

**OPINION 6**  
AN ALARMING  
TREND

**WORLD 8**  
AZERBAIJANI LEADER: CHRISTIAN  
CHURCHES WILL BE PROTECTED

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## Nitish returns as Bihar CM

Kumar elected NDA leader in House; Tarkishore, Renu Devi elected as leader and deputy leader of BJP legislature party; suspense on Sushil Modi

PNS/PTI ■ PATNA

The NDA on Sunday chose JD(U) president Nitish Kumar for another term as the Chief Minister of Bihar even as suspense hung over the fate of his most trusted man in the BJP Sushil Kumar Modi who has served as his deputy for major part of his tenure so far.

Kumar's name was announced at 1, Anney Marg, the Chief Minister's official residence, by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh who had been sent from Delhi as the "observer" for the BJP, which has returned with the highest number of seats in the NDA in the Assembly elections.

"Kumar was unanimously elected as the NDA legislature party leader. Our MLAs Tarkishore Prasad and Renu Devi were respectively elected as the leader and deputy leader of the BJP legislature party", Singh told reporters later.

Kumar, who met Governor Phagu Chauhan, along with leaders like BJP State president Sanjay Jaiswal to stake claim for the formation of a new Government, said the swearing in would take place "tomorrow, between 4 and 4.30 pm" and curbedly replied "it will be decided in due course" when asked who were likely to take oath as members of his State Cabinet. Singh, a former BJP national president, who was accompanied by Sushil for most part of his day-long visit,



JD(U) national president Nitish Kumar and HAM(S) chief Jitan Ram Manjhi after meeting Bihar Governor Fagu Chauhan in Patna on Sunday

however ducked queries about who would be the new Deputy CM. "You will come to know about it at an appropriate time", said Singh even as Sushil himself dropped ample hints about the happenings within the party. The senior BJP leader, who is an avid user of social media, had his designation as Deputy CM dropped from his

Twitter handle. He also congratulated Prasad and Devi and came out with a cryptic tweet about his own future in the BJP. "Few might have got from the BJP and the RSS as much as I did in my 40 years of political career. I will fulfill whatever responsibility that comes my way in future. Nobody can,

after, all, snatch away from me the post of a party worker", Sushil said in the tweet.

Union Minister Giriraj Singh, considered one of the detractors of Kumar in the BJP and not known to be on the best of terms with Sushil, came out with a tongue in cheek response. "Respected Sushil Kumar Modi, you are a leader, you held the office of Deputy CM and will remain a BJP leader. One does not become great or small because of a post", Singh tweeted.

The names of Prasad, a Vaishya who is known to be close to Sushil, and Devi, an Extremely Backward Caste (EBC) who was formerly the party's national vice president, kept doing the rounds for the Deputy CMs post though no official confirmation came till late in the evening.

Speculation about Prasad grew stronger late in the evening as he drove to the Chief Minister's office alongside BJP national general secretary in charge of the State Bhopendra Yadav and former Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis who was made the party's in charge for the Assembly elections.

Prasad's residence in Katihar was also abuzz with murmurs of "badi zimmedari" (big responsibility) even as family members were busy lighting candles by way of celebration.

Continued on Page 2

## Fresh steps to curb Delhi's Covid surge

Shah chairs remedial meet; 300 more ICU beds, daily RT-PCR tests to be doubled, house-to-house survey

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With Delhi reeling from a fresh spike in Covid-19 cases, the Centre on Sunday announced a slew of steps including making available 300 additional ICU beds, double the number of daily PCR tests and a house-to-house survey in the entire national Capital.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah also said some of the hospitals under the municipal corporations of Delhi will be converted into dedicated Covid hospitals. Doctors and paramedics of paramilitary forces will be flown in to be deployed in the national Capital to deal with the shortage of manpower.

The decisions were taken at a high-level meeting chaired by Shah and attended by Delhi Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajaj, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan among others. It was the second major intervention by Shah, who had stepped in and announced several steps in June to check the rising number of Covid-19 cases in the national Capital after criticism in different quarters of the Delhi Government's handling of the crisis.

Sunday's meeting was convened in the wake of the rising number of cases, which is

### Covid-19 IN INDIA

**TOTAL**  
CASES: 88,43,396  
DEATHS: 1,30,066  
RECOVERED: 82,44,632  
ACTIVE: 4,66,726



STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	17,47,242	45,974	16,15,379
Karnataka	8,61,647	11,529	8,22,953
Andhra Pradesh	8,52,955	6,854	8,26,344
Tamil Nadu	7,58,191	11,478	7,30,272
Kerala	5,24,999	1,869	4,48,207
Uttar Pradesh	5,09,903	7,354	4,79,182
Delhi	4,85,405	7,614	4,37,801
West Bengal	4,31,551	7,661	3,94,576
Odisha	3,08,659	1,580	2,97,862
Telangana	2,57,374	1,404	2,40,545
Bihar	2,26,916	1,184	2,19,864
Rajasthan	2,25,817	2,066	2,05,414
Assam	2,10,268	964	2,05,636
Chhattisgarh	2,10,004	2,562	1,88,167
Haryana	1,99,874	2,019	1,78,298
Gujarat	1,88,310	3,803	1,72,032

being called the 'third wave' of Covid-19, in Delhi and it noted the increasing strain on medical infrastructure in the city.

In a series of tweets in Hindi, Shah said daily PCR tests in Delhi will be doubled and the capacity of the testing laboratories will be enhanced. He said mobile testing vans of the Union Health Ministry and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) will be deployed in the areas where the Covid-19 threat is high.

Currently, around 18,000 to 19,000 PCR tests are conducted daily in Delhi. Shah said the meeting resolved to enhance the capacity of Delhi's hospitals and in this direction, 300 ICU beds will be made available at the DRDO Covid hospital (Dhaura Kuan) in addition to the existing 250 ICU beds.

Continued on Page 2

### Vaccine to bring life back on track by next winter

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A new Covid vaccine's impact will work significantly over the summer and life should be back to normal by next winter only, said the co-developer of Pfizer, a US drug manufacturer which is expected to launch the shot by this December-end.

"Normalcy from the Covid era can only be expected by next year's winter as any vaccine will take to show its effect and will not immediately reduce number of infections," said Prof Ugur Sahin, co-founder of BioNTech.

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### Covid +ve Cong leader Patel admitted to ICU

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Six weeks after he first contracted coronavirus, senior Congress leader Ahmed Patel has been shifted to the intensive care unit (ICU) of Medanta Hospital, Gurgaon, for further treatment and is stable.

Patel, 71, tweeted on October 1 that he had contracted coronavirus. Patel's son Faisal tweeted on Sunday, "...we would like to share that Patel had tested positive for Covid-19 a few weeks ago. He has now been admitted to the ICU of Medanta, Gurugram for further treatment."

Continued on Page 2

## Firecrackers' ban flouted in Capital

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Despite the ban imposed on its sale and use in the National Capital Region in view of rising air pollution and Covid-19 pandemic, bursting of firecrackers was reported from across the national Capital and its neighbouring areas on Diwali night.

Meanwhile the Delhi Police arrested over 850 people and registered over 1,200 cases for continuing to burst crackers as well as sell them. A total of 1,314 kilograms of crackers were seized in Delhi on Saturday, police said. According to Delhi Police, 139 calls were received from the Rohini district. Sixty-five FIRs were registered against violators and two cases were against the illegal sale of firecrackers. Meanwhile, Dwarka registered 72 cases against the bursting of firecrackers. The highest numbers of cases were registered in the South district.

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) had on Monday imposed a total ban

on sale or use of all kinds of firecrackers in the NCR till November 30 midnight. The Delhi Government too had earlier this month imposed a total ban on all kinds of fireworks till November 30.

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### Day after Diwali, air quality in Delhi plunges to severe

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Day after Diwali, air quality in Delhi plunged to the severe category with Particulate Matter (PM) 2.5 recorded 1,798 µg-m<sup>3</sup>, 180 times higher to its safer limit which is 60 µg-m<sup>3</sup> as prescribed World Health Organisation (WHO) for India.

The overall Air Quality Index (AQI) on Sunday settled at 418 µg-m<sup>3</sup> at 20:00 hrs under severe category.

Continued on Page 2

## China, 14 set world's biggest trading bloc to beat pandemic shocks

AP ■ HANOI (VIETNAM)

China and 14 other countries agreed on Sunday to set up the world's largest trading bloc, encompassing nearly a third of all economic activity, in a deal many in Asia are hoping will help hasten a recovery from the shocks of the pandemic.

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, or RCEP, was signed virtually on Sunday on the sidelines of the 10-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

"I am delighted to say that after eight years of hard work, as of today, we have officially brought RCEP negotiations to a conclusion for signing," said host country Vietnam's Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc.

"The conclusion of RCEP negotiation, the largest free trade agreement in the world, will send a strong message that affirms ASEAN's leading role in

supporting the multilateral trading system, creating a new trading structure in the region, enabling sustainable trade facilitation, revitalising the supply chains disrupted by Covid-19 and assisting the post pandemic recovery," Phuc said.

The accord will take already low tariffs on trade between member countries still lower, over time, and is less comprehensive than an 11-nation trans-Pacific trade deal that President Donald Trump pulled out of shortly after taking office.

Apart from the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations, it includes China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand, but not the United States. Officials said the accord leaves the door open for India, which dropped out due to fierce domestic opposition to its market-opening requirements, to rejoin the bloc.

Continued on Page 2

## A beautiful mind no more

RINKU GHOSH ■ NEW DELHI

Soumitro Chatterjee was much beyond the many talents he was defined by — an actor, the-atreperson, writer, essayist, poet, elocutionist and thought leader. And will and should be remembered for the rare human being he was, hosting everyone in his modest study, surrounded with books, and willing to give you a patient hearing for a college play of no consequence as he would his next script. He respected every form of craft, be it rudimentary or elegant, for the sheer weight of the human imagination to conceive a world outside everyday reality, rather reinterpret reality from an individual perspective. Art, to him, was classless and he respected it for rising above the ordinary and creating a cultural idiom of our times. Such grace, empathy and oneness of what can only be called "a beautiful mind" will be his lasting legacy beyond him being just the last of the Bengali bhadralok.



Soumitra Chatterjee  
JAN 19, 1935 — NOV 15, 2020

He will forever be the mentor of the true artiste and remind us it is important to dream, no matter how little or big. And that life is always worth another try.

It is because of this passion for new ideas that he continued working in the studios in the thick of a pandemic despite his

playing character actors in maudlin TV soaps. And if Bengal had a superstar called Uttam Kumar, an aura so large that years later the best of talent would still be called "aspirant," Soumitro consciously occupied the other space, the less starry one, that of the everyday Bengali, who struggled without bothering to think about the outcome, who was guiltless about a lack of ambition and who wasn't scared to admit to his frailties. Finally, the Everyman became the star. He challenged Uttam's superstardom in director Tapan Sinha's *Jhinder Bondi* (adapted from *The Prisoner of Zenda*), playing the villainous Mayurbahon, setting himself up as a counterpoint and stealing the thunder from the star who had more screen time playing a double role. And then there was no looking back. He won them all, Padma Bhushan, the Dadasaheb Phalke, National film award and the French Legion of Honour.

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# PM greets J'khand people on Birsa's birth anniversary

**New Delhi:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday greeted Jharkhand's people on its Statehood Day and also paid tributes to 19th century freedom fighter and tribal leader Birsa Munda on his birth anniversary. In a tweet in Hindi, the Prime Minister extended wishes for the happiness, prosperity and good health of people of Jharkhand on the occasion.

Modi also dubbed Birsa Munda a true 'messiah' of the poor, saying that "he struggled throughout his life for the welfare of the exploited and deprived."

"Birsa Munda's contribution in the freedom movement and his efforts for social harmony will

always inspire the countrymen," the Prime Minister said.

A century after Birsa Munda's death, Jharkhand was carved out of Bihar on his birth anniversary on November 15, 2000.

Born in 1875 in Ulihatu in then Bengal Presidency in Ranchi district of current Jharkhand state, Birsa Munda from the Munda tribe had challenged the British rule and is credited with mobilising the tribals against the empire.

The freedom fighter died in British custody at the age of 25 and attained a folk hero status. His portrait hangs in the Indian Parliament Museum. He is the only tribal leader to have been so honoured.

# Army pays tributes to its bravehearts in J&K

**Srinagar:** The Army on Sunday paid tributes to its bravehearts martyred in the line of duty during Pakistani firing at the LoC in north Kashmir, officials said. In a solemn ceremony held at BB Cantt, Lt General BS Raju, Chinara Corps Commander, and all ranks paid homage to Havildar Hardhan Chandra Roy, Naik Satai Bhushan Ramesh Rao, Gunner Subodh Ghosh, and Sepoy Jondhale Rushikesh Ramchandra on behalf of the proud and grateful nation.

