three units of 3x210MW, ATPS, Anpara. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 26,000.00 (Rs. Twenty Six Thousand Only) (Refundable). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 500.00 + 18% GST, (Non Refundable). **Earnest money deposit & tender cost to be deposited through NEFT/RTGS of DY.C.A.O., CFA&BO, ATPS, Anpara. Last date for submission of hard copy of requisite documents:** 06.04.2020, **date of opening e-bid Part-I:** 07.04.2020, **Part-II:** Shall be intimated later. **Period:** 12 Months. **For participation and detailed information log in to website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 30. **E-Tender No.:** 04/MMD-II/ATPS/2020-21, Office: Superintending Engineer, O&M MCC-I, ATPS, Anpara. **Work:** Preventive (Routine) mechanical maintenance of fuel oil pressurizing pump, LDO unloading pump, drain pump, sump pump etc. Filters & valves of 3x210MW, ATPS, Anpara. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 12,000.00 (Rs. Twelve Thousand Only) (Refundable). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 500.00 + 18% GST, (Non Refundable). **Earnest money deposit & tender cost to be deposited through NEFT/RTGS of DY.C.A.O., CFA&BO, ATPS, Anpara. Last date for submission of hard copy of requisite documents:** 06.04.2020, **date of opening e-bid Part-I:** 07.04.2020, **Part-II:** Shall be intimated later. **Period:** 12 Months. **For participation and detailed information log in to website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 35. **E-Tender No.:** 20/CHD-VII/BTPS/2019-20, Office: Superintending Engineer, CHC, BTPS Anpara. **Work:** Round the clock operation, routine minor maintenance and general up keeping of KONE make elevator lift of SCH building & TP-25 of CHP-2X500MW, BTPS, Anpara. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 22,000.00 (Rs. Twenty Two Thousand Only) (Refundable). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 500.00 + 18% GST, (Non Refundable). **Earnest money deposit & tender cost to be deposited through NEFT/RTGS of DY.C.A.O., CFA&BO, BTPS, Anpara. Last date for submission of e-bid (Technical & Financial) at E-procurement website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 16.03.2020, **date of opening e-bid Part-I:** 17.03.2020, **Part-II:** Shall be intimated later. **Period:** 12 Months. **For participation and detailed information log in to website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 40. **E-Tender No.:** 05/CHD-II/BTPS/2019-20, Office: Superintending Engineer CTC, BTPS Anpara. **Work:** Shifting / stacking of picked up stones from coal accumulated on the ground beneath the conveyors of coal handling plant of A & BTPS, Anpara and stone transportation to a prescribed place along with loading and unloading of same as per scope of work. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 30,000.00 (Rs. Thirty Thousand Only) (Refundable). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 1000.00 + 18% GST, (Non Refundable). **Earnest money deposit & tender cost to be deposited through NEFT / RTGS of DY.C.A.O., CFA&BO, BTPS, Anpara. Last date for submission of hard copy of requisite documents:** 16.03.2020, **date of opening e-bid Part-I:** 19.03.2020, **Part-II:** Shall be intimated later. **Period:** 12 Months. **Last date for submission of E-bid technical & Financial at E-procurement website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 16.03.2020, **date of****************

opening e-bid Part-I: 17.03.2020, **Part-II:** Shall be intimated later. **Period:** 12 Months. **For participation and detailed information log in to website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 37. **E-Tender No.:** 20/CHD-VI/BTPS/2019-20, Office: Superintending Engineer, CHC, BTPS Anpara. **Work:** Work of complete electrical wiring of power, control, lighting along with laying of power/control cables and installation of control panels of new constructed crusher house for coal sample preparation at tail end of ATPS track hopper of Anpara TPS. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 2,000.00 (Rs. Two Thousand Only) (Refundable). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 500.00 + 18% GST, (Non Refundable). **Earnest money deposit & tender cost to be deposited through NEFT/RTGS of DY.C.A.O., CFA&BO, BTPS, Anpara. Last date for submission of E-bid technical & Financial at E-procurement website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 16.03.2020, **date of opening e-bid Part-I:** 18.03.2020, **Part-II:** Shall be intimated later. **Period:** 01 Month. **For participation and detailed information log in to website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 38. **E-Tender No.:** 05/EMD-II/BTPS/2020-21, Office: Superintending Engineer, O&M MCC-I, 2X500MW, BTPS, Anpara. **Work:** Replacement of stator / Rotor & its accessories in 2 nos. spare defective boiler circulation pumps of 2x500MW, BTPS, Anpara. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 20,000.00 (Rs. Twenty Thousand Only) (Refundable). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 500.00 + 18% GST, (Non Refundable). **Earnest money deposit & tender cost to be deposited through NEFT/RTGS of DY.C.A.O., CFA&BO, BTPS, Anpara. Last date for submission of e-bid (Technical & Financial) at E-procurement website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 06.04.2020, **date of opening e-bid Part-I:** 07.04.2020, **Part-II:** Shall be intimated later. **Period:** 12 Months. **For participation and detailed information log in to website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 39. **E-Tender No.:** 01/BMD-II/ATPS/2020-21, Office: Superintending Engineer, O&M MCC-II, 3X210MW, ATPS, Anpara. **Work:** Miscellaneous work for main boiler, E.S.P., A.P.H and stone handling etc of 3x210 MW, ATPS, Anpara. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 10,000.00 (Rs. Ten Thousand Only) (Refundable). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 500.00 + 18% GST, (Non Refundable). **Earnest money deposit & tender cost to be deposited through NEFT/RTGS of DY.C.A.O., CFA&BO, ATPS, Anpara. Last date for submission of hard copy of requisite documents:** 21.03.2020, **date of opening e-bid Part-I:** 23.03.2020, **Part-II:** Shall be intimated later. **Period:** 12 Months. **For participation and detailed information log in to website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 40. **E-Tender No.:** 01/BMD-II/ATPS/2020-21, Office: Superintending Engineer, O&M MCC-II, 3X210MW, ATPS, Anpara. **Work:** Preventive / Breakdown maintenance of paddle feeders installed in CHP - 2X500MW, BTPS, Anpara. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 23,000.00 (Rs. Twenty Three Thousand Only) (Refundable). **Tender Cost:** Rs. 500.00 + 18% GST, (Non Refundable). **Earnest money deposit & tender cost to be deposited through NEFT / RTGS of DY.C.A.O., CFA&BO, BTPS, Anpara. Last date for submission of e-bid (Technical & Financial) at E-procurement website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. 16.03.2**************

2018 BHIMA-KOREGAON VIOLENCE

348 cases withdrawn so far: Anil

Maha also withdraws 460 cases booked for demanding Maratha reservations

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Maharashtra Government has withdrawn 348 cases registered in connection with the 2018 Bhima-Koregaon violence and 460 cases booked during the various agitations demanding Maratha reservations, Home Minister Anil Deshmukh informed the State Legislative Council here on Thursday.

Replying to a question in the upper house of the Maharashtra Legislature, Deshmukh said: "Out of the total 649 cases registered in connection with the Bhima-Koregaon violence, the State Government has withdrawn 348 cases. Similarly, 460 cases out of the total 548 cases registered during agitations demanding Maratha reservations".

Deshmukh said that the process of withdrawing cases in connection with the Bhima-Koregaon violence was continuing. "The cases that we intend to withdraw are all of minor nature. However, we will not withdraw cases registered for destruction of property and assault on police officials in connection with Bhima-Koregaon violence," the minister said.

Slamming the previous Devendra Fadnavis government for carrying out an improper investigation into the Bhima-Koregaon case, Deshmukh said: "The state government may have handed over the case to the National Investigation Agency (NIA), but the state government will order a probe into the Bhima-Koregaon case under the Bombay Police Act, 1951 or section 10 of the NIA Act, 2008".

Deshmukh also came down heavily on the previous BJP-led government for dubbing the activists who were vociferous critics of the ruling BJP and Modi government at the Centre, as "urban naxals".

The minister said that despite a directive issued by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on December 2 to withdraw all cases filed against protesters who had opposed the proposed oil refinery and petrochemicals complex at Nanar in Rajapur taluka of Ratnagiri district, "only three cases" had so far been withdrawn. Deshmukh's statement about his plans to order a fresh investigation into the Bhima-Koregaon violence case should be seen in the context of chief minister Uddhav Thackeray's decision to let the NIA take over the investigations into the 2018 Bhima-Koregaon-Elgaar Parishad case.

Deshmukh had said earlier this month that the State Home Ministry was seeking legal

opinion before going ahead with its plan to order a fresh probe into the Bhima-Koregaon-Elgaar Parishad case under section 10 of the NIA Act. "The Maharashtra government may have let the NIA carry out the investigations in the Bhima-Koregaon-Elgaar Parishad case to the NIA, but we will seek a legal opinion if we can institute an SIT to investigate the case," the minister had said.

If the NCP—which holds the Home portfolio in the state—decides to go ahead with the SIT probe into the Bhima-Koregaon-Elgaar Parishad case, it will send a clear cut message to its ruling ally—Shiv Sena that the chief minister—can ill-afford to "overrule" his party's allies in the MVA on crucial matters like the one in the case. Simultaneously, the NCP is bound to trigger a confrontation between the State and Centre over a parallel probe on the Bhima-Koregaon-Elgaar Parishad case.

FADNAVIS' BANGLES REMARKS ROW

Sena complains to RSS about Amruta's 'objectionable' remarks against Aditya

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The controversy over a spat between the ruling Shiv Sena-NCP-Congress alliance and the Opposition BJP over former Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis' 'bangles' remark assumed a new dimension on Thursday, as a Sena leader complained to the RSS about 'objectionable' remarks by Fadnavis' wife Amruta against his party's leader and Minister Aditya Thackeray.

A day after Fadnavis' banker-wife Amruta came to the defence of her and hit out at Aditya through a tweet, president of the state-run Vasantrao Naik Sheti Swavlamban Mission (VNSSM) Kishore Tiwari—in a letter written to RSS general secretary Bhayyaji Joshi—objected to the term "cocooned worm" used by her to describe the Sena minister in her tweet put out on Wednesday.

Addressing a BJP workers rally held at Azad Maidan on Tuesday, Fadnavis had slammed the Sena for its failure to act against Pathan for his much-discussed "15 crore..." statement. "Uddhav Thackeray-

led Shiv Sena may be wearing bangles but we are not. If someone says something then he will be given an answer in the same way. BJP has this much power."

Responding to Fadnavis' "bangles" comment, Aditya tweeted on Wednesday: "Shri @Dev_Fadnavi ji, normally I choose not to comment back. Kindly apologise abt bangles comment: bangles are worn by the strongest of all-the women. Politics can go on, but we need to change this discourse. Rather disgraceful coming from a fmr CM".

A couple of hours later, Fadnavis' banker-wife Amruta Fadnavis—who has of late been taking political stands on various issues and coming out in support of her former chief minister-husband—slammed Aditya through a tweet. "A cocooned worm will never understand the 'Pun' of life! It's meant to thrive on the glory of the silken life woven for its comfort by its ancestors @AUThackeray! Proud of ur struggles @Dev_Fadnavis & each and every hardworking member of @BJP4Maharashtra!", Amruta tweeted.

Tasking strong exception to Amruta's tweet, Tiwari stated in his letter to the RSS general secretary: "... celeb-banker Amruta Fadnavis sought to defend her husband (Devendra) by suggesting that Aditya was a 'cocooned worm' and she said 'A cocooned worm will never understand the 'Pun' of life! It's meant to thrive on the glory of the silken life woven for its comfort by its ancestors @AUThackeray!".

"This unwanted activism of both Devendra and Amruta is the main cause for souring of good relationship between BJP-Shiv Sena and due to over-confidence and arrogance, which is core cause of historic SS-NCP-INC mega alliance (sic)," Tiwari stated.

In his letter -- a copy of which he posted on his Facebook page, Tiwari said: "Amruta's unwanted political activism is beyond the understanding and culture of Indian culture as no opposition politician's spouses -husband/wife, anywhere all over India criticises Govt like this (No even unhappy womenfolk does not spell doom for BJP in 2024, in centre & State".

Tiwari also took the examples of the wives of BJP leaders Amit Shah, Nitin Gadkari and Rajnath Singh who, he said, "don't go around abusing Sonia/Rahul or husbands of political rivals". "What's Amruta Fadnavis' hidden agenda? Is she trying to take over the state BJP which has no prominent women leader left now? Will she be acceptable to the BJP-RSS mindset? These are the questions being asked by the people," Tiwari stated.

Tiwari urged the RSS general secretary "to look into the matter and ensure that such unhappy womenfolk does not spell doom for BJP in 2024, in centre & State".

Jeswant Singh, Shatrughan Sinha, Arun Shourie etc do not do such things".

"Shiv Sena founder Balasaheb Thackeray's wife Meenatai Thackeray quietly functioned in shadow and her contribution came out after her sad demise... Same is the case of CM Uddhav's wife Rashmi, his cousin Raj T's wife Sharmila (who are) in background without making useless remarks and controversial gestures," Tiwari wrote.

Bill making Marathi mandatory in schools OK'd

Mumbai: The Maharashtra Legislative Assembly on Thursday unanimously passed a bill which makes Marathi a compulsory subject across all schools in the state.

The development came on 'Marathi Bhasha Din' (Marathi language day) which is celebrated on February 27, the birth anniversary of poet and Jnanpith award winner late V V Shirwadkar.

The state Legislative Council had passed the legislation, titled 'Maharashtra Compulsory Teaching and Learning of Marathi Language in Schools Bill, 2020', on Wednesday.

Minister for Marathi Language Subhash Desai introduced the bill in the Lower House on Thursday.

Desai said the legislation was on the lines of laws in Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka, and it makes teaching and studying Marathi compulsory in all schools (irrespective of the board to which they are affiliated).

Marathi will become a compulsory subject in all schools from standard 1st to 10th in a phased manner from the academic year 2020-2021, he said.

It will be introduced in the first and sixth standards from the coming academic year and extended to further classes in subsequent years.

The subject will be, thus, taught from 1st to 10th standards from 2024, and the schools will follow a curriculum prescribed by the government.

The government will have the power to exempt a student or a class of students from all or any of the provisions of the Act, Desai said.

The Act also provides for a penalty of Rs 1 lakh for non-compliance. PTI

Resolution for caste census in Bihar again

Patna: The Bihar Assembly on Thursday unanimously passed a resolution for the second time in just over a year favouring a caste-based census in 2021.

Speaker Vijay Kumar Choudhary made the announcement in the assembly during the pre-lunch session.

"... This is an appropriate time when the House should convey its sentiments to the authorities concerned for a caste-based census... The proposed census 2021 be conducted on caste basis," Choudhary said. He said Chief Minister Nitish Kumar had made a proposal for a similar resolution during the debate on adjournment motion on Tuesday on the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, National Register of Citizens and the

National Population Register in the Assembly, which found support from all other political parties in the House.

The Bihar Assembly had on February 18 last year passed a unanimous resolution for carrying out caste census.

Caste-based census was conducted way back in 1931, the chief minister had said. PTI



J&K bank: Fresh recruitment ordered

PNS ■ JAMMU

Bank through the IBPS.

This was stated by Principal Secretary Planning, Development and Monitoring, Rohit Kansal at an evening press conference.

Addressing media, Rohit Kansal also informed that various legal infirmities had been pointed out in the ongoing recruitment process. As a result the ongoing process of recruitment for these posts by this bank shall stand scrapped," he said and added that the bank is being advised to ensure that all applicants eligible in the last recruitment which has been cancelled shall be eligible for the fresh recruitment also.

He added, "The entire recruitment process will be completed by on a fast track basis within three months. The detailed modalities and announcements in this regard will be finalized by the bank in its next board meeting.

Among other important decisions, the Government also announced new amnesty scheme for power consumers across UT of J&K. The amnesty scheme for the power consumers will come into effect from March 1, 2020. "It decided that as a welfare measure and in order to give an opportunity to power consumers to prevent disconnection of their connections and to facilitate easy payment, the amnesty scheme envisages payment of arrears in three easy instalments," he announced.

PM Modi holds talks with Myanmar Prez

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the focus on the socio-economic development of the southeast Asian nation, India and Myanmar on Thursday signed 10 agreements as Prime Minister Narendra Modi held wide-ranging talks with Myanmar President U Win Myint. The Myanmar president, who arrived in India on Wednesday, received a ceremonial welcome at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. He and First Lady Diao Cho were welcomed by President Ram Nath Kovind and PM Modi.

The Prime Minister and President Myint later held talks at Hyderabad House and 10 agreements were signed between the two countries. The focus of many agreements was on development projects under India's assistance, particularly in the conflict-torn Rakhine state.

DELHI VIOLENCE

Political parties to pick issue for Bengal civic polls

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Delhi mayhem may polarise Bengal municipal elections in a big way. There are reports that the political parties of the State are planning to 'utilise' Delhi riots as an issue to influence the voters in the upcoming municipal elections.

According to sources in the BJP local leaders and workers have been asked to stage local level meeting and place the party's views not only on its development plans but also the tumultuous situation in the National Capital and the groups responsible for it.

"We will tell the truth to the people as to what happened in Delhi. How things were planned to defame India during President Trump's visit. The politically educated people of Bengal must know about the reality as the opposition parties are running a hate campaign in the media accusing the Hindus of perpetrating the riots which is not the real side of the story," said a senior leader of the State committee accusing the rival community for holding the Capital to ransom.

"Is the central Government a fool to embarrass itself by inciting riots when President Trump is present. Is the BJP so immature as not to understand how Pakistan will take mileage out of the situation. In fact it is the traitors of the nation who have organized the riots to defame India... The Delhi Police in fact has exercised great restraint in not opening fire in many places just because our Government has great regard for the minorities unlike Pakistan," another BJP leader said. This leader, and a party candidate in the Lok Sabha elections was himself accused of giving inflammatory speeches during campaigning.

On whether the BJP will go to people with an intent of polarizing the atmosphere the leader said "the atmosphere

has already been polarized as the Hindus have awakened and learnt to assert their rights. If some people think that speaking the plain truth is polarization, then so be it."

The Trinamool Congress on the other hand was less vocal while its leaders said the people will be told as to how the BJP was trying to divide India along communal lines.

"It is not only Pakistan which is trying to divide India but it is also the BJP which is dividing the country by playing into the hands of Pakistan," a senior TMC leader and a Minister said adding his party would go to the people with the report card containing what Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has done for the State in the past nine years.

"And if the BJP tries to communalise the atmosphere then we will not let them do that. Rather we will use the situation to expose their communal plans," the Minister said adding definitely Delhi riots would be raised during the election campaign but to tell how BJP and Hindutva goons applied the Gujarat model in Delhi to break the society along communal lines. CPI(M)'s Sujan Chakrabarty, a party central committee member however accused both the parties for being "complementary to each other." While Mamata Banerjee was banking on minority communalism, the BJP was taking the opportunity to play its Hindutva card, he said adding "these two parties are communal and are complementary to each other. We will tell the people during the elections how BJP designed and planned the Delhi riots and how our Chief Minister maintained a diplomatic silence so as not to hurt any community."

This was "political opportunism" he said adding "the Left however would expose both the parties during the election campaign."

India evacuates 112 people from China, 124 from Japan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

CORONAVIRUS

India on Thursday brought back 112 people from the coronavirus-hit Chinese city Wuhan and another group of 124 from Tokyo who were on board a cruise ship infected by the deadly virus. All the evacuees will undergo a 14-day quarantine in two batches at the ITBP and Army facilities in Chhawal and Manesar respectively here.