The gallant soldiers had made the supreme sacrifice on November 13 when the Pakistan Army indulged in unprovoked ceasefire violations in multiple Sectors of Kashmir.

Havildar Hardhan Chandra Roy and Gunner Subodh

Ghosh of the Artillery Regiment were deployed in the Uri Sector while Naik Satai Bhushan Ramesh Rao and Sepoy Jondhale Rushikesh Ramchandra of the Maratha Light Infantry were deployed in the Gurez Sector.

In the unprovoked artillery shelling by Pakistan army, these bravehearts received multiple splinter injuries. They were provided immediate medical aid and evacuated to nearest military medical facilities, but succumbed to their injuries.

Late Havildar Hardhan Chandra Roy, 38, belonged to Mhedhipara village in Futkibari Tehsil in Dhubri district, Assam. He had joined the Army in 2001 and is survived by his wife and son.

Late Naik Satai Bhushan Ramesh Rao hailed from Kotal

village in Nagpur district, Maharashtra. The 28-year-old had joined the Army in 2011 and is survived by his parents.

Late Gunner Subodh Ghosh had joined the Army in 2017. The 22-year-old belonged to Raghunathpur vilage in Tehatta Tehsil in Nadia district, West Bengal, and is survived by his wife and parents.

Late Sepoy Jondhale Rushikesh Ramchandra hailed from Bahirewadi village in of jara Tehsil in Kolhapur district, Maharashtra. The 20-year-old had joined the Army in 2019 and is survived by his parents.

"The Chinara Corps also acknowledges the supreme sacrifice of Sub-Inspector Rakesh Doval of the Border Security Force during the ceasefire violation in Naugam Sector," the Army said.

# Telangana's new corona cases' count drops due to fewer tests

IANS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana's daily count of new coronavirus cases dropped further to 661 on Sunday as authorities conducted fewer tests on account of Diwali, taking the state's tally to 2,57,374.

During the last 24 hours, the laboratories conducted only 21,264 coronavirus tests, about 50 per cent of the daily tests conducted on weekdays.

Three more patients succumbed to the virus during the period, taking the state's COVID-19 death toll to 1,404.

The fatality rate dropped to 0.54 per cent as against the national average of 1.5 per cent. Officials said the percentage of deaths due to COVID-19 was 44.96 while the remaining 55.04 had comorbidities.

Greater Hyderabad reported 167 new cases. Rangareddy recorded the second highest 57 cases, followed by Medchal Malkajgiri (45) and Nalgonda (34).

According to the daily media bulletin from Public Health and Family Welfare Department, 1,637 more patients recovered

during the 24-hour period that ended at 8 pm on Saturday.

The state's recovery rate improved further to 93.46 per cent as against the national average of 93.1 per cent.

The active cases total 15,425, of which 12,899 are in home or institutional isolation.

The cumulative number of tests mounted to 48,74,433. Eighteen government-run and 50 private laboratories and 1,076 Rapid Antigen test centres are conducting the tests.

Out of 21,264 samples tested during the last 24 hours, 19,703 were tested in government-run laboratories and 1,561 in private ones.

Samples tested per million population ratio rose further to 1,30,962. The daily testing target for the state is 5,600 per day as against the World Health Organisation (WHO) benchmark of 140 per million per day.

Out of 2,57,374 positive cases so far in Telangana, 70 per cent (1,80,162) were asymptomatic while the remaining 30 per cent (77,212) were symptomatic.

# Vaccine to bring life back...

**From Page 1**

Prof Sahin's vaccine candidate has proved to prevent over 90 per cent people from getting Covid-19, as per preliminary reports. This winter would still be hard, he said in an interview to a news agency.

Last week, Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech said their experimental vaccine was more than 90 per cent effective in preventing Covid-19 based on initial data from its Phase III trials. The encouraging results have prompted Anthony Fauci, the top US infectious-disease expert, to say that the country may begin offering the vaccine to priority groups at the end of December.

Sahin said he was confident the vaccine would reduce transmission between people as

well as stop symptoms developing in someone who has had the vaccine, though not as high as the test results but still "maybe 50 per cent".

He said as everything continued to go well, he said, the vaccine would begin to be delivered at the "end of this year, beginning of next year". He, however made it clear that it was not yet known how long immunity would last after the vaccine's second shot is administered.

The goal was to deliver more than 300 million doses worldwide by next April, he said on the BBC show, which "could allow us to only start to make an impact" and the bigger impact would happen later only.

"Summer will help us

because the infection rate will go down in the summer and what is absolutely essential is that we get a high vaccination rate until or before autumn/winter next year," he stressed.

Asked if the vaccine was as effective in older people as it is in younger people, he said he expected to have a better idea in the next three weeks.

Sahin also said the "key side effects" of the vaccine seen so far were a mild to moderate pain in the injection site for a few days, while some participants had a mild to moderate fever over a similar period.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), more than 150 Covid-19 vaccines are presently in development, with around 44 candidates in clinical trials and 11 undergoing late-stage testing.

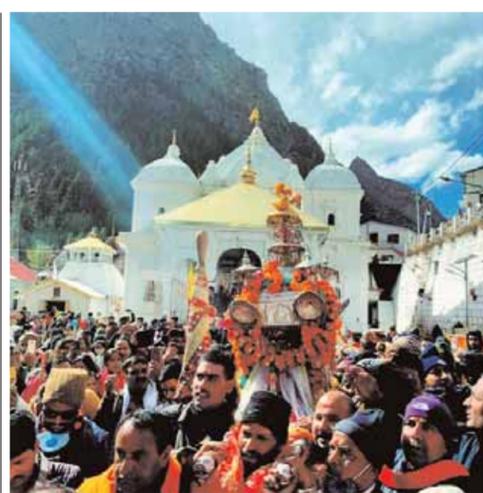
# Covid +ve Cong leader Patel admitted...

**From Page 1**

"His condition is stable and he continues to be under medical observation... We request you to pray for his speedy recovery," he said.

Several Congress leaders wished a speedy recovery to Patel. "Deeply concerned and praying for the good health of my friend and comrade Ahmed Patel. Please join us in praying for his early recovery," senior Congress leader Anand Sharma tweeted.

Many Congress leaders, including Abhishek Singhvi and Tarun Gogoi, had also tested positive for COVID-19 earlier.



A large number of pilgrims attend the door closing ceremony of Gangotri Dham for winterers, in Uttarkashi on Sunday

# Trump appears to acknowledge Biden's win, but says won't concede

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

For the first time, President Donald Trump on Sunday appeared to grudgingly acknowledge that his Democratic rival Joe Biden won the closely-fought race for the White House, but indicated that he would not concede and would keep trying to challenge the "rigged" election outcome.

The Republican president's declaration comes as he and his administration continue to accuse Democrats of election fraud without evidence and impede the transition.

"He won because the Election was Rigged. NO VOTE WATCHERS OR OBSERVERS allowed, vote tabulated by a Radical Left privately owned company, Dominion, with a bad reputation & bum equipment that couldn't even qualify for Texas (which I won by a lot!), the Fake & Silent Media, & more!"

Trump tweeted. Unlike in India where election results are declared by the election commission, the results of the presidential elections are certified by each of the 50 states separately which takes weeks.

# China, 14 set world's biggest trading...

**From Page 1**

It is not expected to go as far as the European Union in integrating member economies but does build on existing free trade arrangements. The deal has powerful symbolic ramifications, showing that nearly four years after Trump launched his "America First" policy of forging trade deals with individual countries, Asia remains committed to multinational efforts toward freer trade that are seen as a formula for future prosperity.

Ahead of Sunday's RCEP "special summit" meeting, Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said he would firmly convey his government's support for "broadening a free and fair economic zone, including a possibility of India's future return to the deal, and hope to gain support from the other countries."

The accord is also a coup for China, by far the biggest market in the region with more than 1.3 billion people, allowing Beijing to cast itself as a "champion of globalisation and multilateral cooperation" and giving it greater influence over rules governing regional trade, Gareth Leather, senior Asian economist for Capital Economics, said in a report.

China's official Xinhua News Agency quoted Premier Li Keqiang hailing the agreement as a victory against protectionism, in remarks delivered via a video link.

Now that Trump's opponent Joe Biden has been declared president-elect, the region is watching to see how US policy on trade and other issues will evolve. Analysts are sceptical Biden will push hard to rejoin the trans-Pacific trade pact or to roll back many of the US trade sanctions imposed on China by the Trump administration given widespread frustration with Beijing's trade and human rights records and accusations of spying and technology theft. Critics of free trade agreements say they tend to encourage companies to move manu-

facturing jobs overseas. So, having won over disaffected rust-belt voters in Michigan and western Pennsylvania in the November 3 election, Biden is "not going to squander that by going back into TPP," Michael Jonathan Green of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies said in a web seminar. But given concerns over China's growing influence, Biden is likely to seek much more engagement with Southeast Asia to protect US interests, he said.

The fast-growing and increasingly affluent Southeast Asian market of 650 million people has been hit hard by the pandemic and is urgently seeking fresh drivers for growth. RCEP originally would have included about 3.6 billion people and encompassed about a third of world trade and global GDP. Minus India, it still covers more than 2 billion people and close to a third of all trade and business activity.

RCEP includes six of the 11 remaining CPTPP members. India balked at exposing its farmers and factories to more foreign competition. Among other concerns, Indian dairy farmers are worried about competition from New Zealand and Australian milk and cheese producers. Automakers fear imports from across the region. But overall the biggest fear is over a flood of manufactured goods from China. Trade and investment flows within Asia have vastly expanded over the past decade, a trend that has accelerated amid feuding between the US and China, which have imposed billions of dollars' worth of punitive tariffs on each other's exports.

The RCEP agreement is loose enough to stretch to fit the disparate needs of member countries as diverse as Myanmar, Singapore, Vietnam and Australia. ASEAN members include Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, Brunei, Singapore, Malaysia and Vietnam.

# Day after Diwali, air quality in Delhi plunges to severe

**From Page 1**

This was reported by Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting And Research (SAFAR), Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES). According to the agency's air quality index or AQI, any reading above 100 on a scale of 500 is progressively unsafe for health.

At 08:00 hrs the AQI in Delhi was at 467, indicating severe conditions that pose a risk of respiratory problems. The AQI further deteriorated, standing at 490 at 17:00 hrs.

While the pollution control board uses 24-hour average data, the Ministry of Earth Sciences' SAFAR, or System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting And Research, reports real-time figures. According to SAFAR observatory, the stubble burning contribution was only four per cent lowest of the season. "The overall air quality of Delhi is in the Severe category as of today morning as predicted even under zero predicted local load scenario."

"However, the magnitude of PM2.5 within the severe category is found to be more than predicted tend to suggest that significant local additional emissions (probably firecracker related) during yesterday night on already build up stubble fire-related pollutant concentrations lead to such scenario where hourly average concentrations touched more than 1000ug/m3 at midnight on the intervening night of Saturday,"

Citing MeT factors playing crucial role impacting air quality, SAFAR said, boundary layer winds picked up and changed its direction to easterly now which is not favorable for stubble fire-related intrusion."

"Effective Stubble fire counts (with sufficient potential) estimated from SAFAR-multi-satellite products are significantly reduced to around 350 on Saturday night in contrast to around 2586, on Friday night."

# Firecrackers' ban...

**From Page 1**

However, on Diwali night firecrackers could be seen going off in various residential colonies of the national Capital from around 8 pm.

The Delhi Police, however, said it has

deployed personnel in many parts of the city and action will be taken against those violating the ban. "We have deployed adequate police personnel to check illegal sale and bursting of fire crackers. Today also, personnel have been deployed and action will be taken against the offenders," a senior police officer said.

In south Delhi's Lajpat Nagar area, a lot of crackers could be heard going off.

In Delhi's neighbouring Noida, Pawan Kumar said he could hear a lot of firecrackers. "People burst crackers despite the fact that there was a ban. There should have been strict measures to enforce the ban at ground level," he said.

# Fresh steps...

**From Page 1**

The home minister said to increase the number of oxygen beds, the 10,000-bedded Chhatrapur COVID care centre will be strengthened and some of the hospitals of the municipal corporations of Delhi will be converted into dedicated COVID hospitals.

After the meeting, Delhi Chief Minister Kejriwal, however, said around 750 ICU beds will be arranged at the DRDO centre and daily testing will be scaled up to 1-1.25 lakh in coming the days.

"The Centre has assured that in the next two days 500 ICU beds will be made available at the DRDO centre and after a few more days 250 more ICU beds will be arranged. So, around 750 ICU beds will be available there."

Kejriwal said another decision taken in the meeting was to scale up daily tests from around 60,000 (PCR and rapid antigen tests) to 1-1.25 lakh daily.