The Union Ministry of External Affairs said that AC-17 Globemaster III transport aircraft of Indian Air Force evacuated 76 Indians and 36 foreign nationals from Wuhan while an Air India flight brought back the group of 124 people from Tokyo.

The foreign national evacuated from Wuhan included 23 from Bangladesh, six from China, two each from Myanmar and Maldives and one each from South Africa, USA and Madagascar.

Besides 119 Indians, the people evacuated from Japan included two from Sri Lanka and one each from Nepal, South Africa and Peru. The group was among 3,711 people who were on board the coronavirus-infected Diamond Princess ship when it docked at the Yokohama port near Tokyo on February 3.

"In line with India's neighbourhood first policy and Indo-Pacific vision, the special flight also evacuated five foreign nationals — two Sri Lankans, one Nepalese, one South African and one Peruvian," MEA spokesman Ravesh Kumar said.

Three Indian crew members didn't board the Air India flight as they conveyed their wish to continue their stay on-board the cruise ship to complete the period of extended quarantine put in place by the Japanese government.

Out of the total 138 Indian nationals originally on-board Diamond Princess, 16 Indian crew members have tested positive for coronavirus and are receiving medical care at an onshore medical facility in Japan. They will undergo a 14-day quarantine at the facility set up by the Indian Army in Manesar. Earlier, India had evacuated around 650 Indians from Wuhan in two Air India flights. All these people later tested negative for the virus and were allowed to go home after a fortnight of quarantine. "In all 723 Indian nationals and 43 foreign nationals have been evacuated from Wuhan, China in these three flights," an MEA statement said.

The AC-17 Globemaster flown to Wuhan on Wednesday had carried 15 tonnes of medical supplies for coronavirus-affected people in China.

On the medical supplies delivered by India to China, the MEA said they will help augment the country's efforts to control the coronavirus outbreak which has been declared as a public health emergency by the World Health Organisation. "The assistance is also a mark of friendship and solidarity from the people of India towards the people of China as the two countries also celebrate 70th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations this year," it said.

A team of doctors, paramedics and others will be present at the quarantine facility round-the-clock and the inmates will be provided facilities like food, bed and indoor entertainment to spend time, as per the statement.

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION, RUDRAPRAYAG

CORRIGENDUM

Please refer to the Tender Notice No-1767 Dated 13/02/2020 for "Design, Installation, Commissioning and Operationalizing on BOT (Build, Operate and Transfer) Model" ON SHRI KEDARNATH CHARDHAM YATRA ROUTE of tender documents is here by amended to the following extent:

Para 7:-	Services to be provided by Vendor/Consortia (Consortia will be allowed)
Para 12 (XII) - Connectivity/ communication	Timeline for the setup of alternate network will be finalized after the finalization of tender
Para 14:-	Vendor/Firm etc. registered under MSME will be given exemption as per the Government of Uttarakhand Order No. 1542/VI-13-13/145-Udhog/2003 dated 20 August 2019.

All other terms and conditions of the tender shall remain unchanged. Further details can be downloaded from our website <https://mtdrprayag.gov.in/>. The duly sealed offer/letter addressed to the District Magistrate, Rudraprayag must reach this office at Rudraprayag on or before 5 March 2020 up to 12 noon.

No. 1871
Date:- 26.02.2020
District Magistrate
Rudraprayag.

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY Notification No. 14/2020

Important Notice for Rail Passenger

It is notified for the information of general public that Express trains was cancelled and reduced frequency until 29-02-2020 due to fog. Notification No- 04/2020 dated 23.01.2020. Now these train - were restored from 01-03-2020 as per following:-

(A) Full Cancellation

05106	Basti-Gorakhpur	14006	Anand Vihar-Sitamari
05105	Gorakhpur-Basti	14005	Sitamari-Anand Vihar
22424	Amritsar - Gorakhpur	14618	Amritsar - Banmankhi
22423	Gorakhpur - Amritsar	14617	Banmankhi - Amritsar

(B) Reduction in Frequency

12561	Jainagar-New Delhi	Thursday
12562	New Delhi-Jainagar	Friday
15211	Darbhanga-Amritsar	Wednesday
15212	Amritsar-Darbhanga	Friday
12557	Muzaffarpur-Anand Vihar	Wednesday
12558	Anand Vihar-Muzaffarpur	Thursday
15054	Lucknow Jn.-Chhapra	Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday
15053	Chhapra-Lucknow Jn.	Wednesday, Friday, Sunday

CPROT-81 Chief Pass Trans. Manager, Gorakhpur
About any passenger amenity complain SMS on Mobile No. 09794845955
"Never travel on roof and foot boards"

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY Notification No.-13/2020

Important Notice for Rail Passenger

It is notified for the information of general public that in continuation of notification no-04/2020 dated 23-01-2020 in view of operational difficulties due to dense foggy conditions, the cancellation, partial cancellation, reduction in frequency and diversion of following trains will continue after 29.02.2020 till dates shown against them will be as under:-

(A) Full Cancellation

S. Train No.	From Station to station	Dates of Cancellation from originating station Upto
1	15111 Chhapra-Varanasi City	31-03-2020
2	15112 Varanasi City-Chhapra	31-03-2020
3	15105 Chhapra-Nautwa Intercity	31-03-2020
4	15106 Nautwa -Chhapra	31-03-2020
5	14213 Varanasi-Gonda	31-03-2020
6	14214 Gonda-Varanasi	31-03-2020
7	15071 Mau-Lucknow Jn.	31-03-2020
8	15072 Lucknow Jn.-Mau	31-03-2020
9	12179 Lucknow Jn.-Agra Fort	31-03-2020
10	12180 Agra Fort-Lucknow Jn.	31-03-2020
11	15033 Haridwar-Ram Nagar	31-03-2020
12	15034 Ram Nagar-Haridwar	31-03-2020
13	05306 Farrukhabad-Kanpur Anwarganj	31-03-2020
14	05305 Kanpur Anwarganj-Farrukhabad	31-03-2020
15	14616 Amritsar-Lalkuan	31-03-2020
16	14615 Lalkuan-Amritsar	31-03-2020
17	14524 Ambala-Barauni Jn.	31-03-2020
18	14523 Barauni Jn.-Ambala	31-03-2020
19	14674 Amritsar-Jainagar	31-03-2020
20	14673 Jainagar-Amritsar	31-03-2020
21	12583 Lucknow Jn.-Anand Vihar(T)	31-03-2020
22	12584 Anand Vihar(T)-Lucknow Jn	31-03-2020

(B) Reduction in Frequency

S. Train no.	From Station to Station & Train Name	Day of Cancellation	Dates of Cancellation from originating station
1	12571 Gorakhpur-Anand Vihar	Wednesday, Friday	March 2020-4,6,11,13,18, 20, 25, 27
2	12572 Anand Vihar-Gorakhpur	Thursday, Saturday	March 2020-5,7,12,14, 19, 21, 26, 28
3	12595 Gorakhpur-Anand Vihar	Monday	March 2020-2,9,16,23,30
4	12596 Anand Vihar-Gorakhpur	Tuesday	March 2020-3,10,17,24,31
5	12226 Delhi-Azamgarh	Wednesday, Saturday	March 2020-4,7,11,14,18, 21, 25, 28
6	12225 Azamgarh-Delhi	Thursday, Sunday	March 2020-1,5,8,12,15, 19, 22, 26, 29
7	15203 Barauni-Lucknow Jn.	Tuesday	March 2020-3,10,17,24,31
8	15204 Lucknow Jn.-Barauni	Wednesday	March 2020-4,11,18,25
9	15273 Raxaul-Anand Vihar	Thursday	March 2020-5,12,19,26
10	15274 Anand Vihar-Raxaul	Friday	March 2020-6,13,20,27
11	12523 New Jalpaiguri-New Delhi	Tuesday	March 2020-3,10,17,24,31
12	12524 New Delhi-New Jalpaiguri	Wednesday	March 2020-4,11,18,25
13	15705 Kathar-Delhi	Thursday	March 2020-5,12,19,26
14	15706 Delhi-Kathar	Friday	March 2020-6,13,20,27
15	11124 Gwalior-Barauni Jn.	Monday, Thursday	March 2020-2,5,9,12,16, 19, 23, 26, 30
16	11123 Barauni Jn.-Gwalior	Tuesday, Friday	March 2020-3,6,10,13,17, 20, 24, 27, 31

(C) Diversion

(1) Train no 13237/13239 (Except Friday)-Patna-Kota-Patna Exp. leaving Patna Jn. On & From 01.02.2020 to 31.03.2020 will be diverted via Kanpur-Farrukhabad-Kasganj-Mathura-Achhnera-Bharatpur scheduled route of Kanpur-Tundla-Agra-Mathura-Bharatpur.

(2) Train no. 13238/13240 (Except Saturday) Kota-Patna Exp. leaving Kota On and from 01.02.2020 to 31.03.2020 shall be diverted via Bharatpur-Achhnera-Mathura-Kasganj-Farrukhabad-Kanpur-Lucknow scheduled route of Bharatpur-Mathura-Agra-Tundla-Kanpur. (In Remark - Sr.No. 1 and 2 train stoppage 5 minute at Achhnera Jn. in both direction).

(3) Train no.18631/18632 Ajmer-Ranchi Exp. leaving Ajmer Jn.On&from 06.02.2020 to 27.02.2020 and 05.03.2020 to 26.03.2020 respectively will be diverted via Allahabad Jn.-Allahabad City-Mandulih-Varanasi-Pt. Deen Dyal Upadhaya scheduled route of Allahabad-Mirzapur-Varnanagar-Pt. Deen Dyal Upadhaya

CPROT-80 Chief Pass Trans. Manager, Gorakhpur
About any passenger amenity complain SMS on Mobile No. 09794845955
"Never travel on roof and foot boards"

Costlier casualty

The Delhi violence is serious because it shows that binaries have been deep-set and a panic economy has taken over



The story of the Delhi violence lies much beyond the headlines or the number of the dead. The terrifying visual of a man, whose photo of being beaten up by a violent mob simply because he wore a certain kind of clothes and sported a beard went viral, validated the pogrom-like sequence of events as the new normal and its casual acceptance in normal life. It's something as statistical as an accident on the crime charts. It is serious simply because it happened in Delhi, the nation's capital no less, and not in a far-flung town in

India clouded by obscurantism. It is a test case that could get copied elsewhere and worse, be passed off as another law and order situation that can be tamped down by Section 144. When a judge like Justice Muralidhar, whom junior lawyers call an inspiration, gets transferred overnight for daring to question the Delhi police, then we should worry, with deep furrowed brows. Simply because an independent judiciary is the only hope for citizens seeking justice and rights that the Constitution guarantees to them. If this institution is broken, then our statute books mean nothing at all and public morality simply spins out of the orbit of our nation as we knew it. Till now. If north-east Delhi, where various communities have literally lived cheek by jowl for decades and more, is torn asunder by blood-curdling rage at the mere remark of an extremist, it shows that Indians, as a people, are harbouring a tinder box in their minds. This is a separatism that has nothing to do with the unresolved wounds of Partition. But an otherisation propaganda that has been bred systematically on a fertile ground of insecurities and economic denial. The polarisation of the mind is a far deadlier poison for it blunts the edge of humanity. It also means a subterranean conflict, which may bubble up any moment and because of its smouldering nature, engulf every other human possibility of reason, wisdom and compassion. If BJP motormouth and "go and kill" instigator Kapil Mishra has not been reined in despite protests from within his own party, it legitimises the politics of hate as a yielder of fast dividends and delegitimises public service. Politically, socially and culturally, there is a sudden vacuum which nobody wants to plunge into or commit to. That explains why the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), despite winning a solid verdict, seems uncertain about the public stance it should take. It cannot stick its neck out simply because nobody, including the BJP, knows what shape panic can acquire in a vacuum. Prejudice has taken over national pride to such an extent that everybody listens to it, not without it.

The only certainty about these uncertain times is that it is not the best time to seek our place in the world. US lawmaker Bernie Sanders has expressed reservations and concern as has the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). Even UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was "very saddened" by the casualties in Delhi. He called for maximum restraint and violence to be avoided. Although the Modi Government sought to describe such comments as "factually inaccurate and misleading," truth is the world doesn't expect India to indulge in genocidal politics. Especially, when we use the optics of the Sabarmati ashram for visiting dignitaries but forget the non-violence mantra preached by its original resident. When it comes to the Opposition, the BJP anyway wins the battle on competitive whataboutery. So when senior Congress leaders, led by party chief Sonia Gandhi, met President Ram Nath Kovind to demand the resignation of Home Minister Amit Shah over his "abdication of duty", the party reminded it of the anti-Sikh riots of 1984. BJP MP Pragna Singh Thakur, another motormouth who hasn't been reined in, asked the Congress to review its role during that period. Only RSS general secretary Suresh "Bhaiyyaji" Joshi advised the BJP that nobody had the right to take the law into their hands and that the Centre should ensure that peace is restored in Delhi. Placatory, high-sounding terms that are abstract enough to spare the BJP's extreme elements, all of whom have been birthed by its ideology. In the end, it is time for the civil movement to free itself from the piecemeal appropriation of causes and issues by political parties. Or be exploited by them. For Delhiites, who have found a new identity in a city that is a melting pot of all migrants, the time for denial is over. We cannot be sporting identity cards like a curfew pass. We must stand up and be counted.

Imperfect justice

Harvey Weinstein is convicted of third-degree rape and a criminal sexual act. He's staring at just 5 years



The battle of justice for women, who take on rich and powerful men for molestation, or worse rape, is long, lonely and hard. No matter in which part of the globe they are, whether it is India, Pakistan, the UK or even the biggest and one of the most technologically-advanced Western countries in the world, the US. What else justifies the fact that movie mogul Harvey Weinstein, who was accused by no less than 90 women of sex crimes, was convicted only in two cases whereas he was found guilty of raping one woman and committing a non-consensual sex act on another? It was imperfect justice because he was acquitted of the most serious charges — two counts of predatory sexual assault and one count of first-degree rape, which might have put him in a cell for the rest of his life. The jury only convicted him of third-degree rape and a first-degree criminal sexual act. So now he is looking at just five years in prison. And this was the man, who throughout his long career as a film producer, had silenced multiple accusations of rape and sexual assault with threats, denials, character assassinations, monetary settlements and Non-Disclosure Agreements. He had even scared off journalists who tried to expose his dastardly acts and bring him to justice, till tenacious journalists from the *New York Times* and the *New Yorker* brought him down with their exposés in 2017.

However, the verdict is a small victory for women around the world battling hard against their sexual predators. The Unnao rape victim, who accused former BJP MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar of rape or the law student, who tried to bring former BJP MP Swami Chinmayanand to book for raping her repeatedly, would tell you at what personal peril they managed to be heard. Weinstein's conviction is also a defeat of the most belligerent victim-shaming and blaming tactics that are used by ruthless defence lawyers in such cases. More importantly, it broke the stereotype of what a "perfect victim" is as justice was given to the two women who did not end their relationship with their tormentor simply because he was who he was. It is a small measure of vindication for the six women who testified that Weinstein attacked and sought to intimidate them as they were put through the grinder by his lawyers. They can now feel proud of the part they played in getting the predator put behind bars, where he belongs. It is also a victory for the #MeToo movement, which was fast classified as a fad that a cause.

Some hard, home truths

It is an irony of our times that the very Government, which promised to protect the country from any divisive internal or external force, has failed to fulfill its duties



AJOY KUMAR

When the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was voted to power in 2014 and then even more resoundingly in 2019, one of the pillars that the party sought to stand on was its claim that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will represent a strong Government and that it will protect the country from any divisive internal or external force. It is this assurance that forms the backdrop of the now-infamous belief that the Prime Minister's "56-inch chest" will provide India with a protective shield. Events that unfolded in Delhi over the past week, where clashes broke out between communities that led to the killing of 35 people (at the time of writing), have thrown cold water over the Prime Minister's hollow claims of leading a strong Government.

In fact, there will be few instances in the history of independent India where a citizen has felt more unsafe than he/she does right now. Delhi is in the midst of its worst riots since 1984. And as relevant authorities examine who exactly is to be blamed for the violence that has been unleashed, there are some issues that are indisputable and require some tough answers.

The first is, how did such a riot take place, that, too, in the capital city? Delhi is not just the capital of this country but is also home to India's most well-funded and trained police force. Let this sink in. Theoretically speaking, this means that the Delhi police, which functions under the Central Government that is controlled by the BJP and more specifically comes under the direct supervision of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, is India's best equipped police force. This means that in terms of numbers and assistance, compared to other forces across the country, the law and order situation in Delhi could not have been better protected. Well, hypothetically speaking, at least.

In addition to this, Delhi is also the centre for all intelligence agencies in the country. It is home to several intelligence bodies, whose job includes to be alert about all possible acts of violence or riots that may erupt in the country. But the intelligence bodies and the police force have failed to prevent violence in not more than a 10-km radius from Parliament. How does this make those residing in other parts of the country feel? If the Government could not stop acts of mass violence in places where its base is the strongest, how exactly does it plan to protect the rest of the country?

Let's once assume that this is not true. But the element of bias cannot be denied because as per reports, the Delhi police was sent at least six alerts on Sunday (February 23), asking for deployment to be stepped up after BJP leader Kapil Mishra called for a gathering in support of the Citizenship Act at Delhi's Maujpur. Why then was the police so helpless in preventing violence? This is a greater cause for concern because if the Delhi police is better equipped to tackle violence than any other police force



in the country, why did it fail to deliver?

These are not the only questions over the conduct of the Delhi police. Why are videos of police personnel destroying CCTV cameras doing the rounds? The only way to get answers and to ensure that such riots do not happen again is to dig deep and find out as to what exactly happened. But how will the destruction of CCTV cameras help answer that question? What I am concerned about and what should concern all of us is the establishment of truth and the delivery of justice to all those people who have been affected by this senseless violence. This can be done only by taking appropriate action against those involved in the violence. Perpetrators include leaders of political parties of every hue and any official, who allowed such violence to go unabated for three days.

The more serious concern is that slowly but steadily, we have reached this shameful place. There are a few reasons for this. One is the lack of resistance by the bureaucracy. I have some sympathy for the bureaucrats here though. Governments of the past have often shown — and the BJP Government has mastered — how adept they are in the art of abuse, twist and wrangle. This is in contrast to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's vision of the civil services being the "steel frame" of good governance. Bureaucrats are now routine-

“ IF THE STATE MACHINERY IS FAILING US AND INSTITUTIONS ARE DISPLAYING A LACK OF BACKBONE, THE ANSWER AND BURDEN (UNFORTUNATELY OR FORTUNATELY) FALL ON EVERYDAY PEOPLE. IN THIS FIGHT, THE ONLY THING WE MUST MAKE SURE IS THAT WE FIGHT, NOT WITH VIOLENCE, BUT WITH VIGOUR, VOICE AND VOTE TO UPHOLD THE RULE OF THE LAW ”

ly being threatened with transfer orders, raids by income tax authorities or the Enforcement Directorate or any other agency which is at the Centre's disposal with a degree of reckless abandon. I don't think we would have to go more than a few weeks behind to find an instance of such abuse. It has permeated all institutions, including the Election Commission of India.

More recently came the brazen example of Justice S Muralidhar of the Delhi High Court, who received a presidential order transferring him to the Punjab and Haryana High Court. This order came a day later after he pulled up the Solicitor General and the Delhi police for inaction during the riots in north-east Delhi. Coming down heavily on the Delhi police, he pulled it up for its failure to register FIRs against alleged hate-speeches by three BJP leaders, Anurag Thakur, Kapil Mishra and other usual suspects from the BJP.

While pressure by a Government on the bureaucracy and the judiciary is not an invention of the BJP — there are obvious examples of the Emergency, 1984 and 2002 — rarely has there been as concerted an effort by a Government to undermine all institutions, all at once. Circumstances are not helped by members of these institutions either. So often, we see bureaucrats being asked to jump and respond back with, "How high?" In the judiciary, too, we have recently seen a sitting

Supreme Court judge lavish heavy praise on the Prime Minister even as serious allegations of abuse of State power were being examined by the very same court.

Such acts and comments by individuals in positions of authority — whether in the bureaucracy or in the judiciary or any other institution — have chilling effects on the citizens. It erodes their faith in the institutions and the Constitution. This poses a greater risk to India's democratic health in the long term than individual acts of abuse of power by the BJP that I have highlighted in this article.

So what do we do? If the State machinery is failing us and institutions are displaying a lack of backbone, the answer and burden (unfortunately or fortunately) fall on everyday people. Unfortunate because this is a great burden that the civil society must now discharge when its institutions appear to be found wanting. Fortunate because there is rarely a time in history when any Government or institution can suppress the will of the people. The only thing we must make sure is that we fight, not with violence, but with vigour, voice and vote to uphold the rule of the law and the Constitution. Victory then will be undeniable for everyone who wants to live in a unified, peaceful and prosperous democracy.

(The writer is a former IPS officer, a former MP and currently a member of the AAP)

SOUNDBITE

When the US President was here lakhs of policemen were deployed. How could a riot happen? Had the Government and police wanted, it would not have happened.



SP chief — Akhilesh Yadav

I am a big believer in education. I truly believe that the way forward for any country, any family, city, state is by educating itself more and more.



Actor — Shah Rukh Khan

Ongoing incidents in Delhi are more concerning in the context of efforts to target and potentially disenfranchise Muslims, in clear violation of international human rights standards.



USCIRF Chair — Tony Perkins

Instead of taking active steps to remedy or defuse the situation, the Central government as also the Delhi Government have remained mute spectators.



Congress president — Sonia Gandhi

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The science of prayer

Sir — Every year, the country celebrates February 28 as the National Science Day in remembrance of Dr CV Raman, who discovered the scattering of light, also known as the "Raman effect". It is fascinating that great scientists strongly believed in the power of prayer, which helped them discover the secrets of nature.

This reminds me of a story about a young businessman sharing a compartment on a train with an elderly gentleman. When he noticed that the old fellow was quietly and intently praying with his Rosary, the young man chided him for his "superstition" and told him that science had rendered the beliefs of religion irrelevant. "How did you come to discover that?" the old gentleman asked.

His companion didn't really know how to answer the question then and there, so he offered to send him a few texts and public lecture notes on the subject for his enlightenment. "What's your address?" he asked, "I'll send you the material via the post."

The old man rummaged in

Amid chaos, heroes still exist

This refers to the editorial, "Delhi aflame" (February 26). Blood, violence and hate sum up the last few days in Delhi. This cauldron has been going on for four days and counting, and citizens, along with the rest of the country, can only helplessly look on in horror. The visuals have been so graphic that they would make one shut out the disturbing imagery and news headlines making their way onto the screen. But despite the flood of negativity, glimmers of hope remain.

Even as rioters and hateful, communal bigots give us a glimpse of India's ugliest underlying tendencies, there are still people in the city who can restore faith in humanity. Still, there are heroes as the city burns. These heroes are the people who have chosen to put humanity first at a time that demands that religion be prioritised. They are the people who stood up for their neighbours and fellow citizens, even while the State machinery failed to contain the bloodshed. They are those, who after the destruction had passed, were there to pick up the pieces, hand-in-hand with their neigh-



bours and friends. They have also fought to ensure that daily life continues, despite the upheaval. Their actions are a soothing balm in these tumultuous times, a reminder that India and its children still remember and honour the spirit of the Constitution — one that promises to secure justice, liberty, equality and fraternity for its citizens.

Javvadi Lakshmana Rao
Andhra Pradesh

Shun prejudice

Sir — This refers to the report, "CCPD issues notice to central medical institutions for denying job to Divyang doc" (February 26). The office of the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities (CCCPD) has made

the right intervention by stepping in to issue notices to the Delhi-based central medical institutions, Safdarjung Hospital and VMM College. They allegedly denied a teaching job to Dr Nonita Gangwani, an MD in physiology and a wheelchair user with 70 per cent disability due to multiple sclerosis, despite her

clearing an exam and interview for the post. At a time when Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given special status to the physically challenged and called them Divyang to emphasise their special place in the society, such discrimination is condemnable. Action should be taken against the officials responsible.

Lalit Adesara
Pune

Dirty political game

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "The court rap" (February 27). The violence in the capital, a result of political manoeuvres, was avoidable. It reflects badly not only on the police force but also on the functioning of the high echelons of bureaucracy. Keeping the Delhi police under the control of the Union Government has provided much space for shameless and dirty politics. To make governance accountable, the command of the police must be given to the State Government.

Vineet Keshri
Via email

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

India's baptism by fire

The nation is passing through a transitional period in its history, from a feudal agricultural society to a modern industrial one



MARKANDEY KATJU

Few people in India or for that matter, outside the country, are able to understand what is happening in the nation, particularly after the recent mindless violence in the national Capital in which as many as 38 people lost their lives and a whopping 150 were injured, apart from the massive destruction of private and public property. So let me try and explain this as best as I can. India is passing through a transitional period in its history, from a feudal agricultural society, to a modern industrial one. At present it is not entirely feudal nor entirely modern but stuck somewhere in between. Though there was a limited degree of industrialisation in India after 1947, it was not complete, like in Western countries (or even anywhere near that of China). Feudal remnants in the form of casteism, communalism, religious bigotry, superstitions, gender discrimination and so on are still powerful and well-entrenched.

A transitional period is always a very painful time in history as it is full of turbulence and strife. If we read the history of Europe from the 16th to the 19th centuries, when Europe was passing through its transition from a feudal to modern society, we find it was full of turbulence, turmoil, wars, revolutions, chaotic conditions, intellectual ferment and so on. It was only after going through this fire that modern society emerged in Europe. At present, India is going through this fire and we are going through a very painful epoch, which might last another 15-20 years or so.

For what is a transitional period? It is a time when the old society is being totally uprooted and torn apart, when ancient values are being challenged and destroyed but new values are yet to be created. Can such a historical transition be achieved peacefully? One wishes it could be so. However, historical experience shows otherwise. The vested interests in the old order always put up a fierce resistance to any fundamental change in the political and social order, as that would endanger their interests. So this change can only be achieved by some kind of revolution.

People ask when and how such a revolution will come about in India. Who will be its leaders? No one can say for sure. One can never be rigid about historical forms. But this much can be said with certainty: Some kind of revolution is inevitable in India because everything has collapsed here. All our State institutions have become hollow and empty shells, while on the other hand the Indian economy is sinking and the people's distress is growing. Nature does not like a vacuum and chaos cannot continue forever. So some alternative to the present political and social system is bound to emerge.

At present we have a parliamentary democracy in our country but this runs largely on the basis of caste and communal vote banks. Casteism and communalism are feudal forces which must be destroyed if India is to progress. However, parliamentary democracy further entrenches them. So we have to have an alternative. What that alternative system will be has to be thought out by intellectuals and for this they have to use their creativity. Intellectuals are the eyes of society and without them a society is blind. However, the test of every political system or act is one and only one: Does it raise the standard of living of the people? Does it give them better lives?

Before an actual revolution there has to be an intellectual revolution. For instance, before the French Revolution of 1789 there were several decades of intellectual struggles by great thinkers like Voltaire, Rousseau and the other thinkers of the Enlightenment, who attacked the feudal system, religious bigotry and so on. This intellectual revolution is needed to change the mindsets of the masses who are at present steeped in feudal ideas and feudal practices.

So the present stage in Indian history is the pre-revolutionary stage, i.e. the stage of the intellectual revolution. All patriotic, broad-minded intellectuals must contribute to it. In particular, they must attack the poison of communalism which has gripped India, and which is being promoted and fostered by our medieval-minded political masters.

All forces which divide our people and spread religious or caste hatred must be strongly combated, for only a mighty united people's struggle can lead to the revolution which will transform India into a prosperous, highly developed and highly industrialised country. It will also get rid of the scourge of poverty, record and rising unemployment, appalling level of child malnourishment, almost total lack of proper healthcare and quality education for our masses, atrocities and discrimination against minorities and Dalits, widespread corruption, gender discrimination, female infanticide, child marriage farmers distress and so on, which have bedeviled Indian society for long.

(The writer is a former judge of the Supreme Court of India)

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

THE ARMY SHOULD BE DEPLOYED IN DELHI AS THE POLICE HAS BEEN UNABLE TO CONTROL THE SITUATION AND INSTILL CONFIDENCE.
 —DELHI CHIEF MINISTER
 ARVIND KEJRIWAL



CM WAS READY TO COOPERATE IN MAINTAINING PEACE IN DELHI BUT TODAY HE TALKS ABOUT CALLING THE ARMY. THE POLICE IS WORKING 24X7
 —DELHI BJP PRESIDENT
 MANOJ TIWARI

Shouldering responsibility

South Asian nations face a water crisis which poses a threat to agriculture and industries. Given its increasing influence, is India willing to become a provider of water security in the region?



SANDEEP KUMAR DUBEY

On May 23, 2013, while speaking at the foundation stone-laying ceremony for the Indian National Defence University, Gurugram, the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh exuded confidence that India was well-positioned and willing "to become a net provider of security" in its immediate region and beyond. In 2015, the Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA), New Delhi, came out with an assessment report titled, *India as a Security Provider*. The report highlights India's growing military capabilities and its proactive responses to the human and non-human threats to the littoral nations of the Indian Ocean, which corroborates the country's image and positioning as a benign power and net security provider in the region. But the question here is: Is India also willing to play the role of net security provider when it comes to ensuring water security in the region? The above-mentioned IDSA report points out, "While traditional security threats limit India's role; cooperation on non-traditional threats opens up a new opportunity for India to play a regional role." Thus, it is a geostrategic imperative for India to focus on non-traditional security threats in the region emerging from sectors such as water and energy.

Today all the nations of South Asia face a water crisis in one form or another due to a range of factors — population growth, urbanisation, inefficient use, bad management and lack of governance, among others. The unfolding water crises pose a serious threat to sustainable development, agriculture and industries, poverty reduction and the ecosystem. Climate change has exacerbated the brewing water crises like never before. The United Nations Secretary General António Guterres has termed climate change as "the most systematic threat to humankind."

Water is a common resource and managing and governing it has always been a challenge at any scale, be it local or regional. A participatory robust institutional architecture for water governance is needed to manage and govern resources in a systematic and efficient way. Many of the important water bodies in South Asia are transboundary and thus their basins spread in more than one country. Integrated basin management would not be a reality without regional cooperation at the South Asian level.

Most of the water treaties in South Asia are bilateral in nature, which form the core of the South Asian political ecology of governance. Be it upper or lower riparian, nations in the region are apparently not content with the existing treaties. For example, India, an upper riparian nation, does not seem to be happy with the Indus Water Treaty with Pakistan, a lower riparian nation in this case. Between Bangladesh, a low riparian nation and India, the Teesta river issue still remains unresolved, with Dhaka asking for an increase in water share. People in Nepal, an upper riparian nation, think water treaties with India produces environmental injustices to the riverine people of Koshi river. Along with this kind of political ecology of the region, the issue of sovereignty in South Asia is a very sensitive topic. South Asia represents a typical case of the Westphalian concept of sovereignty, where each nation has exclusive sovereignty over its territory and the natural resources, including water. No nation would like to be seen as compromising its sovereignty. However in reality, in the face of globalisation and trade integration, each nation is bargaining its sovereignty with the other nations and regional and international actors. These two factors — the existing South Asian political ecology and the power politics played out in the name of sovereignty — both

WATER WOES COUPLED WITH THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE HAVE RESULTED IN A DISTINCT SET OF CHALLENGES THAT CALL FOR INDIA'S PROACTIVE ROLE IN THE SOUTH ASIAN REGION. WHAT IS REQUIRED TODAY IS A CONTINUOUS REGIONAL COOPERATION IN PROVIDING WATER SECURITY, WHICH IS AT PRESENT MARRED BY THE ABSENCE OF AN INSTITUTIONAL ARCHITECTURE FOR WATER GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH ASIA. INDIA SHOULD PLAY A LEAD ROLE IN INSTITUTIONALISING REGIONAL COOPERATION BY ESTABLISHING A ROBUST ARCHITECTURE



hinder and open up opportunities for regional cooperation at the same time. Some may think that regional cooperation compromises on the sovereignty of a State. However, the notion of sovereignty can be broadened to accommodate and facilitate the idea of cooperation, which is not about imposing suzerainty of one nation on another.

India has been quite active in the region in terms of coming to the rescue of its neighbours when they are in trouble. A case in point is when Maldives faced a water crisis in December 2014, India launched Operation NEER to immediately provide Maldives with it. The people and the Government of Maldives were appreciative of India's quick response and help. Having said that, one must be mindful that those were more of a response to a crisis that emerged and similar exercises could be useful to tackle future contingencies of that sort. However, water woes coupled with the effects of climate change have resulted in a distinct set of challenges that call for India's proactive role in the South Asian region. What is required today is a continuous regional cooperation in providing water security, which is at present marred by the absence of an institutional architecture for water governance in South Asia.

India should play a lead role in institutionalising regional cooperation by establishing a robust architecture. It has already set an example with the launch of South Asian Satellite in 2017, which Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his tweet termed as a "symbol of South Asian cooperation" and "a journey to build the most advanced frontier" of regional cooperation and partnership. With India looking for a larger regional role, it cannot afford to be a security consumer. It has to metamorphose itself into a credible secu-

rity provider. Benjamin Kienzie, a faculty member of Defence Studies at King's College London, elucidates, "A security provider has a stronger interest in the immediate security of a third party, rather than in direct security gains for itself...the action of a security provider easily lead to a win-win situation...A security consumer, on the other hand, is primarily interested in its own security and is largely indistinct towards the security needs of third parties...In general, security consumers create easily win-lose situations..." Notwithstanding, he makes it clear that a security provider in no way compromises its own security interests.

Domestically India has made some progress to improve water governance. The then Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation (now Ministry of Jal Shakti) constituted a committee led by Mihir Shah to suggest institutional reforms for water governance to deal with the water challenges that India faces in the 21st century. In July 2016, the Committee came out with a report titled, *A 21st Century Institutional Architecture for India's Water Reforms*. The report makes a number of critical suggestions to strengthen the governance of India's water resources. One of them is about its shape and structure. The report underlines that "polycentric governance regimes characterised by a distribution of power but effective coordination structures perform better." Considering water as one of the sectors most vulnerable to climate change, the report stressed that the ability to respond to it is strengthened by polycentric governance regimes.

The existing political ecology of South Asia makes the space of water resources a geopolitically contested zone. Governance is needed to protect the envi-

ronment, to save the ecology and to manage water resources in an integrated and holistic manner. Polycentricism is inherent in South Asia and by default distribution of power is effected by the very nature of South Asian sovereignty. What is missing essentially is the effective coordination to realise and unlock water governance potential in the region. Effective coordination can be established only through a well-structured institutional architecture involving all the actors and stakeholders. With the emergence of non-State environmental actors and groups in the region, the role of governments has receded in water governance and self-organised governance networks have found prominence.

In their article "Reflections on Actor-Network Theory, Governance Networks, and Strategic Outcomes", Ludmilla Meyer Montenegro and Sergio Bulgacov caution that, "self-organised governance networks can impede (policy) implementation...or they can enhance the efficiency of policy implementation...Thus, it is important to determine how these networks are formed, who forms them and how they function, since they have such direct impacts on governance. The more we know about networks, the better we understand governance dynamics and its relationships with the Government, informal mechanisms, and private actors."

India should painstakingly study the governance networks that exist today in South Asia for conceptualising a regional institutional architecture for water governance in the region, to not repeat another SAARC which is failing under its burden.

(The writer works as a Senior Programme Manager for climate and water projects at a German foundation and is a policy commentator)

Make nature's value visible

If bureaucrats could accept poverty-alleviation as a mainstream agenda to make a powerful diminution of rural poverty, accounting for the GDP of the poor can be the way forward



MEGHA JAIN

It has taken the world a while to reach the understanding that nature can never be taken for granted. Unfortunately, in India, this is not the case and utilisation of common natural resources like forests, green cover, oceans, rivers, fish stocks and so on, doesn't reflect anywhere in our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) accounting, as these are difficult to chronicle. This economic inconspicuousness of nature's services becomes an underlying concern, which has generated debate and discussions like

The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) initiated by the United Nations in 2007. TEEB is a global initiative focussed on "making nature's value visible". Its main objective is to mainstream the value of biodiversity and ecosystem services into decision-making at all levels. It aims to achieve this goal by following a structured approach to valuation that helps decision-makers recognise the wide range of benefits provided by ecosystems and biodiversity, demonstrate their values in economic terms and where appropriate, capture them in decision-making.

Although conservationists like Pavan Sukhdev and Gretchen C Daily — pioneers in illuminating and quantifying the economic value of our natural environment — who are awarded with the Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement in 2020, have clearly put forward the same opinion, acceptance remains elusive. The economic invisibility of nature to

drive humanity and dependence upon market-based economic systems, remain at the heart of deserved recognition to account for nature in the GDP, especially in relation to the survival of marginalised sections of society. This invisibility somehow hampers the cognition to acknowledge the GDP of the poor via negative externalities. Often, in the process, the secondary sector (industrial) omits to make the required dent due to an invisible characteristic attached to the transformation, from sourcing of raw material to processing of finished product.

Think-tanks and economists realised the requirement for true demonstration of environmental economics or "greenomics" for its invisible values much earlier and American biologist and philosopher Garrett Hardin's *The tragedy of the commons* is an exemplar to this. For the uninitiated, the tragedy of the commons is a situation in a shared-resource sys-

tem where individual users, acting independently according to their own self-interest, behave contrary to the common good of all users by depleting or spoiling the shared resource through their collective action. It is quite worrisome that big business houses and people at large are not able to value the gratuitous support provided by nature due to imprudence and the incompetence to distinguish private goods from public goods.

Greenomics is all about economic factoring of public and non-market (those not made by man and not transacted in the market) goods in computation of the national domestic product of an economy. It is definitely essential (and poses a challenge in a way) to evaluate the intrinsic economic value, as most of the business minds have tried to comprehend today. One such endeavour comes through the Global Initiative for a Sustainable Tomorrow (GIST) platform to quantify the impact of nega-

tive externalities by allocating economic values to invisibles to make it a plausible option for inclusion by the bureaucrats and corporates.

The concept of GDP accounting of the poor appears to be crucial in that it has to blend sustainability along with big data that is accessible to all. The TEEB framework facilitates all of the above by merging it with data analytics, technology and sustainability. Certainly, it is not about placing a price on nature, rather it is about recognising, demonstrating and valuing nature's services to people. Nobody is buying or selling a cloud. The reality is that forests can generate rainfall that is vital for agricultural productivity. However, recognising and demonstrating that true scientific value is the reality now.

The idea propagated by TEEB's Indian members, "GDP of the poor", holds relevance especially in a fragile atmosphere of everlasting ecological uncertainties that undoubtedly will

decide the future placement of the nation on the global map. Their report signals that the rural production system would suffer the most, given the destruction of our ecosystems. The question that we must ask ourselves is, that if nations like Vietnam, Indonesia and so on, can separately compute the GDP of the poor, why not India, despite three of the members on the board of the TEEB being Indian. Initiatives like zero-budget natural farming in Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra are welcome and the need of the hour. If bureaucrats could accept poverty-alleviation as a mainstream agenda to make a powerful diminution of rural poverty, accounting for the GDP of the poor can be the way forward.