A home ministry statement said Shah directed the Health Ministry to make arrangements for requisite numbers of BIPAP machines and high flow nasal canulas to the Delhi government within the next two days.

House-to-house survey in

the entire Delhi will be conducted by the teams of AIMS, Delhi government and municipal corporations of Delhi and all the symptomatic persons found in the survey would be tested and provided the necessary treatment. The health ministry will issue a standard protocol for plasma therapy and plasma administration for the treatment of COVID-19 patients immediately.

Mobile testing laboratories will be deployed by the health ministry and ICMR in areas where poor and vulnerable sections of the society reside, the statement said. Dedicated multi-departmental teams will visit all the private hospitals in Delhi to physically check the availability of Covid-19 medical infrastructure vis-a-vis the admission status. The meeting resolved that the Delhi government and Delhi Police will strictly enforce the necessary measures, especially wearing of face masks, so that there is no laxity in the observance of Covid-19 appropriate behaviour.

It was presented in the meeting that the number of active cases per day has increased substantially but the Case Fatality Rate (CFR) continues to remain in control.

The health and medical infrastructure, such as dedicated Covid-19 beds, beds with

ventilators, and ICUs, is already showing signs of strain, the statement said.

Accordingly, it is essential to enhance surveillance, strictly enforce containment measures, increase testing, and rapidly build up the requisite medical infrastructure, it said.

The government also decided to temporarily shift some testing laboratories from other parts of the country, where they are unutilised, to Delhi.

The home minister also emphasised that the entire set of containment measures instituted earlier should be reviewed continuously, so that there are no gaps in implementing these measures. The officers considered, particularly those at district levels, would be personally responsible for ensuring compliance in this regard, and any deviation observed in this regard would be viewed seriously.

Shah said that the situation of COVID-19 in Delhi, as also in the neighbouring areas of the National Capital Region (NCR), would be reviewed on a continuous basis over the coming weeks. Kejriwal said there was no discussion in the meeting on possible restrictions in Delhi in view of the rising COVID-19 cases, and added the home ministry will perhaps hold a meeting in this regard on Monday.

On November 2, a meeting convened by Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla had attributed the third surge in coronavirus cases in Delhi to festivals and a greater movement of people, accompanied by laxity in adhering to the basic principles of COVID-appropriate behaviour. The national capital had recorded its highest single-day spike of 8,593 COVID-19 cases on Wednesday. On Thursday, 104 fatalities, the highest in a day in over five months, were recorded.

According to the health bulletin issued on Saturday, the tally of active cases rose to 44,456 in the national capital while the recovery rate stood at over 89 per cent. The number of containment zones in Delhi was 4,288 as on Saturday.

The National Centre for Disease Control, in a report drafted recently, had warned that Delhi needed to be prepared for about 15,000 fresh COVID-19 cases per day, taking into account the winter-related respiratory problems, a large influx of patients from outside and festive gatherings. In June, when the number of COVID-19 cases was on the rise in Delhi, there were complaints of non-availability of beds in hospitals and difficulty in getting tests done in laboratories.

# Nitish...

**From Page 1**

Tarkishore himself refrained from divulging much as in reply to persistent queries from journalists he said little more than "I shall function in whatever capacity my party asks me to". There were also speculations that Bihar might go for two Deputy CMs like in neighbouring Uttar Pradesh and Prasad and Renu Devi might be elevated as a step in that direction. The proposed replacement of Sushil Kumar Modi called "Chhota Modi" in the political circles of Bihar, a jocular reference to the surname he shares with Prime Minister Narendra Modi is being viewed as a precursor to the BJs ambitious plans of aggressively expanding its own

base in Bihar, where it has played second fiddle to the JD(U) boss so far. Kumar is also understood to have tactically remarked at the NDA meeting that he was in favour of "a BJP CM", but was agreeing to take up the job again "because of the insistence" of the saffron party.

The BJP leadership, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, had been emphatically stating that Kumar will be retained as CM even if his JD(U)'s strength in were to shrink in the assembly polls. The BJP is said to be wary of Kumar, sorer over rebellion of Chirag Paswans LJP, gravitating towards the opposition Grand Alliance. There have also been speculations that the BJP, which has 74 MLAs against only 43 of JD(U), was likely to insist on having a greater share in the council of ministers and have

one of its members as the Speaker, a post which has been with the Kumars party ever since he took over a decade and a half ago. In addition to the two aforementioned parties, the NDA in Bihar includes smaller allies Vikassheel Insaan Party (VIP) and Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM). HAM president Jitan Ram Manjhi, a former Chief Minister, has ruled himself out of joining the new ministry and is said to be lobbying for his son Santosh Suman who is a member of the legislative council.

The VIP is in a peculiar position as all its four MLAs are said to be BJP cadre who fought on the fledgling outfits symbol, while the two-year-old partys founding president Mukesh Sahni, a former Bollywood set designer, himself losty in the elections.

# A beautiful mind no more

**From Page 1**

Of course, his epochal and cult appeal was gifted by the great maestro Satyajit Ray, who scooped him up for his rare ability to not only get under the skin of the character but egolessly become it with such self-effacing realism and minimalism that it wouldn't look like acting at all. The Ray-Soumitra partnership is often compared to great director-actor relationships like that of Akira Kurosawa and Toshiro Mifune, Ingmar Bergman and Max von Sydow, Federico Fellini and Marcello Mastroianni and Martin Scorsese and Robert De Niro. Except there is one difference. Soumitro never got identified

just by Ray's luminescence, he played iconic characters in films by other directors as well, giving us a multiplicity of relatable characters than a signature one. The last was reserved though for Ray. From *Apur Sansar*, the coming of age story of a young man, who learns to love only to lose her during childbirth and decides to embrace their son for the journey ahead, to Pradosh Chandra Mitter or Feluda, the sharp-brained and agile Bengali private investigator who relied on logic and deduction than firepower to detect crimes, Soumitro had spanned not just in confidence but range. So much so that the Charnimar-smoking Feluda was not exactly

ly Marlborough man but definitely a cult hero like James Bond. And no matter how many Hindi versions or the Bengali remakes followed, Soumitro, like Sean Connery, will be the only Feluda.

One most particularly mention his role in *Aakash Kusum*, by Ray's rival and another doyen, Mrinal Sen. Soumitro, as an aspirational young man trying to climb the corporate ladder of success, bluffing a rich girl and cutting corners in the process, would not be justifiable or likeable. But he made human want so yearningly real that the audience felt for him despite him crossing the line. The actor took a risk with a weak character

as he did in Ajoy Kar's *Saat Paake Bandha*, where he plays an ordinary professor who is insecure about his rich working wife and would rather have her subscribe to his ordinariness. With the wife played by the gorgeous Suchitra Sen, one could never justify the husband's pettiness but Soumitro made the conflict between his limitation and desire so honest and painful, that you lived the demons with him and were forced to confront visceral life choices.

Of course, there were *Charulata* and *Ghaire Baire*, where he stole the women's heart, enlivened them but wasn't man enough to warrant their freedom from their marital status. And it was in such roles that Soumitro was the perfect counterpoint for women characters and actors, each of whom, from Sharmila Tagore to Aparna Sen, appeared his onscreen equal. He was careful not to dominate them, yet shine with his own light, making his shortcomings believable and conquerable at the same time.

Yet, as he played elderly characters in his old age, they seemed to resolve all of life's conflicts with the maturity of wisdom. Be it as the authoritative patriarch, or the ageing husband who realises he had not appreciated his wife much in *Bela Sesh*, the wasted loner craving for companionship in *Podokhhep* and the professor dealing with dementia in *Mayurakshi*, Soumitro perhaps penned his own swan song through the dialogues, flowing from a life well lived and enriched. He has left us words, plenty of them, articulated or authored, to make sense of life, not just intellectually.

# Daily Delhi Covid tests to be raised to over 1L with help of ICMR

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday said that the Government will increase the number of testing in the national capital from 60,000 to 1 lakh or 1.25 lakh per day with the help of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

In the meeting convened by the Home Minister Amit Shah regarding increasing number of cases in Delhi, the Chief Minister asked for cooperation from the Central Government to tackle the pandemic. The Delhi chief minister has also asked the central government to immediately intervene in the matter of pollution and to instruct the neighbouring states to take serious steps to stop the stub-

ble burning. Kejriwal said, "It was also decided in the meeting that the number of tests in Delhi will increase from 60,000 per day to 1 lakh or 1.25 lakh. The Delhi government facilities are working at their highest capacity right now, therefore, the ICMR has assured that they will help us to increase the number of testing."

Talking to the media, Kejriwal said that the key problem which the government is facing is shortage of ICU (Intensive Care Unit) beds in Delhi. "After October 20 the number of Covid cases in Delhi is increasing at a very high rate. Right now we have sufficient number of Covid beds in Delhi but the scarcity is with the ICU beds," he said.

Earlier also when the Delhi

government has sought support from the Centre, it has always responded positively and provided the state with beds, medical facilities and other support whenever required.

The Delhi Model was widely acknowledged by every agency and the better coordination amongst the various wings of the government that Delhi has managed to control the COVID-19 cases

In the meeting the Delhi CM also followed up on Delhi Government's request to increase the number of beds in the Central Government Hospitals.

Kejriwal said, "Today home Minister Amit Shah called an emergency meeting over the Covid pandemic situation in Delhi. After this meeting we



have the assurance that all the government agencies of both the central government and the state government will work together to tackle the COVID-19 situation of Delhi. I want to thank Amit Shah ji for his cooperation."

Earlier this week Kejriwal wrote to the Union Health Minister requesting him to augment Covid-19 bed capac-

ity in central government-run hospitals in the capital in view of the surge in cases.

"The Delhi government has given a very serious focus on the increasing number of Covid beds in various hospitals. Regarding this, the Delhi government also reached out to all the private hospitals to increase the number of Covid beds and to reserve 80 per cent of beds



for Corona patients. Last week the Delhi high court gave its nod to the Delhi government's decision of reserving 80 per cent of intensive care unit (ICU) beds in 33

private hospitals for Covid-19 patients for two weeks, lifting its legal hold after noting that the coronavirus outbreak was at alarming new levels in the national capital," he said.

As on date, there are 16641 COVID 19 beds out of which the Delhi government hospitals have 5451, the Centre has 3721 and the remaining are private hospitals.

## City reports lowest single-day spike this month

3,235 NEW COVID CASES

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

At least 3,235 fresh Covid-19 cases reported in the national capital, the lowest since October 26, taking the total number tally to over 4.85 lakh on Sunday, while the positivity rate increased to 15.33 per cent.

According to the health bulletin issued by the government on Sunday, ninety-five more fatalities pushed the death toll to 7,614. The fresh coronavirus cases were detected from 21,098 tests conducted the pre-



vious day, the lowest since August 14, when 14,389 tests were done. Out of the total tests conducted, 11,877 were rapid-antigen tests, and 9221 RT-PCR

tests, the bulletin said. According to the Sunday bulletin, out of the total 16,654 beds in COVID hospitals, 7,913 are vacant. The number

of tests per million was over 2.8 lakh, while the total number of tests stood at over 54 lakh.

The bulletin said 4,37,801 patients have recovered, been discharged or migrated so far.

Delhi had recorded its highest single-day spike of 8,593 COVID-19 cases on Wednesday.

On Thursday, 104 fatalities, the highest in a day in over five months, were recorded.

The city had registered 93 deaths on June 16. On Sunday, 95 more fatalities were recorded. The 10-day average death rate in the city stands at 1.23 percent, the bulletin said.

"The national capital recorded a positivity rate of 15.33 per cent amid the festive season and rising pollution in

the city, according to the bulletin issued by the health department," it said.

The total number of cases reported so far has climbed to 4,85,405.

As many as 1,258 COVID-19 deaths have been recorded in the national capital in the last 17 days, with experts attributing it to sudden surge in cases, deteriorating air quality, laxity by people in adhering to safety norms, among other factors.

Coronavirus cases in Delhi have registered a sudden spike since October 28 when the daily infection breached the 5,000-mark for the first time and it crossed the 8,000-mark on Wednesday, also for the first time.

## Kejriwal nominates 11 MLAs for district development committees

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has nominated 10 AAP MLAs and one BJP MLA as chairpersons of district development committees.

An order for nominations of committee chairpersons in 11 districts in Delhi was issued by Principal Secretary (Revenue) Sanjeev Khirwar earlier this week, official said.

The list of new chairpersons also includes the name of BJP MLA Jitender Mahajan for Shahdara district development committee.

The remaining nominated AAP MLAs include S K Bagga

(East), Pramila Tokas (New Delhi), Ajesh Yadav (North), Surendra Kumar (North East), Mukesh Ahlawat (North West) and Naresh Yadav (South).

Sangam Vihar MLA Dinesh Mohaniya has been nominated as chairperson of South East district development committee.

Besides Naresh Balyan (South West), Jarnail Singh (West) and Som Dutt (Central) have also been nominated, the order said.