(The writer is Assistant Professor and Senior Research Scholar, DRC/FMS, University of Delhi. Inputs by Kushankur Dey, Assistant Professor, IIM Lucknow. The views expressed are personal.)



FOREIGN EYE



A NATION ON FIRE FOR ITS FREEDOM

Over 30 people have died and hundreds have been injured in New Delhi. The Prime Minister talks of peace and brotherhood, but he has led his country here. The political opposition is enfeebled. He continues efforts to muzzle civil society. Yet it is fighting back. Indian citizens have expressed their revulsion at the country's direction. (The Guardian editorial)

Can meet liabilities only with govt support: Voda Idea

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Troubled Vodafone Idea has written to the telecom department expressing its inability to pay full AGR dues unless the government takes urgent measures, including allowing staggered payment, reduction in levies and implementation of floor prices in the crisis-ridden sector. The letter to the communications ministry comes at a time when the company is confronted with AGR dues of over Rs 53,000 crore and has paid a mere 7 per cent of its liabilities so far. Warning that it is "not in a sound financial state", Vodafone Idea said the company would be in a position to meet its liabilities only if the government initiates steps including allowing set offs for GST credit accumulated so far, and permitting staggered mechanism for payment of balance amount of interest, penalty, and interest on penalty. It said adjustment of GST credit due from the government could help in meeting its AGR payment.

Citing its losses over last few years, the company said the financial stress in the telecom sector is widely acknowledged. The company underlined its current subscriber base of 300 million, and employee base of 10,000 direct staffers while mak-

ing a strong plea for "urgent support from government". Vodafone Idea Ltd (VIL) said it can settle the balance of its self-assessed principle if the Centre allows set-offs of Rs 8,000 crore worth of GST credit lying with the government.

In fact, the amount when fully set off will even pay in part the self assessed interest, it said in the letter to the telecom department seen by PTI. The company has sought a moratorium of three years on payment of interest and penalty, and subsequent payment timeline of 15 years at an interest of six per cent. The letter, similar to the one written by industry body COAI, has also batted for grant of loan, equal to AGR amount at six per cent interest rate "so that the AGR liability may be discharged immediately". When contacted, a VIL spokesperson refused to comment on the issue. VIL, in its letter, further pitched for reduction in licence fee to three per cent from the current eight per cent, and also sought reduction in spectrum usage charges (SUC) to zero or a uniform rate of one per cent for all spectrum. Blaming the below-cost pricing of telecom services, compelled by competitive pressures as being the root cause of financial stress, the company sought immediate

implementation of floor price in tariffs. VIL said a floor price needs to be immediately made effective, say from April 1, 2020 to ensure that the sector is fully sustainable and in a position to pay deferred spectrum and AGR dues and still invest to create world-class network and services. The company said the introduction of floor price will enable revenue of the telecom sector to nearly double from the current level of Rs 1.75 lakh crore.

"Revenue of VIL is likely to touch the revenue levels which existed five years ago i.e 2015-16 and ensure that enough cash is generated to pay for deferred auction spectrum dues and deferred AGR payments of interest, penalty and interest on penalty," it said. VIL Chairman Kumar Mangalam Birla has in the past made it clear that the company will fold if it is forced to make payment of over Rs 53,000 crore dues. Birla has held multiple rounds of discussions with the finance minister and the telecom minister over the last few days to explore options to keep the company afloat. In all, as many as 15 entities owe the government Rs 1.47 lakh crore — Rs 92,642 crore in unpaid licence fee and another Rs 55,054 crore in outstanding spectrum usage charges.

Markets slump for fifth day on coronavirus woes, F&O expiry

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity indices reeled for the fifth straight session on Thursday, pressured by a sell-off in bank, IT and energy counters, as the global markets grappled with fears of the coronavirus outbreak turning into a pandemic. The expiry of February series derivatives contracts took the domestic markets volatile, traders said.

After plunging over 465.69 points during the day, the 30-share BSE Sensex finally settled 143.30 points, or 0.36 per cent, lower at 39,745.66. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty fell 45.20 points or 0.39 per cent to end at 11,633.30. The Sensex has now lost 1,577.34 points in five days, while the Nifty has shed 492.60 points. ONGC was the top loser in the Sensex pack on Thursday, dropping 2.61 per cent, followed by HCL Tech, M&M, SBI, IndusInd Bank and ICIC Bank.

On the other hand, Sun Pharma, Titan, Axis Bank and Asian Paints climbed up to 3.68 per cent. World markets extended their losses while safe-haven assets like gold and US Treasuries strengthened after President Donald Trump announced that the US was stepping up its efforts to combat the Covid-19 outbreak, while the number of cases surpassed 81,000. Indian markets were in

the negative territory as the rapid global spread of the coronavirus kept investors on the edge and made them seek safety in gold and bonds, said Narendra Solanki, Head Fundamental Research (Investment Services) - AVP Equity Research, Anand Rathi Shares & Stock Brokers.

India is at risk of getting severely impacted by the epidemic economically because of its high reliance on Chinese imports for various goods, he noted. Benchmarks also remained volatile on account of monthly expiry of derivatives contracts, he said, adding that sentiment remained sluggish amid reports that GDP growth is likely to stay flat at 4.5 per cent in October-December 2019. The government's GDP estimate for the December quarter is scheduled to be released on Friday. Further, relentless selling by foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) spooked retail investors, traders said. According to provisional data available with stock exchanges, so far this week, FPIs have offloaded stocks worth a whopping Rs 6,812.57 crore on a net basis. Sectorally, BSE realty, oil and gas, metal, tech, IT, industrials, energy, telecom and auto indices ended up to 2.09 per cent lower, while consumer durables and healthcare settled on a positive note.

Indian aviation sector outlook remains 'negative': Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

The outlook for India's aviation industry remains "negative" in the wake of coronavirus outbreak, which has resulted in many international passengers cancelling their travel to South East Asian countries, according to rating agency Ica. More than 81,000 people have been infected and over 2,700 people have died due to coronavirus. China is the epicentre of the virus outbreak.

Ica noted that the outbreak has impacted travel to and from China as well as other South East Asian countries. "The suspension of flights on the India-China sector will not result in any significant impact on the financial performance of the airlines, unless the lockdown is prolonged, as the traffic on these routes account for only 0.9-1.3 per cent of the total international passenger numbers," Ica said on Thursday.

However, the agency said the impact is expected to be severe if passengers from other South East Asian countries, hit by coronavirus, cancel their travel. Traffic from these countries account for around 19.5-23.8 per cent of the total international passengers flying to and from India, it noted. The extent of impact of the flight/ticket cancellations on the profitability of the domestic airlines

would, however, vary depending on the airlines' presence in these routes. In a note, the agency said it has "maintained its negative outlook on the Indian aviation industry in view of the ongoing lockdowns in parts of China following the outbreak of the coronavirus".

Some airlines have already discontinued flights to China and Hong Kong until June 2020. Air India has temporarily stopped flying to China and Hong Kong till June 30. The airline has also reduced the number of flights to Singapore. Vistara has decided to cancel 54 flights to Singapore and Bangkok in March. GoAir has suspended its operations to Singapore and has also scaled down the number of flights operated to Phuket and Bangkok.

Among other carriers, Singapore Airlines has extended suspension of flights across its network, including India, till end of May. However, Ica said decline in jet fuel prices would partly compensate airlines' loss of revenues due to flight cancellations. Crude oil prices have fallen in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak, which has impacted many countries.

Ica said the medium-term impact on the domestic aviation industry would also depend on

the economic shock to the global economy due to the coronavirus outbreak. Historically, foreign airlines have enjoyed high market share while domestic airlines account for less than 40 per cent of the total passengers carried on international routes to and from India. Ica Vice President Kinjal Shah said,

"Assuming the same proportion on routes to and from China and other impacted South East Asian countries, the Indian aviation industry could see a maximum impact (of 19.5-23.8 per cent) on the international passenger traffic growth...," she said. This impact would be there in case there is a complete suspension of flights to and from these countries, as they fly 4.5-5.5 million passengers, she added.

According to her, such a scenario would be negative for the Indian aviation industry, which is already reeling under significant passenger traffic slowdown, with the international traffic growth for up to December quarter of the fiscal having witnessed a decline of 8.4 per cent. As per Ica, prolonged shutdown of manufacturing activities in China and subsequent impact of the outbreak on the global economic activity could result in a slump in global oil demand.

NIFTY 50

SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE
NIFTY 50	11661.25	11663.85	11536.70	11633.30	-45.20
SUNPHARMA	375.00	390.70	369.45	388.00	13.30
BRITANNIA	306.95	310.00	296.00	309.95	58.60
TITAN	1250.00	1286.00	1250.00	1278.50	23.40
AXISBANK	728.70	739.45	716.55	737.30	7.90
GRASIM	702.80	717.50	686.00	710.40	7.60
INFRAEEL	218.75	225.40	215.20	221.10	2.35
MARUTI	6230.00	6338.05	6166.80	6291.00	56.15
ASIANPAINT	1829.85	1852.00	1810.45	1843.10	16.45
KOTAKBANK	1666.00	1688.90	1660.60	1678.10	12.00
BAJAJFINSV	9985.00	9994.70	9266.80	9450.00	63.00
HINDUNILVR	2241.95	2259.70	2200.00	2248.35	12.15
TATAMOTORS	144.15	146.75	141.10	145.30	0.75
POWERGRID	185.10	187.70	181.30	186.80	0.95
COALINDIA	173.75	174.55	169.60	173.90	0.10
HDFCBANK	1195.00	1202.50	1181.00	1199.65	0.40
VEDL	130.00	131.40	126.40	130.20	-0.05
NESTLEIND	16300.00	16340.85	16057.50	16224.25	-15.90
LTI	1212.35	1216.95	1200.00	1208.70	-2.45
ULTRACEMCO	4332.55	4365.05	4275.35	431.05	-10.45
YESBANK	37.30	37.95	36.00	36.45	-0.10
CIFLA	411.40	420.40	409.00	421.00	-1.20
NTPC	109.20	110.30	106.65	107.85	-0.35
DREDDY	309.00	3094.00	3029.10	3064.00	-11.35
TECHM	807.00	819.70	800.20	808.35	-3.10
BAJAJ-AUTO	2944.80	2969.95	2913.50	2935.15	-11.45
Eicher ECTO	1727.80	1724.00	1696.10	1708.00	-71.95
HDFC	2279.80	2289.60	2244.55	2265.95	-15.50
TATASTEEL	419.90	415.90	407.05	413.00	-3.30
INFY	778.70	780.75	772.20	775.65	-6.20
BPCL	446.85	449.65	438.50	445.10	-3.70
RELIANCE	1388.00	1393.80	1369.00	1380.45	-11.55
ITC	198.40	199.15	195.90	196.95	-1.65
HINDALCO	169.95	170.30	166.15	168.40	-1.50
BHARTIARTL	534.70	535.85	527.00	531.15	-4.80
BAJFINANCE	4815.00	4815.00	4712.10	4763.50	-46.50
ADANIEXPORTS	358.70	360.75	351.50	354.00	-4.40
TCS	2119.95	2119.95	2086.20	2097.00	-26.60
M&M	504.00	504.00	487.55	496.00	-7.00
GAIL	108.00	108.45	105.15	106.55	-1.50
ICICIBANK	522.80	523.30	512.65	514.40	-9.30
HEROMOTOCO	2147.90	2158.65	2101.00	2104.20	-38.35
INDUSINDBK	1139.00	1139.40	1101.00	1114.00	-21.00
SBIN	328.00	330.00	318.00	321.65	-6.55
HCLTECH	561.10	582.40	568.00	571.00	-12.60
UPL	582.55	581.55	548.85	550.00	-12.50
ZEEL	254.80	254.80	243.50	245.55	-5.85
IOC	108.35	108.35	105.00	105.65	-2.70
ONGC	95.70	96.20	92.05	92.90	-2.90
JSWSTEEL	259.00	259.00	248.30	252.90	-7.90
WIPRO	238.95	238.95	230.50	231.45	-8.45

NIFTY NEXT 50

SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE
NIFTY NEXT 50	27451.50	27458.55	27087.35	27404.30	-65.85
HINDZINC	170.10	187.60	170.00	178.50	5.70
SBILIFE	890.80	913.90	875.00	909.00	17.65
ICICIPRULI	474.10	486.00	466.25	484.90	9.25
HDFCLIFE	599.00	599.30	544.25	567.10	10.65
ICIGI	1220.00	1270.10	1215.00	1258.00	22.55
BERGEPAINT	567.00	580.00	565.20	577.00	10.00
PIDILITIND	1536.00	1563.80	1525.00	1562.00	26.30
AUROPHARMA	512.25	521.80	508.45	518.50	8.50
BANDHANBNK	395.00	406.00	387.30	398.70	4.60
SHREECEM	23549.00	23927.30	23136.80	23729.00	263.85
SIEMENS	1348.00	1363.00	1318.70	1357.80	11.40
DIVISLAB	2148.00	2172.00	2117.05	2158.60	16.50
DABUR	502.80	507.20	501.40	505.60	3.65
LICI	1238.00	1265.80	1218.00	1244.05	8.60
MCOWELL-N	686.00	697.35	675.00	692.00	4.05
PGH	1127.70	1127.00	1108.00	1124.00	-4.05
MARICO	306.30	307.90	302.00	306.00	-0.15
COPAL	1333.10	1338.40	1313.25	1324.40	-1.40
CADILAH	261.80	264.20	256.20	262.10	-0.75
BIOCON	296.00	302.00	292.45	297.80	-0.95
PETRONET	259.90	263.20	259.00	261.00	-1.05
ACC	1399.50	1407.95	1373.00	1392.10	-7.40
PAGEIND	22105.00	22200.00	21990.30	22000.00	-119.05
BAJAJHOLDING	3485.00	3523.65	3413.30	3462.95	-20.05
GODREJCP	602.00	605.20	588.95	597.00	-4.25
HDFCAMC	3263.00	3263.00	3187.00	3241.15	-26.60
LUPIN	669.10	671.30	654.60	664.00	-5.80
NHPC	21.50	21.65	21.20	21.45	-0.20
AMBUJACEM	213.60	215.15	210.50	211.35	-2.25
CONCOR	511.10	521.35	505.55	510.00	-5.80
OFSS	2785.00	2789.75	2710.30	2719.90	-31.05
HINDPETRO	209.00	211.70	203.15	206.15	-2.70
HAVELLS	647.00	647.40	632.60	638.00	-8.80
BOSCHLTD	13280.00	13289.00	12818.00	13066.70	-223.95
DMRT	2347.30	2370.00	2310.00	2317.00	-41.40
INDIGO	1380.00	1382.90	1358.55	1366.50	-24.95
IBULHSGFIN	326.00	328.20	320.30	315.60	-6.40
MOTHERSUMI	110.95	110.95	106.55	109.00	-2.25
PFC	127.45	127.85	122.20	124.60	-2.60
DLF	212.00	212.80	204.30	208.00	-4.45
NMDC	97.50	97.75	94.85	95.45	-2.15
STRANSFIN	1276.95	1276.95	1241.05	1248.00	-28.95
PEL	1424.00	1442.00	1371.05	1395.25	-34.10
NIACL	116.90	117.65	111.10	114.10	-2.80
ASHOKLEY	77.90	78.15	74.75	76.05	-1.90
L&T	114.10	115.00	111.70	112.00	-3.00
BANKBARODA	80.00	80.35	77.20	78.00	-2.20
PNB	4.05	4.25	3.70	3.85	-0.15
INDIA	49.10	49.30	46.80	46.80	-2.35
GICRE	189.60	189.90	178.05	178.05	-12.00

BSE 500

SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE
INFRAEEL	221.50	225.50	214.85	223.40	
HDFCBANK	1200.00	1202.50	1181.00	1199.35	
MARUTI	6237.00	6338.35	6170.00	6285.90	
ICIGI	1234.00	1275.85	1216.00	1251.30	
BAJFINANCE	4830.00	4830.00	4711.10	4763.00	
BHARTIARTL	535.00	536.00	526.85	531.25	
IBULHSGFIN	326.70	328.00	308.20	316.45	
RELIANCE	1390.00	1393.95	1369.60	1385.80	
SBIN	328.25	330.00	318.05	321.95	
STRANSFIN	1280.00	1280.00	1241.95	1246.60	
AUROPHARMA	510.10	520.00	508.30	519.25	
YESBANK	37.20	37.95	36.05	36.75	
INDIACEM	109.40	111.90	98.50	100.40	
TATAMOTORS</					

China coronavirus: Death toll climbs to 2,744 amidst decline in cases

PTI ■ BEIJING

The virulence of the novel coronavirus continues to show a declining trend in China which reported 29 new fatalities, the lowest in weeks, taking the death toll to 2,744 while the confirmed cases climbed to 78,497, officials said on Thursday.

The country's National Health Commission (NHC) said it received reports 433 new confirmed cases of the coronavirus infection and 29 deaths on Wednesday from 31 provincial-level regions on the mainland.

Among the deaths, 26 were from the epicentre of the virus Hubei province and its capital Wuhan and one each from Beijing, Heilongjiang and Henan, it said.

In Hubei province alone 2,641 people died due to the virus since it erupted in December last year including 2,104 fatalities in Wuhan.

The province, which is under lockdown, reported 409 new confirmed cases on Wednesday, taking the total confirmed cases to 65,596, local health commission said.

Wuhan reported 383 new confirmed cases and 19 new deaths on Wednesday. In total, the city has registered 47,824 confirmed cases.

In all 34,978 people were hospitalised in Hubei province of which 6,581 were still in severe condition and 1,403 others in critical condition.

The commission also said Hubei reported 403 suspected cases, taking the total to 2,019 cases. Capital Beijing reported 10 cases on Wednesday, taking the total number of cases to 400.

All over China, a total of



A bank clerk disinfects banknotes in the headquarters of the Suining Bank in Suining city in southwest China's Sichuan province. China's central bank has ordered banks to ensure the safety of the cash circulation through quarantine period or disinfection and destroying cash from places like hospital and public transport services to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

2,358 people were still suspected of being infected with the virus.

A total of 32,495 people had been discharged from hospital after recovery including 23,200 in Hubei province.

By the end of Wednesday, 91 confirmed cases including two deaths had been reported from Hong Kong, 10 confirmed cases in Macao and 32 in Taiwan including one death.

Bruce Aylward, an epidemiologist who led an advance team from the World Health Organisation (WHO), told the media in Geneva on Tuesday that China has

changed the course of COVID-19 outbreak, noting that the rapidly escalating outbreak has plateaued and come down faster than the previously expected.

Aylward said the unanimous assessment of the 25-member team which conducted a nine-day field study trip to Beijing, Guangdong, Sichuan and Hubei is that besides adopting a science-driven agile response, China followed a pragmatic approach which is "technology-powered and science-driven".

"They are using big data, artificial intelligence (AI) in

places," Aylward said, adding that China has managed massive amounts of data in finding each COVID-19 case and tracing contacts.

However, President Xi Jinping, who presided over a high power meeting on Wednesday said while the positive trend in preventing and controlling the epidemic is expanding and economic and social development is rapidly recovering, the situation in Hubei and Wuhan remains "complex and grim as the risk of a rebound of the epidemic in other regions cannot be overlooked".

Xi said at this moment it is important to make unremitting epidemic containment efforts and accelerate all aspects of work in economic and social development.

He told the ruling Communist Party committees and governments at all levels to accurately grasp the epidemic as well as economic and social development situations to ensure winning the people's war against the epidemic and achieving the goals of building a moderately prosperous society in all aspects and poverty alleviation, Xinhua reported.

US, S Korea postpone joint military exercises

AFP ■ SEOUL

The US and South Korean militaries on Thursday postponed forthcoming joint exercises due to the coronavirus outbreak as the Asian country reported 334 new cases, taking its total to 1,595.

The decision to delay the training was made after Seoul declared its highest "severe" alert level over the virus, Combined Forces Command said, adding the postponement was "until further notice".

The United States has 28,500 troops in South Korea to protect it against the nuclear-armed North, many of them based south of Seoul at Camp Humphreys in Pyeongtaek — Washington's biggest overseas military facility.

The security allies have previously scaled back their annual joint military exercises significantly to facilitate nuclear talks with Pyongyang — which condemns such drills as preparations for an invasion — but a command coordination exercise had been planned for this spring.

South Korea has the highest number of virus cases in the world outside China, where the disease first emerged in

December and has since spread to dozens of countries.

Thursday's increase was the biggest reported so far by the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which gave a death toll of 12.

More than 80 percent of the South's cases are in Daegu — South Korea's fourth largest city with a population of 2.5 million — and the neighbouring province of North Gyeongsang.

They centre on the Shincheonji Church of Jesus, a secretive entity often accused of being a cult.

A 61-year-old female member developed a fever on February 10, but attended at least four church services in Daegu before being diagnosed.

Checks have begun on more than 200,000 Shincheonji members after the organisation handed over a list to authorities, and the number of cases is expected to increase as a result.

South Korea has an advanced medical system, a free press and a strong culture of public accountability, and observers say that its health statistics can be treated with confidence.

Officials have urged the public to exercise extra caution,

advising citizens to stay home if they have a fever or respiratory symptoms.

An American soldier stationed at Camp Carroll 30 kilometres (19 miles) north of Daegu was put in self-quarantine at his home Wednesday after testing positive for the virus, the first case among US Forces Korea personnel.

Scores of events have been cancelled or postponed as the outbreak has spread in the world's 12th-largest economy, from K-pop concerts to the start of the K-league football season, while museums and other public venues have closed.

The Bank of Korea on Thursday lowered the country's growth outlook for this year to 2.1 per cent, down 0.2 percentage points, citing a contraction in consumption and slowing exports due to the spread of the virus.

The Catholic Church in South Korea said it would suspend all public masses at more than 1,700 churches across the country in response to the contagion.

A group of Catholics who recently returned from a pilgrimage to Israel had been one of the cluster infections.

Trump mulls travel bans on Italy, S Korea over virus

AFP ■ WASHINGTON

Donald Trump has said he was considering US travel restrictions on Italy and South Korea over coronavirus fears, adding the situation would not inevitably worsen in the United States.

The president's optimism about containing the pathogen contradicted a senior health official in his own administration and came as authorities said they had identified the first case of unknown origin in the United States.

"I don't think it's inevitable. I think that there's a chance that it could get worse, a chance it could get fairly substantially worse, but nothing's inevitable," Trump told reporters at the White House on Wednesday.

He appointed Vice President Mike Pence to lead the response to the disease.

The message was at odds with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which urged Americans a day earlier to be prepared to cancel mass gatherings and said schools and businesses should look at developing teleworking plans.

"It's not so much a question of if this will happen anymore, but rather more a question of exactly when this will happen," said the CDC's Nancy Messonnier, citing the global spread of the virus that has now infected 80,000 people and killed more than 2,700, mostly in China.

As of Wednesday, there were 60 cases in the United States - 15 detected through the

public health system and 45 repatriated from abroad, either from a cruise ship off Japan or from Wuhan, the Chinese city where the first cases were identified.

The CDC said the latest case in California "did not have relevant travel history or exposure to another known patient" — meaning it could represent the first instance of "community spread" in the US, though this was not yet confirmed. Community spread means spread of an illness for which the source of the infection is unknown.

Foreign nationals traveling from China within the past two weeks are currently banned from entering the US, and Trump said more countries could be added to the list.

"At the right time we may do it, right now it's not the right time," he said in response to a reporter's question about South Korea and Italy.

South Korea has almost 1,600 cases, the highest outside China, while Italy has 400. Both countries have reported 12 deaths.

"Italy is, you know, a deeper problem, and we're checking people coming in very, very strongly from those and at some point we may cut that off," Trump added.

On Wednesday night the State Department raised its travel advisory caution level for South Korea to the second-highest, now urging Americans to reconsider traveling there.

Trump added that Vice President Mike Pence had been

assigned to lead coordination of the government's response and would report back to him, taking over the role from Health Secretary Alex Azar.

Trump's briefing came after US lawmakers accused the administration of downplaying the crisis and underfunding the response.

On Monday, the White House asked Congress to make at least USD 2.5 billion available for preparedness and response, including developing treatments and vaccines and buying equipment for a strategic national stockpile.

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said the figure was "too little and too late," proposing instead \$8.5 billion. Trump later told reporters he would be happy to accept more money. The president also took to Twitter earlier in the day to insist his administration is "doing a GREAT job," blaming the media for trying to stoke fear in a tweet in which he spelled the name of the virus incorrectly.

"Low Ratings Fake News MSDNC (Comcast) & @CNN are doing everything possible to make the Coronavirus look as bad as possible, including panicking markets, if possible," he wrote, using a derogatory acronym for the MSNBC network.

Wall Street stocks finished mostly lower Wednesday, stabilizing somewhat after a two-session rout, with worries growing over the economic impact of the coronavirus epidemic.

S Arabia halts travel to Islam's holiest site

AP ■ DUBAI

Saudi Arabia on Thursday halted travel to the holiest sites in Islam over fears about a new viral epidemic just months ahead of the annual hajj pilgrimage, a move coming as the Mideast has over 220 confirmed cases of the illness.

The extraordinary decision by Saudi Arabia stops foreigners from reaching the holy city of Mecca and the Kaaba, the cube-shaped structure the world's 1.8 billion Muslims pray toward five times a day. It also said travel was suspended to Prophet Muhammad's mosque in Medina.

The decision showed the worry about the outbreak potentially spreading into Saudi Arabia, whose oil-rich monarchy stakes its legitimacy on protecting Islam's holy sites. The epicenter in the Mideast's most-affected country, Iran, appears to be in the holy Shiite city of Qom, where a shrine there sees the faithful reach out to kiss and touch it in reverence.

"Saudi Arabia renews its support for all international measures to limit the spread of



A Saudi tour guide wears a mask, due to the coronavirus, in front of the historical Salwa Palace, originally the home of the country's first founders, in Riyadh, outside Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

this virus, and urges its citizens to exercise caution before traveling to countries experiencing coronavirus outbreaks," the Saudi Foreign Ministry said in a statement announcing the decision.

"We ask God Almighty to spare all humanity from all harm." Disease outbreaks always have been a concern surrounding the hajj, required of all able-bodied Muslims once in their life, especially as

pilgrims come from all over the world.

The earliest recorded outbreak came in 632 as pilgrims fought off malaria. A cholera outbreak in 1821 for instance killed an estimated 20,000 pilgrims. Another cholera outbreak in 1865 killed 15,000 pilgrims and then spread worldwide.

More recently, Saudi Arabia faced a danger from a related coronavirus that caused

Middle East respiratory syndrome, or MERS. The kingdom increased its public health measures in 2012 and 2013, though no outbreak occurred.

While millions attend the 10-day hajj, this year set for late July into early August, millions more come during the rest of the year to the holy sites in the kingdom.

"It is unprecedented, at least in recent times, but given the worldwide spread of the virus and the global nature of the umrah, it makes sense from a public health and safety point of view," said Kristian Ulrichsen, a research fellow at the James A Baker III Institute for Public Policy at Rice University.

"Especially since the Iranian example illustrates how a religious crossroads can so quickly amplify the spread and reach of the virus." The virus that causes the illness named COVID-19 has infected more than 80,000 people globally, mainly in China. The hardest-hit nation in the Mideast is Iran, where Health Ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said 19 people have died among 139 confirmed

cases. Experts are concerned Iran may be underreporting cases and deaths, given the illness's rapid spread from Iran across the Persian Gulf. For example, Iran still has not confirmed any cases in Mashhad, even though a number of cases reported in Kuwait are linked to the Iranian city.

In Bahrain, which confirmed 33 cases as of Thursday morning, authorities halted all flights to Iraq and Lebanon. It separately extended a 48-hour ban over flights from Dubai and Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates, through which infected travellers reached the island kingdom off the coast of Saudi Arabia.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said there were no immediate plans to quarantine cities but acknowledged it may take "one, two or three weeks" to get control of the virus in Iran.

As Iran's 80 million people find themselves increasingly isolated in the region by the outbreak, the country's sanctions-battered economy saw its currency slump to its lowest level against the US dollar in a year on Wednesday.

Pak confirms first two cases of coronavirus

Educational institutions in Sindh and Balochistan closed

PTI ■ KARACHI/ISLAMABAD

After two persons returning from Iran tested positive for the deadly coronavirus in Pakistan's largest city Karachi, all educational institutions in Sindh and Balochistan provinces have been closed.

On Wednesday, a young man tested positive for the novel coronavirus in Karachi — the first confirmed case in Pakistan. Shortly after, another case was confirmed and both have returned from Iran, Special Advisor on Health Dr Zafar Mirza said.

Sindh Education Minister Saeed Ghani announced on Twitter that "all Govt and private educational institutions will remain closed on Thursday & Friday (27th & 28th Feb)."

Balochistan government announced to close down all

educational institutions across the province till March 15.

An official handout said the government took the step "as a precaution to protect children from coronavirus."

"I can confirm first two cases of coronavirus in Pakistan. Both cases are being taken care of according to clinical standard protocols & both of them are stable. No need to panic, things are under control," Mirza tweeted on Wednesday.

"If you or somebody you know have recently returned from China, Iran or a country where #COVID19 is prevalent and if there are symptoms like fever, cough, difficulty in breathing, please report by calling at 1166," he was quoted by the Dawn news on Thursday.

Mirza in a late night media interaction in Quetta,

capital of Balochistan, said that both the patients came from Iran but they were in stable condition.

Pakistan has closed its border with Iran where at least 19 people have died from the virus. He said the government had taken effective protective measures well in time to stop the outbreak of virus in Pakistan. He urged the citizens with travel history of Iran and China and having coronavirus symptoms to contact the medical experts.

Meanwhile, there are reports of shortage of masks which are considered as the basic precautionary measure to protect one against the coronavirus.

Authorities have asked the people not to panic as there was no threat of the spread of the disease in the country.

Virus strikes religious tourism in Iraq

AFP ■ NAJAF (IRAQ)

Iraq's vital religious tourism sector was already suffering after months of protests, political turmoil and sanctions hitting pilgrims from neighbouring Iran - then the novel coronavirus arrived.

In the southern Shiite holy city of Karbala, hotels have closed and face masks are more common on the street than the full-length black veils worn by female pilgrims.

Visitors are scarce at the golden-domed tomb of Imam Hussein, grandson of the Prophet Mohammed, despite twice-daily visits by health officials to sanitise the site.

Haidar, who sells rosaries and holy soil from the shrine, said his business had already been hit hard since mass anti-government protests broke out in October.

"We haven't been selling anything because of the lack of visitors from Iran and the Gulf," he said, rows of colourful beads glistening on the shelf in his shop.

"Now, on top of everything, the coronavirus outbreak happened." Millions of Shiite pilgrims, many from neighbouring Iran, visit shrines in Karbala

and nearby Najaf every year, especially during the huge annual Arbaeen commemoration.

In "normal" times, income from pilgrims creates jobs for hundreds of thousands of Iraqis and brings in billions of dollars per year, constituting almost the only form of tourism in a country ravaged by decades of conflict.

But Iraq now has five confirmed cases of the COVID-19 virus — all traced to Iran — and visitor numbers are plunging yet further.

The first confirmed case of the virus was an Iranian national studying in a Shiite seminary in Najaf, another shrine city around 150 kilometres (90 miles) south of Baghdad.

The authorities responded by closing the land borders with Iran and banning the entry of foreign nationals travelling from the Islamic republic and other affected countries.

This week, they even took the exceptionally rare step of closing Najaf's Imam Ali mausoleum.

The site is one of the holiest sites for Shiite Muslims, who flock there to kiss and caress the tomb of the Prophet Mohammed's son-in-law.

Until October, the city hosted more than 5,000 visitors per day, 85 percent of them Iranians, said Saeb Abu Ghneim, head of the city's association for hotels and restaurants.

"Najaf had 350 hotels. At least 300 have closed and those that remain open have a five to 10 percent occupancy rate," he told AFP.

The virus itself has yet to hit Karbala, halfway to Baghdad, but the city has not been spared the fallout.

"Religious tourism in Karbala is currently zero," said Sahib Zaman, deputy head of the city's chamber of commerce.

"No money is coming in. No tourists are coming because of the situation."

The novel coronavirus is just the latest disaster to strike religious tourism in Iraq's Shiite holy cities.

US sanctions against Tehran, the plummeting Iranian rial and tit-for-tat bombings between Washington and Iran on Iraqi soil had forced cash-strapped pilgrims to stay home.

Ahead of the Arbaeen commemoration in October, Iraq had scrapped visa fees for



cash-strapped Iranian nationals to boost their numbers.

But mass anti-government protests in Baghdad and Iraq's south starting that month further hit visitor numbers.

"There have been demonstrations and violence, American sanctions against Iran, the devaluation of the Iranian rial," Najaf official Abu Ghneim said.

"Just when tourism just started to pick up again, we had

a case of an Iranian infected with coronavirus." Fear of the virus has left Najaf's streets deserted and schools closed. The only crowds are in pharmacies, where people flock to buy disinfectants and medical masks.

In the street leading to the Imam Ali shrine, waiters stood outside restaurants, eagerly trying to convince a few passing pilgrims to come inside.

"It's fresh, it's fresh!" one of them shouted.

A Najaf resident said the same street had been packed with pilgrims before the protests, with restaurants full and waiters scrambling to take never-ending orders.

For Shiite cleric Fadel al-Bdeiri, the tourism downturn is a sign that Iraq should wean itself off Iranian dependence.

"The Iraqi community, especially in Najaf, pinned great hopes on Iran, so they opened hotels for Iranians and didn't buy any goods except from Iran," he told AFP.

But the rupture in trade and travel between the two countries has shattered Najaf's economy, he said.

"Iraqis thought that Iranians would stay forever... this was a mistake."

Lot of progress made in ties with India: Trump

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump has said that the US' relationship with India is "extraordinary" right now and a lot of progress was made in bilateral ties during his maiden official visit to the country where America will be doing a lot of business.

Talking to reporters here, after his return from India on Wednesday, Trump said, "He (Prime Minister Narendra Modi) is a great gentleman, a great leader. It's an incredible country."

President Trump visited India from February 24 to 25. He was accompanied by First Lady Melania Trump daughter Ivanka Trump, son-in-law Jared Kushner and the top brass of his administration, including National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien.

They visited Ahmedabad, Agra and New Delhi before leaving for Washington on Tuesday. During his stay, he addressed a massive rally in Ahmedabad, visited Agra and held official meetings in New Delhi.

The US president was feted

at the world's largest cricket stadium in the "Namaste Trump" event in Ahmedabad and was cheered by tens of thousands of people.

"We were treated very, very well and we really enjoyed it. A lot of tremendous progress was made in terms of relationship—our relationship with India is extraordinary right now," he said.

"We are going to be doing a lot of business with India, they are sending billions and billions of dollars now to the United States," Trump said in response to a question.

In a tweet, his daughter Ivanka said that, Trump announced that US International Development Finance Corporation "will establish a permanent presence in India to strengthen our economic ties, improve development plus further women's economic empowerment through WGPDP (Women's Global Development and Prosperity Initiative)!"

On her arrival from India, she thanked Modi for "your warm hospitality as we visited your beautiful country and celebrated the strength, spirit

and unity of the US and India!" "Throughout our visit we saw monumental achievements of human creativity & proof of the infinite capacity of the human heart!" she said.

The First Lady tweeted two pictures of her with Trump facing the Taj Mahal in Agra. "One of the Seven Wonders of the World, the breathtaking Taj Mahal!" she said.

President Trump "reaffirmed the strong strategic partnership, vibrant economic ties and expanding security relationship between our two countries. Wonderful trip, but glad to be home! Thank you India!" said White House Press Secretary Stephanie Grisham.

During the visit, India and the US on Tuesday finalised defence deals worth USD 3 billion under which 30 military helicopters will be procured from two American defence majors for Indian armed forces.

The deals will include procurement of 24 MH-60 Romeo helicopters by India from the US at a cost of USD 2.6 billion. Another contract to acquire six AH-64E Apache helicopters for USD 800 million from the US is also on the table.

Malaysian king summons Mahathir

AP ■ KUALA LUMPUR

Malaysia's king summoned Mahathir Mohamad to the palace Thursday, fueling talks he may have majority support to return as the next prime minister after his abrupt resignation and the collapse of his ruling coalition this week.

Mahathir didn't speak to reporters as he was driven into the palace grounds. The meeting came after the king interviewed lawmakers to determine who they support as prime minister and if they want fresh elections.

A comeback as prime minister for a third time will be a remarkable feat for Mahathir, the world's oldest leader at 94, after nail-biting twists, turns and machinations in the political drama that unraveled over the weekend.

A failed bid by Mahathir's supporters to form a new government without his named successor Anwar Ibrahim plunged the country into a political limbo.

A total of 37 lawmakers, led by Mahathir's Bersatu party, left the ruling alliance, depriving it of majority support and sparking a crisis less than two years after it ousted a corrupt-tainted coalition that had ruled for 61 years.



The king dissolved the Cabinet but reappointed Mahathir as interim leader. The result was a renewed battle between Mahathir and Anwar, whose political feud has stretched more than two decades.

Mahathir said Wednesday he had quit to show he wasn't power crazy and because he doesn't want to work with the former corrupt regime that he had ousted in 2018 polls.

Despite a prelection pact

to handover power to Anwar, he said Parliament should pick the next leader and that he would form a nonpartisan government if he is chosen again to helm the government.

"I just want to do what is best for the country. ... I believe, rightly or wrongly, politics and political parties must be set aside for now. If allowed, I will form an administration that does not side with any party. Only national interest will be prioritized,"

Mahathir said in a televised message.

His unity government plan was rejected by Anwar's camp, which said it would only create a "Mahathir government" that is not accountable to the people and unsustainable.

Anwar said lawmakers from the three remaining parties in his alliance have nominated him as the prime minister after Mahathir rejected their offer to restore their former government.

He has said they will wait for the king's decision. His camp still controls 41% of parliamentary seats but could be the largest bloc after two key Malay opposition parties withdrew their support for Mahathir.

Anwar was Mahathir's deputy during Mahathir's first stint in office in the 1990s, but he was sacked following a power struggle and later jailed on sodomy and corruption charges that he said were trumped up.

Anwar led a reform movement that helped built a fledgling opposition but was jailed a second time for sodomy in 2014 in a move he said was aimed at killing his political career.

Mahathir, who retired in 2003 after 22 years in power, made a comeback in 2016 spurred by anger over a massive graft scandal involving a state investment fund. Mahathir and Anwar reconciled and forged an alliance that won a historic vote in 2018 that ushered in the first change of government since independence from Britain in 1957. But their relationship remained uneasy as Mahathir refused to set a time frame to hand over power to Anwar.