The power of nomination of chairpersons of district development committees is vested in the chief minister as per an order of the General

Administration Department of Delhi Government, issued in 1999.

The district development committees serve many purposes, including decentralisation of decision-making by involving elected representatives in the matters of development, officials said.

They also play a role in planning and execution of programmes and schemes at district level with special focus on development of basic amenities and serve as public grievance redressal mechanism through involvement of the elected representatives, they added.

## Man who shot at Delhi Police team in 2018 held

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Special Cell of Delhi Police has nabbed a 40-year-old man allegedly involved in opening fire at a police party in 2018 near a mall in Gurugram.

The accused has been identified as Nasim alias Bhukkad. Police said that Bhukkad is a Mewat based criminal and was wanted in a case of assault and firing at Delhi police team in North Delhi's Timarpur area in 2018.

Police said that he remained evasive for two years and was subsequently declared as a proclaimed offender by a Delhi court.

According to Pramod

Singh Kushwaha, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Special Cell, the accused was arrested on November 12 from a spot near a mall in Gurugram and has been booked under appropriate sections of law.

"In September 2018, the accused Nasim and his six associates stole cows from Timarpur.

They loaded them in their truck and started moving away in their vehicle when they were challenged by police. They were chased by a PCR van and their vehicle was intercepted near Wazirabad flyover," said the DCP.

"While all the accused fled away from the spot after open-

ing fire at the PCR staff, nearly after about a week, two members of the gang were arrested, but Nasim and his other four associates were absconding since then," said the DCP.

"On interrogation, the accused revealed that during his absconding period, he had been hiding himself in the interiors of Mewat area and continued with his criminal activities from there with the help of his associates," said the DCP.

"The accused was previously involved in more than 30 criminal cases of robbery, dacoity, cow-smuggling and attempt to murder in Delhi and Haryana," said the DCP.

## 205 calls received by fire dept on Diwali

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Despite ban on crackers, the National Capital witnessed burning of crackers on Deepawali and there were 205 calls related to fire incidents, slightly less than the last year. On the eve of Deepawali, there was also an incident of a fire at a godown in west Delhi's Mundka in which a 28-year-old man was killed while another was injured.

Last year, the Delhi fire department had received 245 calls related to fire incidents on Diwali.

According to Atul Garg, the Director, Delhi Fire Services (DFS), the DFS received 205 fire-related calls till Diwali midnight and only two calls were specifically related to firecracker bursting while most of the calls were about the

blaze in open areas or dump yards.

"Of the total calls received, 129 were handled by the fire service department's control room during the peak hours (from 6 pm to 11.58 pm), the time when people usually lit diyas after puja and burst firecrackers," said Garg adding that DFS responded to 205 calls this year on Diwali which is slightly less as compared to the last year.

"It could be due to imposition of a complete ban but people were still found bursting firecrackers and most of the garbage dumps that caught fire are also due to fireworks," he said. The National Green Tribunal on Monday imposed a total ban on the sale or use of all kinds of firecrackers in the National Capital Region from midnight of November 9 to the

midnight of November 30.

Ahead of Diwali, the Delhi government too had imposed a total ban on firecrackers, including the environmentally safer green crackers, from November 7-30 to combat rising air pollution amid an increasing number of COVID-19 cases in the city.

Out of the 205 calls received on this Diwali, 175 were related to fire while the remaining were related to other requirements, including assistance for rescuing birds and animals, the senior fire official said.

Only two of the 175 calls were related to fire due to bursting of firecrackers, while 71 calls were related to fire at dump yards or open areas, including the fire at a cooler-wood godown in Mundka area on Saturday night, he

said.

The injured and the deceased were identified as Aditya, 20, and Sunil Kumar, 28, respectively. Both were residents of Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh, the police official said.

The official suspects that Kumar was sleeping inside the godown when the fire broke out.

"A call about the fire was received at around 11.05 pm and 12 fire tenders were rushed to the spot. The charred body was recovered from inside the godown. The fire was eventually brought under control but what led to the blaze is not known yet," said Garg.

The DFS had deployed 2,500 personnel to deal with any emergency on the occasion. Also, fire tenders were deployed at 24 locations across

the city from 5 pm to midnight on both the days.

The vehicles were deployed at Azad Market Chowk, Jaipur Golden Hospital, New Ashok Nagar, Yamuna Vihar, Radha Soami Satsang - Bhati Mines, Bara Tooti Chowk, Tilak Nagar, Lajpat Nagar (Central Market), Lal Kuan Chowk, Lahori Gate, Nangloi, South Extension, Sonia Vihar.

Mehrauli, Ghitorni Metro station, Alipur police station, Rani Bagh Market, DTC Depot Katran Market, Gandhi Nagar Market, Mahipalpur Chowk, Sangam Vihar, Mundka Metro Station, Chhatarpur Near Tivoli Garden.

Besides, motorcycles with fire fighting equipment and high-pressure pumps were also deployed to douse the fire on the streets and narrow lanes.

## Man charred to death in godown

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 28-year-old man was charred to death while another was injured after a fire broke out at a cooler godown in west Delhi's Mundka area. The incident took place on Saturday night. The deceased has been identified as Sunil Kumar while the injured has been identified as 20 year-old Aditya, both residents of Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh. According to Atul Garg, the Director, Delhi Fire Services (DFS), a call about a

The deceased has been identified as Sunil Kumar while the injured has been identified as 20 year-old Aditya

fire at a wood godown was received at around 11.05 PM on Saturday following which 12 fire tenders were rushed to the spot. "A charred body was found lying inside the godown while the injured was rushed to nearby hospital for treatment. The fire was brought under control but the reason for fire is not known yet," said Garg.

## Gurugram Police challans 59 for bursting firecrackers

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

Despite all the strict measures adopted by Gurugram Police against the bursting, sale and purchase of fireworks in the district, several people flouted all the norms with impunity on Diwali.

As a result, the police have issued 59 challans against people for bursting firecrackers and also registered one case for selling firecrackers on Diwali, the police said on Sunday.

With these 59 challans, a

total of 15 persons have been apprehended till now for selling crackers and same number of cases have been registered.

Nearly 50 kg of firecrackers have been seized from various parts of Gurugram.

"A total of 15 people have been arrested for bursting firecrackers and 15 cases have been registered in this regard till date at different police station in Gurugram.

These 59 persons were challaned on the complaints and calls given by neighbours," said Subhash Boken,

spokesperson of Gurugram Police.

Meanwhile, to celebrate the festival, locals burst firecrackers despite the ban.

National Green Tribunal (NGT) has imposed a total ban on sale or use of all kinds of firecrackers across Delhi-NCR till November 30 midnight.

The district Police have intensified the vigil for persons violating Covid guidelines and policemen were seen issuing challans and checking face masks at public places and busy markets.

## Delhi Police receives over 2,000 PCR calls over bursting firecrackers

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Despite ban on bursting crackers in the National Capital, the Delhi Police personnel were kept their toes as they received over 2,000 Police Control Room (PCR) calls in connection with bursting firecrackers across the city. Police on Diwali also seized over 1,300 kilograms (kgs) of crackers across the city.

The National Green Tribunal on November 9 had imposed a total ban on the sale or use of all kinds of firecrackers in the National Capital Region from midnight of

November 9 to the midnight of November 30 but on Diwali bursting of firecrackers were witnessed across Delhi.

According to a senior police official, on Diwali police received 2,100 PCR calls on Diwali night. "Most of these calls were regarding bursting of firecrackers and were received from Southwest, Dwarka and Northwest parts of Delhi. Such calls were received between 8:30 PM to 10:30 PM," said the senior police official.

Meanwhile, around 1,206 cases including kalandras (formal notices) were registered in connection with sale and usage

of firecrackers on Diwali night.

"A total number of people arrested, including those bound on Diwali alone were 850 and a total of 1,314.42 kgs of firecrackers were seized on Diwali," said a senior police official. As per the Delhi Police data compiled on the Deepwali night, maximum cases were registered in outer-north north district (165) followed by North (146), Northwest (127) and outer (99) while maximum firecrackers were seized in outer district (286.20 kgs) followed by southwest (260.70 kgs) and outer-north with (118.10 kgs).

## WORLD CHILDREN'S DAY

### Rashtrapati Bhavan, Qutub Minar, other monuments to #GoBlue

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Rashtrapati Bhavan, Qutub Minar and other monuments across India will #GoBlue on the World Children's Day on November 20 in solidarity with child rights and the impact of COVID-19 on children's lives, the UNICEF said.

Iconic monuments will light up in blue under the #GoBlue campaign, it said. On the occasion of World Children's Day, UNICEF said, this year's activities will occur in the virtual and the digital spaces.

"Along with grownups, children will also wear masks and maintain physical distance. That, however, does not mean that children's voices



will be any quieter - children will be Masked but not Muted! this World Children's Day," the UN body said in a statement.

UNICEF in partnership with Parliamentarian's Group for Children (PGC) is organizing a Climate Parliament with Children on November

20, under the leadership of Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu, and 30 members of Parliament. "Children will discuss the impact of climate change with

the parliamentarians and present a Charter of Demands on climate action. The participating parliamentarians are expected to sign a letter of commitment to support integrating children's rights and voices to climate action and adaptation plans," it said.

"Monuments across the country - the Rashtrapati Bhavan (Presidential Palace), Prime Minister's Office (North and South Block), the Parliament House and Qutub Minar in New Delhi, and other historical buildings, landmarks and key government buildings across India - will #GoBlue on November 20, standing in solidarity for child rights and the impact of COVID-19 and climate change on their lives," it said.



Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta, LOP Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, along with senior BJP leaders, lit the Saddudhji Jyoti at Rashtrapati Bhavan. BJP leaders fire salvo at Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, asking him to solve problems being faced by people in Delhi. Pioneer photo

# India will react fiercely if provoked, says Modi

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**  
Sending out a tough message to China and Pakistan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India will give a befitting and fierce response if provoked and said it has always opposed expansionist policies and terrorism. He also stressed the need for self-reliance in defence sector.

His stern remarks came in the backdrop of the ongoing stand-off for the last six months with China at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh and recent spurt in ceasefire violations at the Line of Control (LOC) in Jammu and Kashmir.

Celebrating Diwali with soldiers at Longewala, Jaisalmer on Saturday, Modi said India will give a "prachand jawab" (fierce reply) if provoked.

Addressing the troops at the forward post, which has become a part of military legend after troops here successfully thwarted numerically higher Pakistani forces in the 1971 war, Modi took a swipe at China without naming it, saying the world is troubled by "expansionist forces" and expansionism shows a "distorted mindset" that belongs to

the 18th century. India has become a forceful voice against forces of expansionism, he said. As regards Pakistan, the Prime Minister said the Indian soldiers have hit "sponsors of terrorism" in their home, a reference to air and surgical strikes against terror camps in the neighbouring country.

"No force in the world can prevent our brave soldiers from defending our borders. The world today knows that we will not compromise with our interests even one bit at any cost," the Prime Minister said amid a standoff with China at Ladakh border.

He said India believes in the policy of understanding others and making them understand but if it is tested, then it will give a fierce reply. The country has the capability and political will to give a befitting response to those who challenge it, Modi said.

The prime minister also underlined the importance of having strong capability, saying despite advanced international cooperation and equations, vigilance is the path to security, alertness leads to happiness and peace is the prize of having strength.

## PM stresses on self-reliance in defence sector

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Underlining his Government's focus on self-reliance in the defence sector, Prime Minister Narendra Modi rode an Arjun tank during his visit to Longewala, Jaisalmer on Saturday. The Arjun main battle tank (MBT) is indigenously designed and manufactured weapon system.

The Indian army will raise two more regiments of Arjun MK1A (Mark 1 Alpha), which will have 72 improvements over the Mark 1 tank, out of which 14 are major improvements and



Modi said his Diwali is complete only after he comes among soldiers, adding he cannot stay away from his own on this festival. He said the more time he spends with the soldiers, the stronger his resolve to serve and protect the country gets.

"Your sacrifices teach the country discipline and sense of service," the prime minister told soldiers, referring to his

government's efforts to combat the coronavirus and also to restart the economic activity fully.

Urging soldiers to make innovation and yoga a part of their daily lives, he also asked them to learn one language other than Hindi, English and their mother tongue, saying it will enrich their lives.

The prime minister referred to his government's

stress on self-reliance and 'vocal for local' campaign, and complimented the armed forces for the decision to bar import over 100 weapons and defence equipment.

Recalling the glorious battle of Longewala, he said it will always be remembered in the annals of strategic planning and military valour.

He said this was the time when the ugly face of Pakistan

was exposed as its army was terrorizing innocent citizens of Bangladesh and committing atrocities against women.

"Pakistan opened the front on western border to divert the global attention but our forces gave them a befitting reply," he said.