Bernie Sanders terms Trump's statement as 'failure'

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

A day after US lawmakers reacted sharply to the violence in the Indian capital, Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders here accused US President Donald Trump of failing on the issue of human rights.

Slamming the US president, Sanders said the Trump's statement regarding the violence in New Delhi during his India visit was a "failure of leadership".

Asked about incidents of violence during his India visit, the US president had said, "As far as the individual attacks, I heard about it, but I didn't discuss that with him (Modi). That's up to India."

Reacting to the issue, Sanders on Wednesday tweeted, "Over 200 million Muslims call India home. Widespread anti-Muslim mob violence has killed at least 27 and injured many more. Trump responds by saying 'That's up to India'.

This is a failure of leadership on human rights."

Sanders is the second Democratic presidential nominee after Senator Elizabeth Warren to speak against the violence over the Citizenship Amendment Act in New Delhi.

Apart from the Democratic presidential candidate, other influential senators too expressed concern over the developments on Wednesday.

"We are alarmed by the recent violence in New Delhi. We continue to support an open dialogue on issues of significant concern in order to advance our vital long-term relationship," Senator Mark Warner from the Democratic Party and John Cornyn from the GOP said in a joint statement.

Warner and Cornyn are co-chairs of the Senate India Caucus, the largest country-specific caucus in the US Senate.

Congressman Jamie Raskin said he was horrified by

the violence, which was fueled by religious hatred and fanaticism.

"Liberal democracies must protect religious freedom and pluralism, and avoid the path of discrimination and bigotry," the Congressman said.

Richard N Hass, who heads the powerful Council on Foreign Relations, said the reason for India's relative success has been that its large Muslim minority saw itself as Indian. "But this is at risk owing to govt attempts to exploit identity politics for political advantage," he said.

Earlier in the day, the US Commission on International Religious Freedom urged the Government of India to take swift action for the safety of its citizens.

Expressing "grave concern" over the violence, the US body said the Indian government should provide protection to people regardless of their faith amid reports of attack on Muslims.

Gunman kills 5 at Milwaukee brewery

AP ■ MILWAUKEE

An employee opened fire at one of the nation's largest breweries in Milwaukee, killing five fellow workers before taking his own life, police said.

The assailant who attacked the Molson Coors complex on Wednesday was identified as a 51-year-old Milwaukee man who died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound, police said.

"There were five individuals who went to work today, just like everybody goes to work, and they thought they were going to go to work, finish their day and return to their families. They didn't — and tragically they never will," Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett said.

Authorities offered no immediate motive for the attack and did not release details about the shooter or how the shooting unfolded.

None of the victims was identified. Police, who were still contacting relatives, said identities would not be released for at least 24 hours. No one was wounded beyond those who

were killed, authorities said.

Officers worked for hours to clear the more than 20 buildings in the complex where more than 1,000 people work. They announced at a late evening news conference that the work was done and all employees had been allowed to go home. Police Chief Alfonso Morales said authorities believe the shooter operated alone.

President Donald Trump addressed the shooting before speaking at the White House about his administration's efforts to combat the coronavirus.

"Our hearts break for them and their loved ones," the president said.

"We send our condolences. We'll be with them, and it's a terrible thing," the attack occurred at a sprawling complex that includes a mix of corporate offices and brewing facilities. The complex is widely known in the Milwaukee area as "Miller Valley," a reference to the Miller Brewing Co. that is now part of Molson Coors.

Molson Coors CEO Gavin Hattersley called the shooter "an active brewery employee." "Unfortunately, I am devastated to share that we lost five other members of our family in this tragic incident," he said in an email sent to employees.

"There are no words to express the deep sadness many of us are feeling right now." He said the office would be closed the rest of the week and the brewery shuttered "for the time being" to give people time to cope.

A group of brewery employees gathered at a nearby bar to talk about what had happened. "We are all a family. We work a lot of hours together, so we're all very sad," said Selena Curka, a brewery employee who was about to start her shift when the complex went on lockdown and she was turned away.

"It's just weird, because nine times out of 10 you're going to know the shooter," said another employee Thomas Milner. "It's a tight-knit family. Within the brewery we all interact with each other."

Milner was also on his way to work when the shooting happened, and he was turned away too.

James Boyles told the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel that his wife, Lasonya Ragdales, works at Molson Coors in the claims department. She was texting from inside the facility and told her husband that there was an active shooter and she was locked in a room with a bunch of co-workers, the Journal Sentinel newspaper reported.

"Miller Valley" features a 160-year-old brewery, with a packaging center that fills thousands of cans and bottles every minute and a distribution center the size of five football fields. A massive red Miller sign towers over the complex and is a well-known symbol in Milwaukee, where beer and brewing are intertwined in the city's history.

The facility is also home to corporate customer service, finance, human resources and engineering departments. Tours take people to underground caves where beer was

once stored, a saloon with intricate woodwork, a stein hall with stained-glass windows, a champagne room meeting hall with leaded-glass garden, and an outdoor beer garden that can hold 300 people. Molson Coors announced in October that it planned to close a Denver office as part of a restructuring to eliminate 400 to 500 jobs. The reorganisation was to benefit Milwaukee, which was expected to see hundreds of corporate and support jobs relocated there.

Before Wednesday's shooting, there had been three mass killings nationwide in 2020, with 12 total victims. All have been shootings. In 2019, there were 44 mass killings, with 224 total victims. The Associated Press/USA TODAY/Northeastern University Mass Killings database tracks all US homicides since 2006 involving four or more people killed, not including the offender, over 24 hours regardless of weapon, location, victim-offender relationship or motive.

IAEA backs sea release of contaminated water

AFP ■ TOKYO

The world's nuclear watchdog gave its backing on Thursday to Japanese plans to release contaminated water from the damaged Fukushima nuclear plant into the ocean.

Japan has around a million tonnes of contaminated water stored in tanks at the site of the Fukushima Daiichi plant, whose reactors went into meltdown after a huge tsunami in 2011.

A government panel last month recommended the water be released into the ocean or vaporised, but no final decision has been taken, with all solutions deeply unpopular with sections of the Japanese public.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) director Rafael Grossi told journalists in Tokyo the panel's recommendations both appeared suitable.

"Of course the decision on what to do and when is a matter for the Japanese govern-

ment," he said.

"Our final analysis is not completed but I can tell you already that we find the (panel) report based on a sound methodology and a systematic approach," he added, describing the two options proposed as "in line with well-established practices all around the world."

"Releasing into the ocean is done elsewhere, it's not something new, there is no scandal here," Grossi added.

"But what is important is to do it in a way that is not harmful to you and need somebody to monitor before, during and after release, to check that everything is okay."

The radioactive water comes from several different sources — including water used for cooling at the plant, and groundwater and rain that seeps into the plant daily — and is put through an extensive filtration process.

Most of the radioactive isotopes have been removed by the filtration system, but

one — tritium, which has a long half-life — remains.

The issue is controversial, however, with some of Japan's neighbours raising questions about the safety of releasing the water, and locals — including fishermen — concerned about the reputational risks of any release.

Grossi said a "very comprehensive communication strategy" would be key to the process.

"You may have the best technical strategy but a political failure if you don't communicate well," he said.

"It's an issue of legitimate concern."

The 9.0 magnitude quake of March 2011 sparked a huge tsunami along Japan's northeast coast that killed more than 18,000 people. The nuclear disaster it spawned is not directly blamed for any deaths, though contamination rendered swathes of the coast uninhabitable, possibly for decades.

Missing Pak teen's remains found in lions' enclosure

PTI ■ LAHORE

In a horrific incident, a 17-year-old Pakistani boy has been mauled to death by a pride of four lions at an animal park in Lahore.

The remains of Bilal, who had been missing for two days, were found on Wednesday in the lions' enclosure of the Lahore Safari, according to a park official.

"We recovered the remains in the park on Wednesday after Bilal's father told us that his son had been missing since Monday. He was in the Safari Park to cut grass," said Lahore Safari official Chaudhry Shafiq.

"We have sent the remains to a laboratory for a forensic examination and ordered investigation into the incident," he said.

It appears Bilal, whose uncle was an employee at the park, was mauled to death by a pride of lions, he added.

HK starts standing down riot police after budget hike

AFP ■ HONG KONG

Hong Kong's riot police officers will begin returning to regular law enforcement duties such as crime prevention and traffic control because violent pro-democracy protests have faded, the force said on Thursday.

The announcement came a day after the force was given a 25 per cent bump in its annual budget by the city's pro-Beijing leadership, including a doubling of its equipment allowance and plans to add another 2,500 officers.

The police have been maintaining a permanent roster of riot officers after huge and sometimes violent pro-democracy protests raged for seven straight months last year.

The rallies and clashes have since died down, partly due to exhaustion and arrests but also because of the emergence of a new deadly coronavirus.

"Given that large-scale violent protests have declined recently, the police will deploy officers in the anti riot brigades

in stages and with flexibility to reinforce other frontline officers in law enforcement work, including community crime prevention and elimination and traffic control," the police said in a statement.

Hong Kong's protests were triggered by a proposal to allow extraditions to mainland China's opaque and party-controlled courts with millions taking to the streets.

As the government dug their heels in and deployed police to suppress the rallies the movement morphed into a popular revolt against Beijing as well as a call for greater democratic freedoms and police accountability.

More than 7,000 arrests were made while police fired nearly 30,000 crowd control munitions such as tear gas and rubber bullets.

Clashes became a weekly and at times daily occurrence with videos of police beatings and arrests quickly going viral.

Polls show the city's once revered police force are now

loathed by significant chunks of the population and officers are routinely heckled and abused.

Police defended their tactics and said they used appropriate force to match hardcore protesters who embraced violence including arson, vandalism, petrol bombs, rocks and corrosive liquid.

No police officer has been sanctioned over the protests and the top brass have said no instances of inappropriate force was displayed by their officers.

The city's police watchdog is investigating the force's handling of the protests but activists accuse the body of being toothless and stacked with government loyalists.

A group of international policing experts stepped down from advising the panel saying it had neither the resources nor expertise to do the job properly.

Protesters want a judge to oversee a fully independent inquiry into the police, a demand city leader Carrie Lam and Beijing, as well as the force, have dismissed.

China to send 'duck army' to help Pakistan fight locusts

Beijing (AP): China is planning to dispatch a 100,000-strong army of ducks to help Pakistan combat a massive locust infestation, a local newspaper reported Thursday.

The legion of lotus-eating waterfowl will be sent from the eastern province of Zhejiang following the earlier dispatch of a team of Chinese experts to Pakistan to advise on a response to the infestation that is being

called the worst in 20 years, the Ningbo Evening News said.

China deployed ducks, whose natural diet includes insects, to fight a similar infestation in its northwestern region of Xinjiang two decades ago, reportedly with considerable effectiveness. Their use is both much less expensive and environmentally damaging than the use of pesticides, the paper quoted Zhejiang Provincial Institute of

Agricultural Technology researcher Lu Lizhi as saying.

Ducks are also more suited to the task than other poultry, such as chickens, Lu said. "Ducks like to stay in a group, so they're easier to manage than chickens," he said.

A duck is also capable of eating more than 200 locusts per day, compared to just 70 for a chicken, Lu said. "They have three-times the combat capabil-

ity," he added. Calls to the provincial government press office seeking confirmation of the report rang unanswered Thursday and a number provided for the publicity department at the agricultural sciences institute was constantly engaged.

Pakistan was invaded by the locust swarm last year, which proceeded to lay waste to the country's cotton crop and is now menacing the wheat harvest.

Pak PM Imran to visit Qatar ahead of signing of US-Taliban peace deal

ISLAMABAD (PTI): Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan will visit Qatar on Thursday, just two days prior to the signing of a landmark peace deal between the US and the Taliban in Doha to end more than 18-year-long Afghan war that has claimed tens of thousands of lives.

The US is set to sign a peace deal with the Taliban on Saturday provided that a week-long reduction in violence across Afghanistan holds,

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in a recent statement. The Taliban also released a statement confirming the plan to sign a peace deal that day. During his day-long visit, Prime Minister Khan will meet Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani and the two leaders will discuss matters related to the bilateral ties and regional development, according to an official statement.

"During the visit of Prime Minister Imran Khan to Qatar,

the focus will be on strengthening bilateral cooperation and exchanging views on regional developments," the Pakistan Foreign Office said in a statement. This would be the second visit of Prime Minister Khan to Qatar after taking office in 2018.

The Emir of Qatar visited Pakistan in June 2019 and the visit resulted in strengthening the bilateral economic collaboration in diverse areas, the statement said.

Bullied Aussie boy to donate USD 475,000 to charity

AFP ■ SYDNEY

An Australian boy with dwarfism whose distress from bullying became a viral video will donate hundreds-of-thousands of dollars in donations to charity rather than a trip to Disneyland.

The clip of nine-year-old Quaden Bayles showed him crying and repeatedly saying he wanted to die after being bullied at school, sparking an outpouring of support from around the world. The video was watched millions of times and prompted US comedian Brad Williams to start a GoFundMe page that eventually raised almost USD 475,000.

Although the funds were meant to send Bayles and his mum to Disneyland, his aunt told Australia's NITV News that the money would be used for charities instead.

"What kid wouldn't want to go to Disneyland, especially if you have lived Quaden's life. To escape to anywhere that is fun that doesn't remind him of his day to day challenges," she was quoted as saying.

"But my sister said 'you know what, let's get back to the real issue'. This little fella has been bullied. How many suicides, black or white, in our society have happened due to bullying." "We want the money to go to community organisations that really need it. They know what the money should be spent on, So as much as we want to go to Disneyland, I think our community would far off benefit from that."

Australian actor Hugh Jackman and NBA player Enes Kanter were among the hundreds of thousands posting support for Bayles.

PIONEERING CHANGE

The Pioneer group is expanding its umbrella of connecting with thinking minds through live talks. Called *The Pioneer Agenda* series, we hope to generate awareness on ideas that will shape India in 2030 and could be a template for policy-making. The first such dialogue, *Exotica* Tourism Summit, *Exotica* being the group's travel and wellness magazine, was held at Shangri-La hotel, New Delhi on February 26. Since tourism is poised to become a major growth driver and employment generator of the economy, the day-long event had interactive sessions with Union Ministers, industry experts, travel operators, tourism boards, the hospitality sector and brand creators

LOOK WITHIN

How to rebrand an old concept and link it to the discovery of new destinations, given the Government's intent to develop 17 iconic tourist destinations? How to get domestic travellers to look for exotica within, given the Prime Minister's call to travel to at least 15 destinations at home? How to develop a hub and spoke model where the hinterland of known tourist spots can be developed as a linked experience? These were some of the questions that were answered by panellists Ashwani Lohani, Ritu Beri, Pronab Sarkar and Anil Chadha at the inaugural session of the *Exotica* Tourism Summit. Moderated by Dr Chandan Mitra, it explored the possibilities of a deep-pore look within.

Unveiling another of his films in the *Virtual Bharat* series, filmmaker Bharat Bala said that the familiar corners of India evoked different emotions when looked at through the eyes of its people. His film on the *shabad* singers of Amritsar was an interesting perspective of the holy town. Highlighting the need for "felt emotion" to convey a refreshing idea of Incredible India, he said, "It's very critical to showcase what we are doing and how we can build a new idea for tourism in this country. A place is not a destination, it's an emotion, a story and a culture. You tell a story, you will find the traveller. When domestic or international tourists travel and hear a story, they become a part of that destination. Almost 20 years ago, I started Incredible India, all thanks to Amitabh Kant. It's time to discover the new avatar of Incredible India. It has done a wonderful job of showcasing the diversity of this country but today's marketing and advertising needs are different. We need to move on from typical advertising and find new ways to reach the audience. We talk about 5,000 years of heritage, at least we can make 1,000 stories out of them. I have travelled 150 km by road, discovering India. And what I discover, I put into films. In September, we started the new initiative called *Virtual Bharat*. It is going to be a repository of virtual stories of India. To start with, we decided to do 1,000 stories of the country. Deeper stories will connect deeper with the audience and they will have something to take home as emotion. When we talk about culture, it is something you need to win over as an emotion. When people look at India, they see the Taj Mahal because they find it as an embodiment of a great love story. We are a 5,000 year old country, we don't need to hide only behind Taj Mahal. There's a lot more to showcase."

Ashwani Lohani, Ex CMD, Air India, felt that there is always scope for exploration and rebranding India. "Nobody can ever beat the impact of tourism in the country. It is the biggest job creator and also sways the image of the country. A few years back, whenever somebody used to talk about tourism of India, it was always about international market and footfalls. Yet the numbers were not encouraging. The fact is you cannot make tourism a growth driver till you cater to a domestic market. When I got a chance to head Madhya Pradesh tourism, I decided to generate new interest in its diversity."

Lohani shared that people have a fair idea about the places abroad but they are not aware about the rich culture they have at home. He said, "We need to start exploring our own country. Indian tourism has something to offer for everyone in every category with all budgets — India on shoestring, India in luxury, the royal India, urban India, the common man's India, historical India and much more. Why not circulate the funds in our own country for the good of our own people? There is a need to catalyse a movement of people within the states. Tourism is a sector which has a massive potential to grow. And I feel we are moving towards that."

Luxury entrepreneur and fashion designer Ritu Beri believes in the idea of India. She understands the value of being Indian. She tries to promote the country in everything that she does. "My first fashion show in Paris was based on Indian heritage. From culture, designs, motifs to fabrics and embroidery, everything was Indian. I presented the collection in Hindi, it had French translations and the music was Indian too. People absolutely loved it. The country is very well accepted abroad," Ritu said.

"If I go anywhere in the world wearing Pashmina, people go crazy. Khadi, I feel, is true luxury because it's handmade and today, more and more people are forgetting the art of handcrafted things. That is why it's our strength and we need to promote it. So when we talk about tourism of India, it's the whole concept of being Indian. I have a 12-year-old daughter. I am always telling her that India used to be the richest country in the



From the right: Dr Chandan Mitra, Pronab Sarkar, Ritu Beri, Anil Chadha and Ashwani Lohani



Filmmaker and storyteller Bharat Bala



world in recorded history. Our country is very proud of many inventions. From zero, yoga, geometry, snakes and ladders to chess, it all comes from India. So why are we not proud of being Indian or taking a holiday here? Why are we always aping the West. Why are we apologetic of what we stand for. From the Taj Mahal to Rabindra Nath Tagore to Mahatma Gandhi, we have a prolific history," she added.

Ritu said that we are all empowered today to present an India that is richly felt and authentic. An India that we don't even think can exist. "Platforms like these are very important for first, us Indians, to accept the fact that we are above the rest of the world. And then to spread the message abroad. I know we can do it together," said she.

Anil Chadha, COO, ITC Hotels, said that in colleges they always teach you a few

lines — if it is to be, it is up to me. Somebody has rightly said that the three biggest drivers in this century are going to be tele communications, information technology and tourism. "India has had a good story so far. Our growth rates have been better than the world. A lot has been done by the government. However, there is still a lot to be done because the numbers coming in are much less in comparison to the numbers going out. One big

thing that we all have been speaking about is domestic tourism. I feel, we should take pride in our own country. Domestic tourism is something that has the capability to catch the eyeballs of the world market. That's probably the way to move the international tourism forward," said Chadha.

He felt that if we compared ourselves to certain benchmarks available with reference to footfalls, India was at one per

cent, China was at three per cent for their domestic tourism and the US was at six per cent. "That is exactly where we probably need to reach. And it has to be a collaborative effort. It has to be a great partnership between the Centre and the states, private players and the government. Everybody has to put their best foot forward," he says.

As a hotel chain, for example, Chadha said that they had the honour of hosting the US President, Donald Trump. The hotel was full of Americans. They got to see motifs of India that the hotel sports in its decor. "They saw all the artworks and wanted to know what went into their creation. So there's a lot of storytelling that needs to be done. The travellers are looking for experiences more than anything. And we need to create that for them. They want to really get enriched at the destination they travel, in the hotel they live, in the food they eat, the clothes they wear, the mode of transport they use, it's all getting experiential day by day," said Chadha.

The president of Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), Pronab Sarkar, has been in this industry for last 45 years. He felt that the government plays a bigger role in the promotion of tourism because they are the ones framing guidelines and all the taxes. "We also have to include the state government. It is not possible without their help. India is blessed with domestic tourism with more than 180 million tourists. We get only 10 million foreign tourists in comparison, which is very low. As far as the world scenario is concerned, it is less than 0.5 per cent. We don't even get one per cent of international tourism. Therefore, there is a huge scope," he said.

Though some of our neighbours are smaller and have a finite infrastructure, they have had higher international footfalls. "It is very important to state that we are losing out to our neighbours because of the highest taxes. I feel, tourism is not a luxury. It is an economic activity, which is very important. Domestically, we have to be very well connected. Our people must have easy access to reach where they desire. Everybody has to come together and make it happen," said Sarkar.



Punjab is the heart of India: Charanjit

Stars, light, mountains, trees, river...everything is yours in Punjab. So said Punjabi poet Lala Dhani Ram Chatrik. At the Exotica Tourism Summit organised by The Pioneer media group, Tourism Minister of Punjab, Charanjit Singh Channi, recited this poem and made people aware about everything that Punjab has on offer. "We have always had a very rich culture. Nowadays, even the Punjabi music and dance industry is making waves. No film is successful without its music and dance. We have the heart of India. Whether it's the independence movement or any other fight for the nation, Punjab has always been in the front," said he.

There have been many reasons everyone has been in love with Punjab, which is why the state government is making efforts to promote tourism in the state. The farmers are not only involved in agriculture but also are now setting up homestays by building cottages in their farms. Coupling farming with tourism is the growing trend in the state.

He apprised us of the fact that Virasat-e-Khalsa in Anandpur Sahib has



the largest foothall in Asia. The state has also developed wetlands. It has large number of birds coming from outside. Efforts are being made to upgrade the farmhouses so that people can stay and see Punjab's culture. They can interact with the local musicians and potters.

"We are trying to tap the tourists from everywhere. There's also a great connectivity, which will in turn help people from all across to visit us. The rail connectivity is good. We are developing the State highways for a better road connectivity. Five airports have been developed to garner more visitors."

Rahat Indori, lyricist and Urdu poet once said, "Chalte Phirte Huye Mehtaab Dikhayenge Tumhe, Humse Milna Kabhi Punja Dikhayenge tumhe..." The minister said that this poem sums up Punjab very well. In the state, one would feel home. "I invite all of you with a big heart. Come and witness the beauty of the state," he added.

He also expressed his gratitude for The Pioneer for dedicating a day to promote tourism.



'NEW STOP ALONG PUNJAB HIGHWAYS'

What if all the goodness of the world comes alive in a single place? This is Punjab as presented by Harkirat Ahluwalia, founder of Citrus County Farm Stays. "You will find that the beautiful smiles of the state seem to weave a poetry. That's the magic of Punjab. It casts a spell and the rich heritage takes everyone by awe. The spiritual ardor will bring inner peace and every stone in every wall has a tale to tell," he told us.



Taking pride in being a Punjabi, Ahluwalia focussed on the Kartarpur corridor and the benefits it has brought along. "When people celebrated 550 years of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, almost 60,000 people have visited Sultanpur Lodhi.

The government handled the pilgrims in such a way that there was no mishap.

Another advantage that the State has is the connectivity and also the fact that its

geography is good. "It is the new stop in the tourism line. We will promote this state as one of the best tourism destinations, especially its rural tourism," said he.



Hours long traffic jam in hill stations, Hotels displaying "full" in red on their gates, internet flooded with pictures of people forming a beeline for water and residents left with no adequate resources due to over-tourism. All these incidents have become common, especially during the summer as the temperatures goes up and more and more visitors head towards the hill stations. Now the question here is: where do we draw the line and where do we divert the travel addict without denting the tourism economy?

To ponder upon the issue and come up with various solutions across the industry, Mandip Singh Sooin, Sumant Batra and Seema Bhatti spoke on *Over-tourism and Sustainability* at Exotica Tourism Summit organised by The Pioneer media group. It was moderated by Saimi Sattar.

A mountaineer, explorer and environmentalist, Mandip Singh Sooin began the session talking about the potential of eco-tourism and the need to reflect upon responsible tourism. "We will soon ask the government to launch an itinerary for responsible tourism. There will be various checkpoints that the travellers will need to look at before embarking on a journey. It will also include checklist for the travel operators of the industry," said he.

Another panelist, Sumant Batra, an insolvency lawyer and founder of Te Aroha, shared the instances which helped him set up his property in Uttarakhand.

Disperse the crowds

The tourism industry needs to set standards, increase awareness among the visitors, diversify and integrate communities to combat over-tourism

He said, "This place was not much discovered earlier. We started with five rooms and now have 22." It has an unusual but appealing way to attract the visitors through storytelling. It has a museum and houses a library of 12,000 books. This new experiential helped draw tourists to a new Himalayan experience and ease the pressure off usual favourites. Sitting next to him, Seema Bhatti who has worked extensively on issues related to eco-tourism, biodiversity and climate change emphasised upon carrying capacity, setting industry standards and striking a balance between sustainability and livelihood. "There is over-tourism because there are too many people visiting a certain location only. It is very important for us to see the figures of a particular location, set standards and put a limit on the number of people visiting," said she.

She talked about the factors that determine the carrying capacity of a region. When its an ecologically fragile area like Ladakh, it depends on its ecosystem. It requires detailed involved

research such as the revenue generation of the area, population, number of tourists visiting, water consumption, waste disposal and many other factors.

But in order to keep the number of tourists intact, it is very important to route them to a different location. So we need to diversify tourism. "As we are operating in a country, which has the largest number of youth, we need to move beyond the old definition of tourism of just visiting places and focus more upon the experiences," added she.

However, every solution comes with its own challenges. Mandip said that the people usually don't take ecological challenges into account during the beginning. For instance, the number of jeeps in Ladakh increased from four to 450 after people watched the film *3 Idiots*. "When we suggest people on the carrying capacity they say 'we have just started, we need people.' And they only react to it when it gets worse. But you need to consider this problem during the beginning in order to disperse the people in a better way," said he.

While building a property in a local area, it is very important to strike a balance between the local people, the area and tourists. Sumant said that he was very clear about not destroying the apple orchards to build the rooms. "I also decided that I would hire only the local people. But most of them hadn't stepped out of their homes. So I called an expert from Mumbai who trained the locals for six months. They are very quick learners. Now they are all well-trained, some of them can also read wine labels," he added.

The emphasis is to aid the local ecosystem and ensure that the tourists do not impact the local people adversely. There are literature, art and film festivals to boost the local culture and attract more visitors.

For Seema, it is important to hire the local people, not just as labours but build their capacity too. "One must train and empower them. The local cuisine is a strong tool in their hands, one must use that wisely," she added.

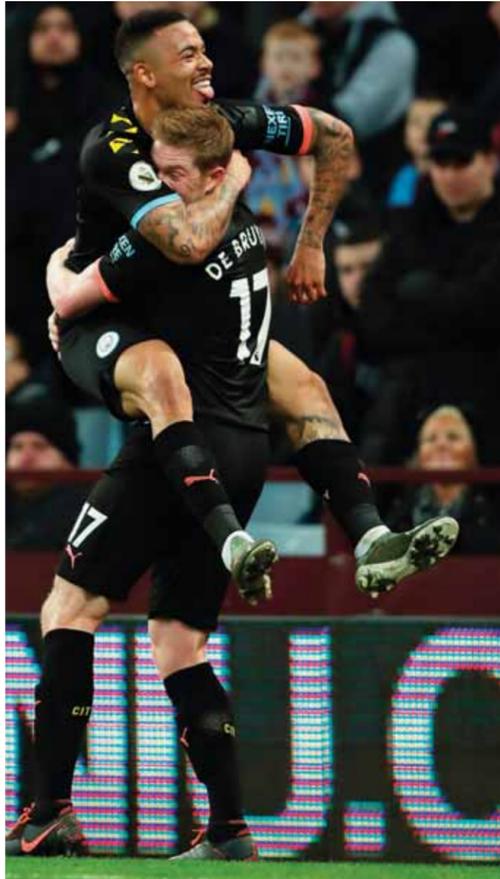


Abu Sufiyan, independent mobile journalist, founder of *Purani Dilli Waalo Ki Baatein* and digital campaign adviser for Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has made an effort towards reinventing Old Delhi. He says that there is an urgent need to explore Delhi and promote its culture

through micro-tourism. Abu has travelled most of the places on foot, which has helped him to have a deeper insight into the subject.

He said that in order to promote the abandoned havelis, we need to conduct *Mushayyara* and *Qawwalis* in them. This will attract more visitors.

An effective solution for this would be to outsource the maintenance and exterior lighting of the heritage monument to corporate giants in return for some branding opportunity at the monument. "We need to have a proper gateway to take the best out of our destinations," added he.



Gabriel Jesus hugs Kevin de Bruyne after scoring Manchester City opening goal

AFP ■ MADRID

Kevin De Bruyne orchestrated a dramatic Manchester City comeback on Wednesday as they stunned Real Madrid 2-1 at the Santiago Bernabeu to put one foot in the Champions League quarter-finals.

Madrid looked on course to edge a cagey contest after Isco's smart finish early in the second half, but De Bruyne teed up Gabriel Jesus in the 78th minute and then tucked away a penalty five minutes later.

A pulsating finish saw Sergio Ramos sent off for preventing Jesus from going clear and Madrid's

captain will now be banned for the second leg at the Etihad Stadium on March 17.

City's two away goals will make them heavy favourites to go through, even if manager Pep Guardiola was quick to discourage complacency.

"It's still not over," he said. "If there is one team that can overcome this it is this club (Real Madrid) with their experience and their history."

"We know the situation," said Real Madrid manager Zinedine Zidane. "We have to go there and win."

Madrid have now won only one of their last five games, with the

EIGHT MINUTE COLLAPSE

City score twice before Ramos sees Red in awful night for record champions

Clasico against Barcelona in La Liga to come on Sunday.

"We are on a bad run but we have to get ourselves out of it," said Zidane. "Sunday is a chance to change."

STRIKERS ON BENCH

Guardiola sprung a surprise by picking De Bruyne up front and leaving Raheem Sterling, Sergio Agüero and Fernandinho all on the bench.

"We played without a proper striker because of the way they defend," said Guardiola.

"They are so aggressive down the middle and when that happens you have to make the pitch wide."

His gamble paid off handsomely, even if Nicolas Otamendi made the mistake that led to Isco's opener while an injury to Aymeric Laporte meant Fernandinho had to be introduced midway through the first half.

Laporte must now be doubtful for Sunday's League Cup final against Aston Villa.

RAMOS RED

City enjoyed their best spell after the break. Casemiro carelessly conceded possession and De Bruyne tore away, feeding Mahrez, who cut in and curled wide. Jesus drove another shot at Courtois.

Zidane considered a change and Gareth Bale was warming up when Madrid took the lead.

Otamendi failed to control a Rodri pass and Vinicius broke, with Kyle Walker and Fernandinho rushing to meet him.

They left Isco free behind them and Vinicius picked him out, giving the Spaniard a simple finish.

The hosts smelt an opportunity for a second as Dani Carvajal weaved through and Ramos's volley was deflected over by Fernandinho.

Bale came on for Madrid and Sterling for City. Shortly after, De Bruyne's clipped cross was too high



Lucas Tousart celebrates after scoring Lyon's opening goal against Juventus

Lyon roar on Tousart tunes

LYON: Cristiano Ronaldo drew a blank as a Lucas Tousart goal handed Lyon a surprise 1-0 win over Juventus in the first leg.

Midfielder Tousart netted in the 31st minute to give Lyon a lead to defend when they head to Turin for the return on March 17.

The goal came with Juventus defender Matthijs de Ligt off receiving treatment, but it was just reward for an excellent first half by a Lyon side enduring a mediocre campaign.

They then survived late Juventus pressure to claim their finest European result since defeating Manchester City in last season's group stage.

"It was a top-class first-half performance from us. It was much harder in the second half, but I was happy with how we hung in there," said Lyon coach Rudi Garcia.

"I said to the boys that when you're at home in the first leg it's very important not to concede,

and now we need to go and score there. We must remain humble, it's only half-time."

Maurizio Sarri's side have genuine ambitions of winning a trophy that has evaded Juventus for almost a quarter of a century now, but they could not claim a precious away goal here, with Paulo Dybala seeing a late effort disallowed.

"In the first half it was not the Juve that we know. We didn't get going in attack. I am struggling to understand certain things," said Sarri, who thought his team could have had two penalties.

"We didn't do enough given this was a Champions League match but fortunately we still have 90 minutes to turn it around."

The match went ahead before a full house at the Groupama Stadium, including around 3,000 Juventus supporters allowed to attend despite calls from some French politicians to block their access amid fears about the spread of the coronavirus.

for Ramos at the back post and Jesus's header beat a weak right hand from Courtois to equalise.

Five minutes later, City com-

pleted the turnaround when Carvajal slid in late on Sterling and De Bruyne made no mistake from the spot.

Old Lady fail to convince as pressure for European success grows

AFP ■ TURIN

Jürgen Klopp recently labelled Juventus as the favourites to succeed his Liverpool side as winners of the Champions League, and Lionel Messi has also talked up the Italians' chances, but they looked nothing like contenders to lift the trophy as Cristiano Ronaldo and his teammates fired blanks against Lyon on Wednesday.

Juve will have to come from behind in the second leg of their last-16 tie on March 17 after going down 1-0 in France as a first-half goal by Lucas Tousart separated the teams.

The French side were worthy winners, despite enduring a mediocre season in Ligue 1 and only just scraping through their group. They will be confident of scoring an away goal in Turin, too.

All the pressure is on the Serie A outfit. While their rivals talk them up, those within the club admit winning the competition is the major objective, although they have emphasised the importance of luck in the knockout phase.

"We are very lucky to be able to chase the Champions League dream, because if we achieve it, it will be bliss, and if we don't the journey will have been beautiful," insisted coach Maurizio Sarri on the eve of the Lyon game.

However, no Juventus supporter, or director, will agree with that if they do not improve on their performance in Lyon.

The Italian league leaders mustered just one attempt on target, with Ronaldo unable to continue the form that had seen him score in each of his first nine appearances of 2020, and bag 19 goals since the beginning of December.

He is 35 now, so Juve are in a hurry to win the Champions League with the Portugal star, who cost them 100 million euros (\$109 million) from Real Madrid in 2018, not to mention his astronomical wages.

- No holding back -
The Italian press did not hold back on Thursday, with Turin-based sports daily Tuttosport leading the assault by complaining that "This is not Juve!"

Meanwhile, Gazzetta dello Sport asked: 'Juve, where are you?' The paper also warned Sarri "is in trouble".

Skipper Leonardo Bonucci accepted his side "got it all wrong" while Sarri himself admitted his team had been "slow and sluggish".

Yet there are enough young legs in the Juventus team -- not least 85.5 million-euro centre-back Matthijs de Ligt -- for them to play with greater energy than they did against Lyon.

Perhaps there is simply too much pressure on Juventus, who are desperate for Champions League success having lost five finals since last lifting the trophy in 1996. Along with Paris Saint-Germain and Bayern Munich, they are also one of those European mega-clubs whose domestic dominance has become so entrenched it is now all about the Champions League. European failure can leave any other success feeling rather hollow.

Lyon, probably the worst team left in the competition when the draw for the last 16 was made, looked transformed on Wednesday, with Brazilian January signing Bruno Guimarães outstanding in midfield.

However, their coach Rudi Garcia knows not to get carried away.

"We demonstrated that we are not in the last 16 purely by chance, but there is still the second leg to come and it will be very difficult there," he said.

Home advantage could be decisive for Juve, who have not lost in front of their own fans in Turin since Ajax dumped them out in last season's quarter-finals.

In the round before that they lost 2-0 at Atletico Madrid only for a Ronaldo hat-trick to turn the tie around in the return leg.

Korea ask NRAI to clarify position on coronavirus

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The national shooting federation of South Korea, one of the global hotbeds of the deadly novel coronavirus, has asked its Indian counterpart to make its position clear on whether athletes from the East Asian country would be allowed at next month's ISSF World Cup here.

In a letter to National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) President Raninder Singh, Korea Shooting Federation Secretary General Yongjae Lee has said that shooters are keen to participate in the event from March 15 to 26.

"Currently, most of the Korean athletes are wishing to acquire Minimum Qualification Standard at the ISSF World Cup -- New Delhi. However, there is a great deal of concern and worries among athletes and officials that they might not be able to participate," Lee said.

"Kindly state your position regarding COVID-19," he added.

Lee said the tickets for the athletes and officials have already been booked and their visa fees have also been paid.

The letter was prompted by a February 26 directive from the Indian Embassy there in which it was stated that people coming to India from Korea, Iran and Italy -- all severely affected by the virus -- after February 10 "may be quarantined for 14 days on arrival."

South Korea has more than 1700 confirmed cases of coronavirus and 13 people have so far died of the disease.

Meanwhile, Bahrain has become the latest country to pull out of the World Cup. China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, North Korea and Turkmenistan have already pulled out of the tournament due to the virus.

Rangers break Europe's knockout duck

AFP ■ GLASGOW

Steven Gerrard hailed a "faultless" Rangers performance as an impressive 1-0 victory at Braga on Wednesday booked their place in the last 16 of the Europa League, winning 4-2 on aggregate.

Gerrard has been critical of his side in recent weeks as they have fallen 12 points behind Celtic at the top of the Scottish Premiership.

But the former Liverpool captain was bursting with pride as Ryan Kent scored the only goal just after the hour mark in northern Portugal and the visitors should have scored many more.

"Super proud of the players. To a man tonight they were outstanding. I thought they were faultless, certainly out of possession," said Gerrard.

"This is no fluke. This has come from sheer hard graft."

Rangers were without top



scorer Alfredo Morelos through suspension and the absence of the Colombian could have proved costly as they missed a host of big chances before the break.

Kent has been criticised for his lack of impact when Rangers have most needed their £7 million signing most of late.

However, the former Liverpool winger produced a big goal when he had too much

Dev, Vaishnavi book Paris tickets



Dev V Javia and Vaishnavi Adkar pose for photo with Mary Pierce after win

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Young tennis players Dev V Javia and Vaishnavi Adkar emerged victorious at the Roland-Garros Junior Wild Card Series at the Delhi Lawn Tennis Association on Wednesday.

Tournament ambassador and 4-time Gland Slam champion Mary Pierce witnessed the action on the final day of the tournament and gave away the coveted trophies to the winners. The two players will now travel to Paris to compete against their counterparts from Mexico, Brazil and China in the Roland-Garros Junior Qualifiers with a shot to

qualify for the main draw of the Roland-Garros Junior Tournament 2020.

In the Girls' category unseeded Vaishnavi Adkar and Sanjana Sirimalla pulled off upsets against the top seeds to reach the final. The two young players battled it out in a tense, three-setter which went down to the wire. After losing the first set 4-6, Maharashtra girl

Vaishnavi Adkar registered yet another gritty comeback to win the 2nd set 6-4. In the third set, fortunes fluctuated till Adkar eventually clinched the set 7-6 (3) in a tie-breaker.