On the occasion, he recalled the fierce fight the post had witnessed in the 1971 war against Pakistan and paid trib-

utes to Brigadier Kuldeep Singh Chandpuri, a hero of the battle who was then a Major, saying he became "rashtreeya" with his feat of bravery.

Modi has been visiting forward posts every Diwali since his government came to power in 2014. That year he visited Siachen glacier. He was in Rajouri last year, in Uttarakhand in 2018 and in Gurez in 2017.

## CBI books former CMD of Hindustan Steelworks Construction Ltd in graft case

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The CBI has booked former CMD of Hindustan Steelworks Construction Ltd., a public sector undertaking under the Steel Ministry, Moyukh Bhaduri and others in a case of graft and criminal misconduct relating to fraudulent award of contract for construction of Trade Facilitation Center & Crafts Museum (TFC & CM) at Varanasi.

Besides Bhaduri, the CBI has named Hirnadi Sarraddar, GM Engineering and D C Bandopadhyay, Advisor Marketing and Contract of Hindustan Steelworks.

Six private persons associated with private companies have also been named as accused in the case.

The Regular Case in the matter follows a Preliminary Enquiry.

Anant Saxena, MD, Zillion Infra Projects Pvt. Ltd., N Krishna Rao, Director (Projects), Vijay Nirman Co. Pvt. Ltd; V Ajay Kumar, MD,

Vijay Nirman Co. Pvt. Ltd., GRK Reddy of NCC Ltd.; Vikas Jalan (Private Person), MD of Trans Metalite India Pvt. Ltd., Dhiraj Kanchal (Private Person) and unknown others are named as accused in the case.

The PE revealed that the Ministry of Textiles appointed Export Promotion Council for Handicraft (EPCH) as implementing Agency for the project of Trade Facilitation Center & Crafts Museum (TFC & CM). Enquiry has further revealed that in April 2015, EPCH initiated a proposal for engaging HSCL as Project Management Service Provider (PMSP) for the said project. However, in May, 2015, EPCH showed its incapability to continue further as implementing agency for the said project due to involvement of technical nature of work in the said project.

Subsequently, the implementing agency for the said project was changed from EPCH to National Handloom Development Corporation Ltd.

(NHDC) in June, 2015.

"Enquiry has further revealed that Shri Moyukh Bhaduri, the then CMD, HSCL, conspired with Anant Saxena, MD, Zillion Infra Projects Pvt. Ltd. and Vikas Jalan (Private Person), MD of M/s. Trans Metalite India Pvt. Ltd. and in furtherance of said criminal conspiracy, Shri Shri Vikas Jalan, Private Person, MD of Trans Metalite India Pvt. Ltd., during May-June 2015, demanded gratification of total Rs 2.25 crore from Anant Saxena for facilitating the selection of HSCL as PMSP in the said project, according to the complaint which is now part of the FIR.

Consequent to these demands, Anant Saxena allegedly delivered Rs 10 lakh and Rs 15 lakh (in cash) to him on June 4, 2015 and June 24, 2015 respectively, it alleged.

Bhaduri allegedly conspired with other accused persons allegedly indulged in huge monetary transactions in connection with the said work.

## Punjab records 75,781 stubble burning incidents this season

**RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI**

Despite providing ₹100 per quintal per farmers to manage paddy crop residue in situ without burning and spending over ₹500 crore from Central Government's grant in the last two years, out of the 83,466 incidents of stubble burning in three States, Punjab has recorded 75,781 incidents this season, highest since 2017. Farmers' organisations who were protesting in the State claimed that farmers resorted to stubble burning to protest their anger over the central Government's farm legislations.

According to the ministry of agriculture's data, Punjab had reported 46211 cases of stubble burning in the corresponding period last year and 49387 such incidents in 2018. The number of farm fires was 53518 in the state during the same period in 2017. An official from the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) said the incidents of stubble burning hit the peak between November 1 and November 14. With 9695 incidents, Sangrur is



top in the state in stubble burning, followed by Bathinda 7133, Ferozepur 6,968, Patiala 5364, Muktsar 4795 and Mansa 4780 this year as compared to since 2017.

Records show nearly 28,000 crop residue management machines like Happy Seeder, Super-Straw Management System (S-SMS), chopper,

mulcher, cutter-cum-slasher and hydraulically reversible mould board plough were delivered last year, and another 18,000 were delivered this year. The subsidy is 50 per cent on machines purchased by farmers individually, and 80 per cent if purchased by societies.

The numbers of stubble burning incidents in Haryana

and Uttar Pradesh tell a different story altogether. The figures have come down significantly.

According to the data, Haryana recorded 4,909 farm fires between October 1 and November 14 while Uttar Pradesh reported 2,676 such incidents during the period, which is the lowest in both the states in the last five years.

Haryana recorded 5,807 incidents of stubble burning and Uttar Pradesh 2,653 cases (till Nov 12) during the corresponding period last year.

Despite a ban on stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana, farmers continue to defy it as there is a short window between the harvesting of paddy and the sowing of wheat. The high cost of manual or mechanical management of straw is a major reason why farmers choose to burn it. The period from 15 October to 15 November is when stubble burning instances spike because paddy crops are harvested during this time and the residue left behind needs to be cleared to sow wheat. While burning is the easiest and cheapest method, there are other, less harmful ways of clearing agricultural fields.

Last year, Punjab produced around two crore tonnes of paddy residue, of which 98 lakh tonnes were burnt by farmers. Farmers in Haryana burnt 12.3 lakh tonnes of the 70 lakh tonnes of paddy residue produced.

## 160 tonnes of biomedical waste in form of gloves, face masks generated during Bihar poll



**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Almost 160 tonnes of biomedical waste in the form of gloves, face masks and empty sanitiser bottles used by polling personnel and voters, was generated in conducting Bihar assembly polls amid the coronavirus pandemic.

According to Bihar Chief Electoral Officer H R Srinivas, roughly 160 tonne of biomedical waste was generated. The office of the Chief Electoral Officer of Bihar had sought the help of the state health department to decide on "COVID safety material" for the three phase elections. The safety material which included face masks, face shields, gloves and

personal sanitiser bottles were put in a bag meant for a polling party of six persons.

To ensure safety of voters, polling staff and security personnel in the first-ever polls held amid the pandemic, the Election Commission had procured 18 lakh face shields, 70 lakh face masks, 5.4 lakh single use rubber gloves for

polling and security personnel and 7.21 crore 'one hand' single use polythene gloves for voters to press the EVM button and sign the register at the polling stations. It had also bought a total of 29 lakh hand sanitiser bottles of 100 and 500 ml. Bihar was the first state which went on polls during the coronavirus pandemic in the country.

All districts have its biomedical waste (BMW) disposal agency. "The challenge was the agency would lift BMW from health centres, hospitals but not lift from polling stations. The districts then appointed BMW workers," Srinivas said. On polling day, the workers would place two yellow-coloured dustbins per polling station for disposal of used masks, gloves and sanitiser bottles. A team with a vehicle and BMW workers was tagged with 10 to 15 polling stations. After the polling was concluded, the team would pick up the dustbins from the polling stations and bring it to the public health centre it was tagged to. From the PHC, the waste was taken for incineration in polythene bags.

The poll authorities also relied on an inexpensive but effective technology used to track EVMs to ensure that the waste reached public health centres for its onward journey to the incinerator. To track vehicles with biomedical waste, poll authorities use "Election Tracking Enabled System" or Ele-Traces, an application developed by NIC.

As per the guidelines issued by the Election Commission and poll authorities in Bihar, the polling stations were sanitised a day before election and three times on the day of the election.

## India's Covid caseload jumps past 88-L mark



**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

India went past the 88-lakh mark after recording 41,100 new cases of Covid-19 in the past 24 hours on Sunday, making it the eighth consecutive day of less than 50,000 new daily cases. Out of the total cases, 4.79 lakh cases are active, while 82.63 lakh people have recovered after testing positive.

Overall tally stood at 88,14,579 cases while the death toll has mounted to 1,29,635 with 447 more deaths recorded in a span of 24 hours, said the Union Health Ministry in a statement here.

The Indian Council of Medical Research said that a total of 12,48,36,819 samples have been tested for COVID-19 up to 14 November. Of these, 8,05,589 samples were tested yesterday, the ICMR said.

New recoveries outnumbering new cases every 24-hour cycle has also improved the recovery rate to 93.09 per cent, said the Ministry. Also, the total recovered cases stand at 82,05,728. The gap between

recovered cases and active cases that is steadily increasing presently stands at 77,26,512, it said.

While ten States/UTs have contributed 82.87 per cent of the new cases, as many states contributed 79.91 per cent of the new recovered cases. With 7,117 persons recovering from Covid, Delhi saw the most number of recoveries. Kerala registered 6,793 daily recoveries while West Bengal reported 4,479 new recoveries.

Delhi reported 7,340 cases in the last 24 hours. Kerala recorded 6,357 new cases while Maharashtra reported 4,237 new cases yesterday.

The Ministry said that 85.01 per cent of the 447 case fatalities that have been reported in the past 24 hours are from Ten States/UTs of which 23.5 per cent of new fatalities reported are from Maharashtra which reported 105 deaths. Delhi and West Bengal follow with 96 and 53 new deaths, respectively. 21 States/UTs have death per million lower than national average of 94, said the Ministry.

## Fluvoxamine effective in preventing Covid-19 infections from worsening



**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Antidepressant fluvoxamine appears to prevent Covid-19 infections from worsening and may help keep patients out of the hospital, a trial based on research from the University of Virginia School of Medicine suggests.

The researchers who have published their findings in the Journal of the American Medical Association in their clinical trial compared fluvoxamine with a placebo in 152 adult outpatients infected with the coronavirus. None of the participants who received fluvoxamine saw "clinical deterioration" after 15 days, while six patients who received placebo did. Of those six, four were hospitalized, for periods ranging from four to 21 days. One was on a ventilator for 10 days.

While the study size was small, the researchers say the results are statistically significant and that fluvoxamine warrants further study as a Covid-19 treatment. They plan to launch a larger trial in the next few

weeks. "The patients who took fluvoxamine did not develop serious breathing difficulties or require hospitalization for problems with lung function," said Eric J. Lenze, MD, of the Washington University School of Medicine.

"Most investigational treatments for Covid-19 have been aimed at the very sickest patients, but it's also important to find therapies that prevent patients from getting sick enough to require supplemental oxygen or to have to go to the hospital. Our study suggests fluvoxamine may help fill that niche."

The Washington University researchers launched the randomized, double-blind trial based on a discovery by UVA's Alban Gaultier, and former graduate student Dorian A. Rosen, PhD. Gaultier and Rosen found last year that fluvoxamine may stop the deadly inflammation known as sepsis, in which the immune response spirals out of control.

The drug, they determined, reduced the production of

cytokines, which have been linked to potentially deadly "cytokine storms" thought to occur in severe cases of Covid-19.

That connection prompted the Washington University team to investigate the possibility that fluvoxamine could have a protective effect for patients with COVID-19. Perhaps, they thought, the drug could help prevent the immune system over-reactions triggered by this strange new coronavirus. And their work suggests it may.

"Because elevated cytokines levels have been associated with Covid-19 severity, testing fluvoxamine in a clinical trial made a lot of sense to us," said Gaultier, of UVA's Department of Neuroscience and its Center for Brain Immunology and Glia (BIG).

The researchers stressed that there were several limitations to their research. In addition to its small size, the trial was hampered by other factors, including that 20% of participants stopped answering surveys during the 15-day trial.

# Shah to visit Chennai on Nov 21, says TN BJP

IANS ■ CHENNAI

**According to Murugan, maintaining social distance, Shah will be given a rousing reception at the airport here by BJP leaders and workers**

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will visit Chennai on November 21 and meet with Chief Minister K Palaniswami, Tamil Nadu BJP chief L Murugan said on Sunday.

Murugan said that Shah's visit will enthuse the party cadres here.

According to Murugan,

# Maha cases drop to 2,544, deaths down to 60

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In what came as a big relief to the health authorities during the Diwali weekend, the Covid-19 deaths and infections plummeted in Maharashtra on Sunday, as the State recorded nearly six months' low of 60 deaths and 2,544 infected cases.

A far cry from the peak death tally of 515 witnessed on September 15, the daily fatalities came down to 60 on Sunday, taking the Covid-19 toll in the state from 45,914 to 45,974.

Similarly, as against a single-day peak infection tally of 24,886 witnessed on September

11, the daily infected cases dropped to 2,544. With the fresh infected cases, the total infections in the state went up from 17,44,698 to 17,47,242.

As 3065 more people were discharged from various hospitals the number of people discharged from the hospitals after full recovery since the second week of March this year went up to 16,15,379. The recovery rate in the state rose marginally from 92.41 per cent to 92.45 per cent.