The Boys' final was a more straightforward affair as top seed Dev V Javia stamped his authority over the competition once again to defeat Chirag Duhan 6-2, 6-1. Gujarat player Javia's dominant performance throughout the tournament saw him clinch the title without losing a single set in all three matches. Up and coming player Duhan put on a brave display but ultimately proved to be no match for Javia.



Rafael Nadal returns a ball in 2nd round match

Nadal cruises into Mexico quarters

AFP ■ ACAPULCO

World number two Rafael Nadal stepped up his bid for a third ATP Mexico Open title with an impressive display of serving and shotmaking to beat Serbian youngster Miomir Kecmanovic on early Thursday.

The Spaniard hit 20 winners as he kept his hopes alive of regaining the top ranking with a 6-2, 7-5 victory over the 20-year-old Kecmanovic to reach the quarter-finals at the Acapulco hardcourt tournament.

"He's a very dangerous player. Young, with a lot of power. I'm very pleased with the victory," Nadal said.

"I played a very good first set and that's important for me. That gives me confidence."

Next up for Nadal is Kwon Soon-woo, who reached his fourth quarter-final of the month with a 7-6 (7/2), 6-0 upset against eighth-seeded Dusan Lajovic.

Rodgers backs Vardy to end goalless run

AFP ■ LEICESTER

Leicester manager Brendan Rodgers is confident Jamie Vardy will end his current drought and reach a century of Premier League goals.

The former England forward, 33, has scored 97 times in the top-flight but has failed to find the net in nine matches in all competitions.

Rodgers, whose side travel to bottom side Norwich on Friday, said he had no worries about Vardy's recent poor form. "It is only a matter of time before he gets back to scoring goals again," he said. "He doesn't look like the nervous type to me."

Vardy found the net in eight successive matches from mid-October through to early December but has just one goal in his past 12 games.

"Sometimes you get a run like it," Rodgers said. "Probably when he came back from his (glute) injury (in late January) he was maybe not quite up to speed."

"But I thought against Manchester City (in Saturday's 1-0 home defeat), you saw the return of that running power and speed."

"I have no doubt he will get the goals and beyond that. You don't force it, you don't put the pressure on, he knows that is his job. As long as he is contributing, then I'm fine."

Vardy's drought has coincided with Leicester's inconsistent form since mid-December. They have collected just 15 points from the past 36 on offer.

Former Celtic boss Rodgers said his side, third in the Premier League table, could not afford to rely on Vardy's goals.

"You have threats from various parts of the team, and for long periods of this season we had a central threat with Jamie, and other guys were working hard, and they started to contribute, but it's dried up a little bit," he said.

"It's a team responsibility. The strikers are important, but there are other things."

"Look at Roberto Firmino at Liverpool -- he's scored 10, but you look at his influence in the team and what he gives and allows to the other players."



Defender Sandeep Jhinghan

Jinghan, Jeje called for national camp

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Defender Sandeep Jhinghan and striker Jeje Lalpekhlua on Thursday returned to the fold for the 18-day national football camp ahead of India's FIFA 2022 World Cup qualifier against Qatar in Bhubaneswar.

India's World Cup qualifier against Qatar will be played on March 26.

Jhinghan had been sidelined because of a knee injury which he sustained six months ago, while Jeje is returning from a knee injury he suffered in June last year.

Lalengmawia, Jerry Mawihmingthanga, Jeakson Singh, Liston Colaco, Pratik Chowdhary, Shubham Sarangi,

Rafique Ali Sardar, Prabhukhan Gill, Sumit Rath, Seriton Fernandes, Edwin Sydney Vanspaul are among the ones who have been handed their first call-up to the senior team.

A total of 23 players have been called up in the first phase of the training camp in Bhubaneswar on March 9 before 20 other players, from four ISL semi-finalist teams join on March 16.

"Time is very crucial for us. We have planned to utilise the maximum time possible, so we want to see as many players as possible before the Qatar match," India's head coach Igor Stimac said.

"As some players won't be able to join the camp because of their club commitments before the 16th, we'll use this time to assess other players."

"Sandesh (Jhinghan) and Jeje (Lalpekhlua) have been long-standing servers of Indian national team and I strongly believe in their abilities. I have been updated about their current medical status and we'll monitor them closely in Bhubaneswar too," he added.

Jeakson Singh, who etched his name in Indian football history following his thunderous header against Colombia in the FIFA U17 World Cup at the JLN Stadium in October 2017, has also earned his maiden call-up for the senior national team camp.

Evans reaches Dubai last four

AFP ■ DUBAI

Britain's Dan Evans upset sixth seed Andrey Rublev 6-2, 7-6 (11/9) on Thursday to reach the fourth ATP semi-final of his career with victory at the Dubai Championships.

World number 37 Evans said the thought of playing another set after more than two hours was just too much to consider and worked hard to wrap up victory in straight sets.

"It was tough, I just hung in at the end and got through," unseeded Evans said.

"But I just didn't fancy playing another set; I think that's what got me through."

The 29-year-old, whose previous last four appearances came in Zagreb in 2014, Sydney in 2017 and Delray Beach a year ago, needed nearly two and a quarter hours to advance.

He now awaits a Friday opponent as second seed Stefanos Tsitsipas plays Jan-



Lennard Struff.

"Semi-finals in any tournament on the ATP Tour is great," he said.

"It doesn't matter who it's (semi-finals) against. Everyone is so good here."

Evans faced constant pressure from the Russian who started this season with an 11-match win streak, lifting back-to-back trophies in Doha and Adelaide.

Evans needed to battle to earn the opening set, finally taking it after a final game in which he saved five break points before winning on his third set point.

The second set was equally intense. Evans was broken while serving for victory leading a set and 5-4, with Rublev taking it into a tiebreaker.

Evans missed on his first two match point chances in the decider before his opponent sent a return over the baseline to end it. The victory was the second tight contest in a row for Evans, who saved three match points in the previous round.

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

India entered the semifinals of the women's T20 World Cup after Shafali Verma's 34-ball 46 followed by a superlative performance from the bowlers helped the team notch up a narrow four-run win over New Zealand here on Thursday.

Invited to bat, India posted a below-par 133 for eight in the group A match with Shafali top-scoring with a 34-ball 46 and Taniya Bhatia chipping in with a 25-ball 23.

They, however, produced a disciplined performance with the ball to restrict New Zealand to 129 for six and register their third successive win in the tournament and seal a last-four spot.

With this win, India topped Group A, having beaten Australia and Bangladesh in their last two outings.

"It is a great feeling when your team is performing like that," India skipper Harmanpreet Kaur said after the match.

"We did the same mistakes, we got a good start in the first 10 overs and we didn't carry the momentum. We did bowl well in patches and some times, we were not up to the mark and have to focus on those areas," she added.

Defending a below-par total, India introduced spin straight away but Deepti Sharma bled 12 runs with opener Rachel Priest (12) hitting her for two boundaries.

But experienced pacer Shikha Pandey removed Priest in the next over when she had her caught at mid wicket.

With Shikha and left-arm spinner Rajeshwari Gayakwad bowling in tandem, New Zealand played with caution to reach 28 for one.

Back into the attack, Deepti then cleaned up Bates with a beauty of a delivery as New Zealand slipped to 30 for two.

Poonam Yadav and Radha Yadav then mounted the pressure on the Kiwis and soon the Black Caps were 34 for 3 when the former dismissed skipper Sophie Devine (14).

Maddy Green (24) and Katey Martin (25) then tried to resurrect the innings with a 36-ball 43-run stand.

However, Gayakwad returned to



Indian team celebrate their win over New Zealand in their third game of Women's T20 World Cup in Melbourne

AP

remove Green, who danced down the pitch only to end up with an outside edge as Bhatia did the rest.

Radha then dismissed Martin to leave New Zealand at 90 for 5 in 16.3 overs.

Needing 44 off 21 balls, Kerr (34) blasted four boundaries to accumulate 18 runs in the penultimate over bowled by Poonam to bring the equation down to 16 off six balls.

In the final over, Heyley Jensen (11) and Kerr cracked a four each but Shikha held her nerves in the end to ensure India's win.



Aus thrash B'desh

PTI ■ CANBERRA

Alyssa Healy and Beth Mooney hit attacking half-centuries in a dominating 151-run opening stand as Australia hammered Bangladesh by 86 runs in their ICC Women's T20 World Cup match, here on Thursday.

The partnership between Healy (83) and Mooney (81 not out) is Australia's highest for any wicket at the Women's T20 World Cup.

Australia's 189 for one, the highest total of the tournament, proved too much for Bangladesh who could manage only 103 for nine.

THREE IN A ROW

Shafali's 46, bowler's economical spell help Harman & Co book last 4 place with narrow four-run win over White Ferns

We read & handle situations better now, says Taniya



Poonam Yadav celebrates with Taniya Bhatia after the later stumped out opposition player

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Wicket-keeper batswoman Taniya Bhatia says the Indian team has got better at reading and handling different situations, which was evident during the recent tri-series in Australia.

India on Thursday became the first team to seal a semifinal spot at the T20 World Cup following a narrow four-run win over New Zealand here.

"In the last 12 to 14 months, we have improved a lot as a unit. We're in a really positive position. We've been playing well ever since the tri-series. I think we've got a lot better as a team in working out how to handle and read situations well," Bhatia said at the post-match press conference.

"The results are in our favour, but we need to keep up the momentum. If we do that, we will do well and hopefully we can win the final," Bhatia added.

Bhatia is optimistic that their batters will definitely come good in the remaining matches of the tournament.

"We're playing well, it's just one or two odd games where our batters failed to perform. Shafali is giving us a good start and the rest of us batters will take up responsibility," she said.

Bhatia said she is open to bat at any position for the team's cause.

"I can bat well up the order and I know I'm capable of scoring runs there," she said. India will play Sri Lanka in their last Group A game on Saturday.



Virat Kohli plays a pull shot

Kiwis look to exploit sideways movement against Kohli

PTI ■ CHRISTCHURCH

Virat Kohli will be itching to make a comeback in the second Test and the best chance for New Zealand will be to exploit the sideways movement which can spell trouble for the Indian captain, feels opener Tom Latham.

Kohli had an indifferent tour of New Zealand so far. He was out for 2 and 19 in the first Test in Wellington.

"When Virat comes out to bat we will be ready. He is a quality player and there is a reason why he is up around that No 1 rank for such a period of time," Latham said at the media conference on Thursday.

"He has done it for long time and done it in all conditions. If the surface is conducive to sideways movement we will try and exploit that," said Latham.

Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami might have had a below par game in Wellington but Latham said they remain world class bowlers and the team would be certainly wary of them.

"We have played those guys really well in the first Test. But they are World class performers and we will be wary of them. Certainly they would be on top of their game and if we play well it will give us a good chance. We need to be consistent for long periods," he said.

Latham is sure that Neil Wagner's comeback will add firepower to the side.

"I haven't yet seen him but when he rocks up for training he will be absolutely fizzing up to get going and obviously he will be raring to go. He is been a quality performer for a number of years for us," Latham said.

The Hagley Oval surface will have bounce and Latham expects Wagner to be more than a handful.

"It's something that Neil has obviously been so good at for so long and he is second to none in terms of accuracy.

"He is a short guy and that makes him harder to play. If the surface is up for that plan he will be looking to go round with that."

The first day will be important reckoned Latham.

"Generally, it's a good surface and surfaces in NZ have been on the greener side at the start and then flatten out. So we need to do well on day one."

Aggressive intent & clear mindset against pace will help us: Rahane

CHRISTCHURCH: Ajinkya Rahane wants to take on the New Zealand pace battery with more intent in the second Test and his foolproof strategy includes countering the awkward angles which became a nightmare for Indian batsmen during the first Test.

Rahane, who top-scored with 46 in the first innings of the opening Test, is hopeful that a turnaround will happen on a green top at the Hagley Oval, which he reckons will be better for batting compared to the one they got in Wellington.

"I am not saying (we have to be) more aggressive but having that intent and clear mindset will help us," Rahane told reporters on Thursday.

New Zealand pacers Trent Boult, Tim Southee and Kyle Jamieson used the short ball liberally after coming wide of the crease with an angle that was disconcerting for the batsmen.

"I think they used that angle really well in Wellington. Bowling wide of the crease or from the centre, they changed angles while bowling the short balls. I think their plan was completely clear.

"As a batsman, if you going to think about a particular shot, then you need to back yourself and play that shot. You cannot doubt yourself. We need to forget what happened in Wellington," the Indian vice-captain said.

According to Rahane, the two net sessions

at the Hagley Oval is being used to practice negating the awkward angles that Neil Wagner and company can create.

"That's what I said: try and learn what mistakes we did as a group, what can we learn. I think we have to practice those angles. We had a practice session and we have one more tomorrow. And you have to practice that and trust your ability in the middle," Rahane said in a reassuring tone.

While net sessions are important, it's the instincts in match situations that counts, he said.

"But to change or adjust those angles there are times you need to be instinctive while you are batting. It can mean standing on off-stump, or standing outside the crease or staying deep inside the crease - like if it is a pitch for cut shot then you can stand deeper in the crease. This is the mental side of the game," Rahane said.

"For me, as a batsman it is important you show your intent to the bowler, if you stand in one spot then the bowler doesn't need to change anything. These are small things we have been working on in practice and how to use the crease and the angles. Doesn't matter how much you practice you must trust or have the belief to be able to do it in the middle," he added.

PTI

Jaffer advises Indian batsmen to score big

NAVI MUMBAI: Wasim Jaffer, a domestic cricket giant, says unless the Indian batsmen build on their starts and put a big total on the board, bouncing back in the Test series against New Zealand will be extremely difficult.

"Virat has a lean patch for a while, so I am expecting him to come back stronger. Pujara needs some runs under his belt. Most importantly they need to convert their starts into three figures, if that doesn't happen and if we don't put score of 350-400 runs then it is difficult," Jaffer told PTI.

"In 200-250 (runs) you can't win a Test match unless there is much help from the pitch. When we bat first or bat second, we need to score 400-450 runs," Jaffer said.

Jaffer also felt that the team getting bundled out for below 200 in the first Test was not befitting of its number one rank in the longest format of the game.

"They kept our run-rate in check and kept our batsmen under pressure for long periods. I felt that in the first innings the conditions were favourable for bowlers, but they worked out an strategy of bouncers and we should have batted better in the second innings. To get out both times under 200 is unlike the number one Test team," he said.

PTI

Prithvi skips practice with swollen foot

PTI ■ CHRISTCHURCH

Young opener Prithvi Shaw missed Thursday's training session due to a swelling on his left foot, increasing Indian team management's worries ahead of the second Test against New Zealand beginning on Saturday.

According to sources, Shaw will undergo a blood test on Thursday to ascertain the reason of the swelling.

In case the medical report is favourable, a call will be taken during Friday's practice session on his availability for the second Test. If Shaw is not comfortable while batting, he will not make it to the playing XI.

Shubman Gill had a good net session on Thursday and it is expected that he would be asked to open the innings alongside Mayank Agarwal if Shaw is unable to make it.

During Thursday's nets, head coach Ravi

Shastri was seen paying extra attention to Gill's session. At one point, Shastri walked up to Gill and was seen giving some technical inputs about footwork to Gill and what's required to check his uppish drives.

The Indian team management is hopeful that the swelling will not be a serious concern for Shaw.

The Mumbai opener didn't even take part in the customary warm-up session where players had a good time playing touch rugby.

Shaw had a poor outing in the first Test in Wellington, getting dismissed cheaply in both the innings.



Warner, Finch power hunt Proteas



Australian players pose with winners' trophy after win in 3rd T20I

AP

AFP ■ CAPE TOWN

David Warner and Aaron Finch launched a brutal assault on the South African bowlers to set up a comprehensive 97-run Australian victory in the series-deciding third Twenty20 international at Newlands.

In a near-repeat of Australia's record 107-run win in the first match of the series in Johannesburg, South Africa captain Quinton de Kock's decision to bowl first backfired spectacularly.

Led by opening batsmen

Warner (57) and captain Finch (55), Australia piled up 193 for five — three fewer than they made in Johannesburg.

They then bowled out South Africa for 96, just seven more than the host country's record low in Johannesburg.

As in Johannesburg, left-arm fast bowler Mitchell Starc bowled De Kock, South Africa's star batsman, in the first over of the home team's reply.

He followed up by dismissing former captain Faf du Plessis in the third over and was named man-of-the-match after taking

three for 23.

Finch was named man of the series for his aggressive batting and astute captaincy.

"The guys have bought into the roles they have been asked to play," he said.

It was the first time Warner and Steve Smith had played at Newlands since both were banned for a year after a ball-tampering scandal at the same ground two years ago.

South Africa were never in the game after Warner and Finch thrashed 120 for the first wicket off 74 balls.

Apart from some powerful hitting by both players, they forced the South Africans into fielding errors with their aggressive running between wickets.

"It's something we pride ourselves on," said Finch.

"It's quite disappointing the way we lost," said De Kock. "We have to keep our heads up and keep looking forward."

Although Finch said he would have batted if he had won because of the dryness of the pitch, De Kock said he would make the same decision to bowl again.

He said he still thought chasing a target at Newlands was a preferred option, but admitted: "Australia were 20 runs above par."

Warner back as SRH captain

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Explosive Australian batsman David Warner was on Thursday reinstated as IPL franchise Sunrisers Hyderabad's captain, a position that he had to give up after the ball-tampering scandal in 2018.

The 33-year-old Warner, who led the Sunrisers to the trophy in 2016, will take over from New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson for the season starting March 29.

"I am thrilled to be given the captaincy for this coming IPL 2020. I'm extremely grateful for the opportunity to lead the side once again," Warner said in a video posted by the Sunrisers Hyderabad.

"I'd like to thank Kane (Williamson) for the way you guys led the team throughout the last couple of years and I'd be leaning on you guys for support and insight to the game as well," he said.

"To the management thank you for the opportunity and I'm sure I'll be doing my very best to try and lead us and lift again the IPL trophy this coming year," he added.



David Warner walks back to the pavilion

Guwahati will host 2 games of RR in IPL

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Barsapara Stadium in Guwahati will host former champions Rajasthan Royals' first two home matches during the upcoming edition of the Indian Premier League, the BCCI said on Thursday.

"They will now play Delhi Capitals & Kolkata Knight Riders on April 5th & April 9th respectively in Guwahati. Both games will have an 8 PM IST start," BCCI secretary Jay Shah said in a release.

Rajasthan Royals will play their remaining five home matches at their designated home ground of Sawai Mansingh Stadium in Jaipur.

The Steve Smith-led Rajasthan Royals will open their campaign with an away match against Chennai Super Kings on April 2.

"The Royals are bringing the IPL to the Northeast for the very first time, expanding cricket's footprint in the region. See you in

April, Guwahati!" Rajasthan Royals wrote on their official twitter handle.

Last year, Rajasthan Royals had made a request to play few of their matches in Guwahati and have been in talks with the Assam Cricket Association (ACA) for quite sometime. The move, which is backed by the IPL Governing Council, was however challenged by a PIL at the Rajasthan High Court earlier this year.

The reason behind such a move was Royals' unhappiness with the ailing cricketing ecosystem in the state and also their poor relation with the Rajasthan Cricket Association (RCA).

The Royals also had been incurring losses due to reasons such as high demands for free tickets and mandatory allotment of seats to RCA.

Inaugural edition winners Rajasthan Royals had earlier played at Ahmedabad in 2010, and Ahmedabad and Mumbai's Brabourne Stadium in the 2015 season.