Of the 60 deaths reported on Sunday, Mumbai accounted for a maximum of 15 deaths, followed by 9 deaths in

Thane, 7 each in Nashik and Pune, 4 each in Parbhani and Chandrapur, 3 in Beed, 2 each in Ahmednagar, Sangli and Nagpur and one death each in Raigad, Solapur, Satara, Sindhudurg and Gondia.

With 15 deaths, the Covid-19 toll in Mumbai climbed from 10,558 to 10,573, while the infected cases rose by a relatively low 577 cases to trigger a jump in the total infections in the metropolis from 269,133 to 269,710.

Meanwhile, the number of "active cases" in the state came down one lakh mark as the total cases rose from 84,082 on Friday to 84,918 on Sunday.

The fatality rate in the state stood at 2.63 per cent.

Pune district, which continued to be the worst-affected city-district in Maharashtra, saw the total number of cases increase from 3,41,056 on Friday to 3,41,877 on Sunday, while the total number of deaths in Pune increased from 7131 on Friday to 7156 on Sunday.

Thane district remained in the third spot --after Pune and Mumbai -- after the total number of infections rose from 2,30,262 on Friday to 2,31,239 on Sunday, while the pandemic toll climbed from 5361 on Friday to 5389 on Sunday.

# Lack of seeds causes depression among farmers

PRADEEP SAXENA ■ ALIGARH

Lack of seeds in this season has dampened the joy of the farmers. Despite the bumper yields and the prices of potatoes remaining unchanged in the coming season, farmers could not sow more potatoes. Due to this, the area of potato could also grow only 800 hectares.

Due to bumper production, there was a ruckus among the farmers to buy government seeds of potatoes. For the allocation of this at the end of September, the demand of 22,000 quintal seeds from the district level was sent to the government, but only 1400

quintals of seed were received, that too 50% oversized.

Due to excessive demand and the allocation of potato seed work from the government, the horticulture department had done a lottery of 4 varieties of potato Surya, Chipsona 1, Chipsona 3 and Kufri Bahar.

Only 86 farmers could get seed in it and the rest had to return in despair.

During the last season, prices of potatoes remained high and at the end of the season also there was no reduction in prices. Potatoes at Dhanipur mandi were sold at the price of 35 to 40.

# All is not going well in CPM in Kerala

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The CPI(M) in Kerala, the last bastion of the Communist movement in India, is facing the biggest crisis in its history since the party was formed in 1964 when the CPI was split over the differences in the approach to China. V S Achuthanandan, 97, is the only surviving member of the 32 national council members of the party and launched the CPI(M).

But Achuthanandan, named as Kerala Castro by none other than party's all India secretary Sitaram Yechury, is bed ridden and not in a position to speak. The general expectation in Kerala was that Achuthanandan would be appointed as chief minister after the massive electoral vic-

tory registered by the party in the 2016 election held to the assembly. But he was kicked upwards and was designated as administrative reforms commissioner of the State and Pinarayi Vijayan was elevated as chief minister. Achuthanandan is yet to recover from the shock of the party's decision.

The CPI(M) was always considered as a party with a difference because of its uncompromising stance against communalism and corruption. The party impressed the voters of the State in the 1987 election when it chose to face the assembly polls in company of socialist-democratic-secularist forces. E M Sankarana Namboodirippadu, the then general secretary of the party was against the demand made

by All India Muslim League, a faction of the Muslim League, for implementing the Sharia. He had lambasted the Congress for its decision to support the Muslim orthodox by subverting the Supreme Court verdict of the Shahbano case which ruled that a Muslim woman divorced by her husband was eligible for maintenance allowance.

But over the years, the CPI(M) compromised on all issues including its approach towards uniform civil code and Triple Talaaq. The rot was set in much earlier but it came out in the open after Vijayan took over as the secretary of the party. Vijayan had his own favourites among business barons and they include the likes of Captain Krishnan Nair (Leela Hotels), Yusuf Ali and

Ravi Pillai (billionaires based in West Asia).

The party leaders were forewarned by none other than Kunhanandan Nair, one of the founders of the CPI(M) and an internationally acclaimed journalist.

Nair has explained how Veena, daughter of Pinarayi Vijayan, who failed to make it in the merit list in the all India engineering entrance examination in 2000 managed to get admission in Amritha University at Coimbatore through the intervention of Krishnan Nair and the blessings of Amrithanandamayi. "It was interesting to note that the SFI as well as the CPI(M) were waging a war against self-financing engineering colleges in Kerala and elsewhere. Vijayan had no qualms in ask-

ing for charity from Amrithanandamayi for his daughter's admission to B Tech course," writes Nair in his book "Things which are untold by hidden Cameras".

He says Veena, Binoy and Bineesh (the last two are sons of Kodyyeri Balakrishnan) continued to get illegal patronage from business tycoons and barons. Balakrishnan has been eased out of the post of party secretary last week for the role of Bineesh in money laundering and drug trafficking.

The youth who was held by the Enforcement Directorate has been remanded to judicial custody till November 18.

The arrest and detention come at a time when Kerala is getting ready to face the local body election scheduled for December 10.

# Thomas latest to join list of Mins having liaison with kingpin of gold smuggling

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Thomas Issac, Kerala's Finance Minister is the new addition to the list of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, Higher education Minister K T Jaleel, Tourism Minister Kadakampalli Surendran, Cooperation Minister A C Moideen, having illegal dealings with Swapna Suresh, the kingpin of the gold smuggling scam and LIFE MISSION project.

The Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala and BJP Kerala president K Surendran alleged on Sunday that Issac was having illegal liaison with Swapna Suresh as the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) stated in its report that financial borrowings made by Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB) were against constitutional provisions.

The CPI(M) known for its value based politics till 1980s finds itself in an unenviable position with most leaders

enmeshed in corruption charges, money laundering and drug trafficking.

Chennithala, in a no-holds barred attack on Issac alleged that the finance minister had illegal dealings with Swapna Suresh and the CAG has found out massive irregularities in the deals signed by KIIFB.

"The finance minister's press meet on Sunday was to save Chief Minister from the repercussions of the CAG's findings. Issac has committed procedural impropriety by holding a press briefing on CAG findings. The report should have been tabled on the legislative assembly for discussions and not before the press reporters," said Chennithala.

Adding to the woes of the LDF Government, BJP leader Surendran alleged that it was to save Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan the finance minister rushed to the press as a pre-emptive move. We will prove the complicity of Vijayan in the deal at the right time," said

Surendran.

But Issac charged that the BJP and the Congress have joined hands to embarrass the Government in the KIIFB. Mathew Kuzhalmadan, a Kerala High Court lawyer has been chartered by Swadeshi Jagran Manch, to fight the case. Kuzhalmadan is a secretary of the KPCC and this has led to Issac and CPI(M) alleging of a BJP-Congress conspiracy to tarnish the image of the Government.

The minister refused to react to the CAG's charge that Article 293(1) of the Constitution has been violated. The said Article states that "Subject to the provisions of this article, the executive power of a State extends to borrowing within the territory of India upon the security of the Consolidated Fund of the State within such limits, if any, as may from time to time be fixed by the Legislature of such State by law and to the giving of guarantees within such limits, if any, as may be so fixed".

# Aligarh under AMRUT scheme

**Aligarh:** Now control room will provide answers of questions like no water supply from the municipal tank, less quantity of water is coming, 2nd the 3rd floor not getting water because of low water pressure, leaking pipelines, contaminated water, which is not drinkable at all, the water smells bad. The entire system is upgrading to online monitoring in the city. Under this, Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) is being implemented under the AMRUT scheme. In which, after filling water in the water tank, the sensor will monitor the level of water. After that, there will be complete monitoring of the intensity of the flow, quantity of water, water quality.

# JNMC to open OPD in phased manner

**Aligarh:** The Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College Hospital, Aligarh Muslim University is planning to open "Out-Patient Department (OPD)" in a phased manner. The Principal JNMCH Professor Shahid Ali Siddiqui will consult the university authorities and chairpersons and decision may be taken in the next few days depending upon the COVID-19 situation, staff position and availability of resources.

# Assam police arrest six for gangraping two Tripura girls

**Agartala/Silchar:** Assam police on Sunday arrested six men for gang raping two Tripura girls in southern Assam's Karimganj district, officials said.

Karimganj police Chief Mayank Kumar said that a car driver picked up the two girls to take them to northern Tripura, adjoining southern Assam, on Saturday night. Later, the driver of the vehicle along with his five other accomplices gang raped the girls at an under construction building site at Nilambazar.

Kumar, who personally led the raids to nab the accused, told the media that the victims, both are sisters, have identified all the men.

Police said that the girls with the help of a truck driver reached at a safer place first and then lodged an FIR at the Patharkhandi police station (in Karimganj district) before the police launched the operations to detain the culprits, two of whom are residents of Tripura and remaining three inhabitants of Assam's Karimganj.

The incident took place when the girls were returning to their home in northern Tripura after visiting the Silchar Medical College and Hospital where their cancer patient mother has been undergoing medical treatment.

# Love story turns sour in Maha as boy sets girlfriend on fire

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a love story that culminated in a shocking tragedy, a 22-year-old girl succumbed to severe burn wounds hours after her boyfriend threw acid on her, doused her with petrol, set her on fire and left her abandoned on the roadside at Yellamb Ghat near Beed town in Marathwada region of the state on Sunday morning.

After having battled for life for more than 15-long hours, the victim girl Savitra D. Ankulkar died at the Beed Civil Hospital, where she had been rushed to by the police on Saturday.

In a related development, teams of police tasked to hunt down the absconding accused -- identified as one Avinash R. Rajure (25) -- tracked him down to Nanded, a neighbouring district town and arrested him on Sunday evening.

The investigations have revealed that after promising her that he would take Savitra to her as his native village of Shelgaon village in Nanded district for Diwali, Avinash set out on a motorbike along with her from Pune to Shelgaon late on Friday night. The two had stayed as live-partners in Pune before the accused offered to take her home for Diwali.

However, the accused stopped the vehicle at an isolated place near Yellamb Ghat en route at around 4 am and attacked her with acid and petrol.

"First, the accused tried to strangle her. After she resisted the attempt, the accused

- Boy first threw acid on her, doused her with petrol, set her on fire
- After having battled for life for more than 15-long hours, the victim girl succumbs to injuries
- Boy tracked down, arrested

threw acid from a bottle that he was carrying. She screamed for help. No help was forthcoming. The accused went further, removed petrol from his motorbike, doused her with it and set her on fire. Later, he pushed the burning victim girl into a ditch and fled the scene," Investigating Officer (IO) from Neknur Police Station Laxman Kendre said.

According to the IO, a shepherd tending to his flock in the nearby field alerted the police at 2 pm on Saturday. "We reached the spot quickly and rushed the victim girl to the Beed Civil Hospital," Kendre said.

The victim, who had sustained 50 per cent burns, succumbed to the wounds on Sunday morning.

The police have not established yet as to what was the motive behind what look like a pre-meditated murder.



People gather at Kovalam Beach post Diwali in Chennai on Sunday

PTI

# Temples, other places of worship to reopen in Maha today

- Govt puts comprehensive SOPs in place
- CM urges devotees to exercise caution, follow health protocols

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Temples and all other places of worship, which remained closed in the wake of Covid 19-triggered lockdown imposed in the State in March this year, will reopen in Maharashtra from Monday, amid the comprehensive Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) put in place by the state government.

After weeks of political acrimony which saw the Opposition BJP slam his government and Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari and he exchange barbs over the delay in the reopening of temples, chief minister Uddhav Thackeray chose the occasion of Diwali on Saturday to announce the reopening of places of worship from November 16 (Monday). As per the protocols announced by the state government, no physical offerings like Prasad/distribution or sprinkling of holy water are allowed, while wearing masks/face covers are a must. Similarly, no singing groups or choirs will be allowed inside the

place of worship, while social distancing norms, use of alcohol-based sanitizers, respiratory etiquettes and use of individual prayer mats have been recommended for both the devotees and those working at the places of worship.

Significantly enough, persons aged above 65 years with co-morbidities, pregnant women and children below 10 years of age have been advised not to enter places of worship. The state government has advised the devotees as well as people working at the places of worship. Those managing the places of worship will have to adhere to the number of devotees, space and distance protocol through an undertaking to the police and local collector.

Making an announcement about the reopening of places of worship with a note of caution, Uddhav said: "We should not forget that the demon and Coronavirus is still in our midst. Even though there has been some respite, we can ill-afford to be complacent. Citizens need to follow discipline when the places of worship reopen."



A worker sanitizes the premises of Siddhivinayak Ganapati Mandir, in Mumbai on Sunday as worship places in Maharashtra are preparing to reopen after more than eight months of shutdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic

PTI

Uddhav said that though all places of religious worship remained during the pandemic months, God was taking care of all devotees in the form of doctors, nurses and other health staff.

The chief minister said that the people from religious faiths celebrated Ganesh Chaturthi, Navratri and Pandharpur wari (annual pilgrimage), Eid, Mount Mary etc by observing discipline, restraint and following Covid-19 protocol norms enforced by the state government. "People will have to avoid

crowding at the places of worship. The reopening of religious places is not a government order, but is being done as the wish of the Almighty. The devotees will have to leave their shoes outside, while the wearing of masks is mandatory.... If we follow discipline, we will get God's blessings," the chief minister said.

Uddhav's announcement was in line with the indication that he had given during the previous webcast address to the people across the state, when he had said that the SOPs were being prepared and a decision

in this regard would be taken during or after Diwali.

The reopening of the places of worship, especially temples, had become a major bone of contention between the Opposition BJP (and Hindu organisations) and the ruling Maha Vikas Agadhi (MVA). So much so that even the Governor had taken serious objection to the MVA government's delay in reopening the places of worship, especially temples.

It may be recalled that on October 12, Governor Koshyari had shot off a letter to

Uddhav Thackeray, questioning the latter's Hindutva credentials and wondering if Uddhav was receiving any "divine premonition" to keep postponing the re-opening of the places of worship time and again or whether he suddenly turned "secular".

Uddhav, who normally does not agitate over the criticism directed at him or his government, hit back at Koshyari on Tuesday with vehemence, saying that he did not need any certificate for his being practitioner of Hindutva from the Governor and asking the latter if the latter meant "merely opening of temple means Hindutva and not opening means secular".

In a related development, an understandably upset NCP chief Sharad Pawar, whose party is one of the three constituents in the MVA government in the state, shot off a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, throwing his weight behind the chief minister, questioning the contents of the letter written by Koshyari to the chief minister and the "intemperate" language in it, saying that the Governor's letter to the chief minister "invokes the connotation as if it is written to the leader of a political party". Koshyari -- whose con-

duct had come in for severe flak in November last year after the hasty manner in which he had sworn in the BJP's Devendra Fadnavis as the chief minister of Maharashtra apparently at the behest of the ruling party at the Centre -- appeared to exceeded his brief as the Governor, if one were go by the contents of his letter to the chief minister.

In his letter, Koshyari wrote to Uddhav: "You have been a strong votary of Hindutva, you had publicly espoused your devotion for lord Rama by visiting Ayodhya after taking charge as CM, you had visited the Vitthal Rukmini Mandir, Pandharpur and performed the puja on Ashadhi Ekadashi...I wonder if you are receiving any divine premonition to keep postponing the re-opening of places of worship time and again or have you suddenly turned 'secular' yourselves (sic), the term you hated?"

Taking offence to the Governor's invocation of the words "Hindutva" and "secular", Uddhav shot back in his reply: "True, I practise Hindutva. But, I do not require a certificate from you. Nor do I require such certificates from anyone. The act of according rousing welcome to a person

who termed my state or my state capital as Pak-Occupied Kashmir (POK) does not fit into my concept of Hindutva". Through this statement, Uddhav was apparently taking a potshot at Koshyari for meeting actress Kangana Ranaut after her controversial comment of comparing Mumbai to POK.

On Koshyari's comment if Uddhav was receiving any "divine premonition" to keep postponing the reopening of the place of worship time and again and his sarcastic puer to him if he had suddenly turned secular, Uddhav was emphatic when he wrote: "Why this question has come to your mind. Do you feel that merely opening a temple means Hindutva and not opening means secular? As Governor you took oath of office and secrecy as per the provisions of the constitution, which is based on secularism. Do you agree with that secularism?"

Uddhav had gone on to add: "You have asked me if I am receiving any divine premonition. You must have personal experience of divine premonition, I have absolutely no idea, I am not that big. I am studying what's happening in other states and trying to implement what is better for Maharashtra".

## What next for Tejashwi?

The young RJD leader may have changed the discourse of post-COVID politics but needs to make more convincing moves



**D**oes Bihar indeed mark a generational shift in Indian politics and will young Tejashwi Yadav inspire others of his kind to steer the national discourse back to fundamental issues? Yes, the BJP-Janata Dal (United) combine scraped through with a face-saver of a victory but seemed tired out by the chase forced on them by the brash but determined challenger. And despite winning, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who led the campaign to pull up both his party's scoreline (74 seats) and JD(U)'s fortunes, had to sweat it out to the finish line even as Tejashwi had the last laugh of catapulting his Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) as the single largest party

with an increased voteshare. He may have been a late starter but if he can take on the BJP's organisational network single-handedly, then there's a lot going for him and much that we have not seen yet. And if he can connect with the masses with his Bhojpuri-laden witticisms, making Modi's speeches sound like a drone, then he has the pulse of the people. At one time seen as the entitled and indulged son of RJD chief and socialist-secular crusader Lalu Prasad Yadav, the proverbial bad boy has shown that the outlier can become an insider. The best part is he did not ever try to mimic his father, though he picked up his fighting spirit, and created an all-new playbook for himself, one that didn't have any reference points. Stacked against the BJP, he had no political capital and he converted this relative weightlessness to his advantage, giving the BJP no reason to change tack. So the Central party did nothing remarkable really, except talk down to the voter — it relied on brand Modi, talked of Central schemes, Hindutva, hypernationalism and terrorism. And so naked was the party's ambition to swap regional politics in its pursuit of a "one party rule" that it even undercut its chief ministerial nominee and JD(U) leader Nitish Kumar by planting enough vote-splitters against him. It would be naïve to assume that Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) leader Chirag Paswan wasn't deployed to hurt Nitish's image and reduce the JD(U)'s seat count. As the BJP got busy with strategic arithmetic, it was left to Tejashwi to get aggressive about local issues, joblessness and Bihar's dismal development curve. He coalesced the collective will of Biharis to release themselves from the silos of caste and identity. Soon after the combine's victory, Modi may have talked about the State choosing development but that certainly wasn't the tenor of his pre-election speeches. Tejashwi, by holding him to account on promises he didn't deliver while grandstanding on the same in 2015, has forced a change in the BJP's post-poll rhetoric. Once considered a paratrooper from Delhi, Tejashwi now seems to have emerged as the RJD's saviour. His job has been tougher considering that the BJP wasn't as well-oiled back then as it is now and Nitish had not betrayed Lalu. And though he is blessed with legacy, he is also aware of the costly burden of Lalu's corruption. That's why he smartly played down the social justice card, acutely aware that those it empowered, namely the Muslims and Yadavs, would stand by him, too. And he tried to dissociate himself from the taint of "jungle raj" by promising economic justice to the jobless youth, promising 10 lakh jobs. In fact, he described his "economic justice" plank as a version 2.0 of "social justice," at once disconnecting himself from his father's legacy while staying connected to the movement he espoused. He swung the youth along, putting his face to their angst. He tried a rainbow umbrella, bringing in upper caste candidates and even naming a Rajput, Jagdanand Singh, as State party chief. He made common cause with the Left parties, transplanting "caste" with "class," hoping to make a Robinhood-like breakthrough among the dispossessed. And though politically and ideologically divergent, he backed Chirag for pointing out Nitish's flaws, cleverly not antagonising himself among the Paswans, the dominant Dalits. But in a rare display of political maturity — something that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi can take a lesson from — he didn't victimise Modi as a divider or indulge in any kind of shaming. In fact, for all the latter's vitriol on "jungle raj", he countered by saying as a man of stature, Modi was entitled to his opinions. But he was unsparing where it mattered, on specifics.

So what should Tejashwi work on now, considering he made a 100 metre dash and a marathon needs sustainable energy? Though he tried to broaden his constituency that's more contextual than historic, he has not managed to calm fears of a "Yadavisisation" of power and the return of Lalu years. That explains why the Extremely Backward Castes (EBCs) and Mahadalits stuck to Nitish despite his lustreless performance. The upper castes were confused and voted in a divided manner. For his social re-engineering formula to succeed, he needs a more involved outreach that goes beyond the tokenism of distributing tickets. He has to rework his strategy on Muslims as a votebank and address their real concerns. He needs to develop youth voters, some of whom were too young to vote but did show up at his rallies. They are about 24 per cent of the electorate and with a wised-up BJP, Tejashwi has to recruit them as his primary stakeholders. This generation has little or no memory of RJD as a scam-tainted party and he can repackage himself as someone who was starting afresh like them without harking back to the past. He needs to be seen as beginning on a clean slate. And that struggle must appear sincere to be valued.

## A discriminating Schedule

The Meghalaya Government keeps on humouring the Khasi Students' Organisation while turning a blind eye to its crimes against non-tribals



GOVIND BHATTACHARJEE

**M**eghalaya means the abode of the clouds, appropriately named for its incessant monsoon rains. These days though it has been raining posters there — posters that bring back chilling memories of past genocides of non-tribals living in this predominantly tribal State, especially the Bengalis. The capital Shillong is full of shrill cries denouncing that "All Meghalaya Bengalis are Bangladeshis", "Khasiland for Khasis, Foreigners Go Away." They are the brainchild of the Khasi Student's Organisation (KSU) — which actually is the fountainhead of racial hatred, mob violence, extortion, xenophobia, arson and genocide against non-tribals in the State. The Meghalaya administration has since taken down these posters but instead of bringing the culprits to book, the Government of Conrad Sangma has meekly appealed for peace to those for whom peace is synonymous with lynching of settlers. Non-tribals in this State are treated worse than second class citizens. They do not enjoy many of the rights, which under the Constitution are automatically available to citizens living elsewhere and some of these concern even fundamental rights and freedoms. For example, the right to equality of opportunity in public employment under Article 16 is not available to them.

The State of Meghalaya, inhabited predominantly by the Scheduled Tribes (STs) of Khasis, Jaintias and Garos, was carved out of Assam in January 1972. The newborn State had promptly reserved 85 per cent public vacancies — 40 per cent for Khasis and Jaintias, 40 per cent for Garos and five per cent for other SC/STs under Article 16(4) that allows for such reservation. The rest 15 per cent are never given to any non-tribal. Even in private educational institutions, which once used to absorb the meritorious non-tribals as teachers and lecturers, the muscle power of KSU ensures that no non-tribal ever gets a job. There have been cases when, following the due process of appointment, some non-tribal teachers were offered positions but the goons of KSU forced a reputed institution run by missionary brothers to rescind these.

The same is the case with Article 19 which gives every citizen the right to settle anywhere or to practise any profession, business or trade in any



part of India, but not in Meghalaya, and not for the reasonable restrictions that apply to all fundamental rights. The right to settle is denied to non-tribals for the protection of interests of the STs in the State while the right to engage in any trade is denied under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution which deals with special provisions for administration of tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram and has a history dating back to the colonial times. The Schedule envisages Autonomous District Councils of which there are currently 16 in the Northeast. They have power to make laws in respect of areas under their jurisdiction, which, *inter alia*, cover occupation and use of land, management of forest and cultivation and so on.

Under Clause 10(d) of the Schedule, no non-tribal can carry on any trade except with licences granted by the District Council. It is common knowledge that such licences are never granted or renewed except without illegal gratification running into lakhs of rupees that most non-tribal traders cannot afford. If paid, a large part of it goes to the KSU. But the most potent source of their finance is systematic and ruthless extortion of money from all non-tribal traders and professionals. One doctor told me he had to pay a monthly fee of ₹25,000 to the KSU. Even though the right to work under Article 41 is listed under the Directive Principles, the right to livelihood has been interpreted as an integral part of the right to life under Article 21 in a number of judgments by the Supreme Court [2011(1) SCC 53, (2014) 14 SCC 127, 2015(6) RAJ 306, (2016) 2 SCC 123, etc] but such a right is not available to the non-tribals in Meghalaya.

Under Article 13(2), the State cannot make any law in violation of the fundamental rights. But the

Sixth Schedule, in denying the basic rights to Indian citizens, contravenes the fundamental rights of others. In a different context, while dealing with the discretionary powers of the Governor, the Supreme Court, in deciding the appeal case of Pu Myllai Hlychho and others vs. State of Mizoram and others (2005) had observed, "it was argued that the tribal areas are to be administered as per the provisions of the Sixth Schedule only. This contention of the appellants cannot be accepted for various reasons. The Sixth Schedule to the Constitution is a part of the Constitution and cannot be interpreted by forgetting the other provisions in the Constitution. It is impossible to visualise complete segregation of the Sixth Schedule from the rest of the Constitution. As regards the inclusion of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution, there is a legislative history, but that by itself is not sufficient to hold that the Sixth Schedule is a Constitution within the Constitution." Yet this spirit has been undermined by the actions of the State time and again.

It is important to understand the historical context that brought non-tribals into the State in the first place. In the 19th century, the British administration had brought the Bengalis, who were one of earliest Indians to become English-educated, into Shillong, which was then the capital of the composite State of Assam, to help them with their administration; many settled there subsequently and have lived now for generations.

The Sylhet district, which was made a part of Assam, also had close trade ties with neighbouring areas which would later constitute Meghalaya. Bengalis from Sylhet had warm friendly relations with Khasis based on trade and other exchanges since the early 19th century. When

Partition forced the Hindu Bengalis out of Sylhet, many came to Shillong. They contributed immensely to the educational, commercial, economic and cultural life of the town, which emerged as a major educational hub in the region. The British had also encouraged the Biharis, Nepalese and Punjabis to come to Assam to help with their labour. Many of these communities also settled in Meghalaya and have lived there for generations. But once Meghalaya was carved out of Assam as a separate hill State, these people suddenly lost not only their right to pursue livelihood but also their right to settle in the place where they and their ancestors had lived.

In the absence of any prospect, most non-tribals began seeking jobs elsewhere and slowly migrating, and those who remained became reconciled to their marginalised existence. All they wanted was to live in peace even sans their rights in a State that had seen no communal riots even as they raged in neighbouring Assam during the 1960s and 1970s.

But things changed drastically once the KSU was formed in 1978. Since then, riots orchestrated by them have become a regular feature. It started in 1979 against Bengalis when some KSU hoodlums deliberately walked over a Kali idol during Diwali in Shillong and were thrashed up by agitated devotees. What followed was the most gruesome genocide and ethnic cleansing of Bengalis that went unabated for days in which the entire State apparatus sided with the perpetrators. The brutality and violence committed against defenceless men, women and children will compare with the worst in human history, though on a much lesser scale.

Post riots, there were waves of exodus of Bengalis from Meghalaya, leaving what their

ancestors had built over generations with pride, belongingness, love and sweat. This exodus, which remains undocumented, was no less poignant than the plight of Kashmiri Pandits from the Valley. Strangely, not a single perpetrator was ever brought to justice for what they did — the leader of KSU, Paul Lyngdoh, in fact, later went on to become a Minister.

The KSU-engineered pogroms have repeatedly plunged the State into turmoil. It was against Nepal in 1987 which led to a year-long curfew in Shillong. Hundreds of refugees — their houses and possessions burnt — had to live miserable lives in schools turned into refugee camps for months, reminiscent again of the plight of the Kashmiri Pandits. In 1992, riots erupted against Biharis — mostly dairy farmers, even their cows were burnt alive. No non-tribal community — Marwari, Sindhi, Punjabi — has been spared from the KSU's wrath. Most recently, in 2018, the Punjabi Dalits were the targets of its violence. Nobody has ever been indicted for these crimes. The few FIRs that were lodged were all in the name of "unidentified assailants".

The KSU had earlier splashed posters saying they are "Khasi by birth and Indian by accident" only, conveniently forgetting that without the liberal financial support from the Indian State financed by the Indian taxpayers they often call "Indian Dogs", their State would collapse in no time, as their own resources can barely meet even 20 per cent of their expenditure. The salary and wage bills of 80,000 Government employees alone is one and half times their own revenues. The gross inequity of the system is glaring. While tribals residing in the Sixth Schedule areas are totally exempt from income tax regardless of their income levels, the State receives a share of the Central tax proceeds and grants exceeding ₹12,000 crore, as against its own total revenues of only ₹3,000 crore (BE 2020-21).

The Khasi civil society does not share any of the violent racism and hatred but strangely remains silent, presumably out of fear. An impotent Government keeps on humouring the KSU while remaining mute and blind to its terrorism and crimes. And the non-tribals continue to live in perpetual fear, knowing that the KSU thugs may descend with their knives upon their lives any time in a State where the rule of law has been usurped by the law of the jungle.

(The author is a former Director General from the Comptroller & Auditor General of India and an academic)

## Papering over cracks

Till there is a signed agreement between India and China on the logistics of a retreat in Ladakh, not much can be said



**B**oth India and China have agreed to a three-phase plan for disengagement in eastern Ladakh though the specifics are yet to be laid out and committed to. So, there's still a lot left for interpretation and one wonders if all these are mere optics and meant to pandering to domestic opinion by both Governments without each appearing either coerced or compromised. Both armies will supposedly move back armoured vehicles, including tanks and personnel carriers, from the Line of Actual Control (LAC). Also, Chinese forces will vacate their existing positions and return to the Finger 8 region on the North Bank of Pangong lake. And India, too, will return to its positions, prior to the clashes, at the border. Indian and Chinese militaries have agreed on a joint mechanism to verify the progress in the disengagement process through delegation meetings as well as using Unmanned Aerial Vehicles. While all this may sound agreeable, it is still too early to trust the dragon, especially after what happened on June 15 in the Galwan valley, the clash that killed 20 Indian soldiers. That, too, happened in the name of ensuring status quo by China. Besides, with Beijing adamant about reclaiming positions from 1959 and denying India any strategic advantage with revamped border infrastructure, this may be just papering over a faultline. Since 1981, dialogues have continued at different levels while around 22 rounds of talks have taken place at the level of Special Representatives since 2003. And we are still where we started.

Both sides have reasons to de-escalate at this point in time. The harsh winter would stretch out men and resources in sub-zero, high altitude climates on both sides. India, which is dealing with the pandemic and a battered economy, can't afford to devote significant resources to the military. On the other hand, the Chinese Government wants to focus on its growing GDP, the only economy to register a growth in a bad year, and consolidate its gains than bleed them out. But as always there's a caveat and condition that the Chinese use as an excuse to continue their depredations. In September, the Chinese Communist Party mouthpiece *Global Times* noted that the implementation of the agreement depended on whether India would keep up its end of the bargain. And on November 12, it claimed that reports of India and China having finalised a detailed disengagement were "inaccurate" at this stage. Till there is a signed agreement between the two sides on the logistics of the retreat, not much can be said. For now, we have to be rightfully cautious.

## SOUND BITE

Today, India's strategy is clear. Today's India believes in the policy of understanding and explaining, but if anybody tries to judge our capabilities, we equally give a fierce answer.



Prime Minister —Narendra Modi

I have no second thought about recognising Israel unless there is a just settlement, which satisfies Palestinians.



Pakistan PM —Imran Khan

There is a threshold beyond which when the cases spike too much, we might have to make really difficult choices about where to deploy the limited resources we have.



Canadian PM —Justin Trudeau

I think it will be great for the game if the T20 format can become an Olympic sport because there are 75 T20 nations where it is being played.



Former India captain —Rahul Dravid

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Make MPs accountable

Sir — The Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha secretariats should put out the comparative figures of activities of all parliamentarians. These should be regularly updated on their respective websites. Such activities may include their attendance records, number of questions asked and Bills presented, participation in Parliamentary debates, utilisation of the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme funds, number of adopted villages under Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana and so on. A review of all such activities will make the MPs accountable and behave responsibly. Also, political parties will be compelled to give party tickets only to better-performing Parliamentarians in their earlier tenures. Even the Best Parliamentarian Award should be given annually on the basis of performance made public.

It is often seen that many Parliamentarians, especially celebrities nominated in the Rajya Sabha, waste their tenure and look at it as an additional feather in their caps. Also, some highly influential people from prominent industrial groups use

### Trump can't stop the transition of power

**I**t is a matter of grave concern, for those who believe in democracy, that the outgoing US President Donald Trump is still refusing to concede defeat and extend cooperation for a smooth transition of power. President-elect Joe Biden has described it as an "embarrassment". Trump is, indeed, damaging his legacy and America's reputation as a vibrant democracy. Despite its potential to trigger alarm bells, the Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has made the statement that "there will be a smooth transition to a second Trump administration." Fortunately, when the people have spoken through the ballot, the contenders for power have no option but to abide by it. But Trump seems to be under the illusion that America is his own private fiefdom.

In a bid to muddy the waters, Trump has made false claims that he won Pennsylvania and Michigan. He has alleged "voter fraud" without any proof and has even advised his legal team to pursue lawsuits and seek an emergency injunction. By placing obstacles in Biden's path, he is blocking officials from cooperating with the



transition team. However, Biden is going ahead with his work. He has spoken to world leaders and constituted a Coronavirus task force. He has also appointed his long-time aide Ron Klain as the White House chief of Staff. Now Trump cannot prolong the transition of power.

G David Milton Maruthancode

### NDA retains power

Sir — In the past year, in the wake of electoral setbacks and failure to form Governments in Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Delhi, there was increasing commentary over the declining political fortunes of the BJP. The view also gained traction as the Centre faced protests over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act,

economic contraction and the humanitarian distress caused by the lockdown imposed to curb the spread of COVID-19 and more importantly, the desertion by long time allies such as Shiv Sena and Akali Dal (in protest against the farm Acts). However, with the Bihar Assembly election, where the BJP emerged as the senior partner in the Nitish Kumar-led National Democratic

Alliance (NDA), it has reinforced its dominance in Indian politics. And its success indicates that the party still enjoys the support of vast segments of society. This can be attributed mainly to the voters' trust in Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

While the NDA has retained power, it will have to deliver on the promises it has made. Though the Bihar electorate forgot the promises that it did not keep from 2015, it might not be the same next time. Also, the Opposition will have to hold the State Government accountable.

N Sadhasiva Reddy Bengaluru

### Vaccine distribution

Sir — Pfizer and German biotechnology company BioNTech have announced that their Corona vaccine was more than 90 per cent effective in phase three clinical trials. If it does work, it will be months before India gets it. Till then, the Government needs to work out a system for distribution.

Bhagwan Thadani Mumbai

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

## FIRST COLUMN

## A green industrial revolution

A decarbonisation pathway for industries can fulfil the twin objectives of sustained, inclusive economic growth while mitigating climate change



MEKHALA SASTRI

AISHWARYA RAJ

The global energy system has been undergoing a transition that is unprecedented in pace and scale. However, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, what was to be a crucial year in the global climate discourse has now become one of many socially-distant events and webinars. In a bold move, China's President Xi Jinping announced his commitment to enhance the country's nationally-determined contribution (NDC) and lower peak CO2 emissions before 2030, as well as the plan to reach carbon neutrality before 2060. Early estimates by the Climate Action Tracker suggest that if China were to submit a carbon neutrality pledge, it would lower warming projections by around 0.2-0.3°C. This announcement clearly signals that climate action is a strong national agenda for Beijing. With both China and the European Union shifting towards a zero-carbon narrative, India is in the spotlight now as one of the largest emitters in the world. The nation is currently on track to significantly overachieve its NDC targets, both on emissions' intensity (a 30-35 per cent reduction by 2030 on the 2005 levels) and on non-fossil fuel electricity generation (40 per cent non-fossil fuel generating capacity by 2030).

While India is already considered a climate leader in the area of renewable energy growth and electricity sector decarbonisation, the country must turn its attention to industrial decarbonisation. A strong argument can be made that this would be crucial to not only achieving the Paris Agreement goals but also for Indian businesses to remain globally competitive. India and Sweden led the transition track at the UN Climate Action Summit in September 2019 and were entrusted with creating stronger commitments from the industry to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. Recently, industries comprising "hard to abate" sectors, like aluminium and cement, mentioned that they have already initiated action towards enhancing energy efficiency and increasing the share of renewable power in their overall mix. They are also undertaking carbon sequestration, maximising energy efficiency, adopting renewable technologies across the supply chain and embracing best practices of resource-efficiency and circular economy. However, these advancements are likely to face significant constraints in the form of technological capacity, governmental support and investment hurdles in taking up a decarbonisation pathway. Nonetheless, such initiatives can go a long way in boosting confidence of the sector and are crucial for helping India fulfil its climate action goals.

The global climate change and development narrative has highlighted the need to have development pathways that are resilient, green and sustainable. A decarbonisation pathway for industries can fulfil the twin objectives of sustained, inclusive economic growth while mitigating climate change. Decarbonisation as an industry-led approach within the sector would have co-benefits in the form of bringing India closer to fulfilling Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as on Industries (SDG 9), Decent Growth (SDG 8), Energy (SDG 7) and Climate Action (SDG 13). By upscaling their "green" ambitions in the value chains, processes, infrastructure and partnerships, industries would contribute to the growth of decarbonised backward and forward linkages, enhance their sustainable development capacities and create a green growth paradigm for India. An integrated strategy encapsulating environmental, social and economic necessities would require collaboration between policy-makers and industries, with the former supporting and encouraging businesses through stable and green financing incentives and the latter contributing to nationwide growth through innovation and enhanced technical knowledge. The long-term impact of this kind of an informed industry-led approach, covering climate action and sustainable development, would lead to a positive ripple effect in multiple sectors. It would enable India to undergo a large-scale, comprehensive upgradation on poverty (SDG 1), sanitation (SDG 6), resource management and conservation (SDG 6, 12), skill-building (SDG 4) and amplify technical and financial efficacies through capacity-building (SDG 17). While the world is grappling with a pandemic, it has become quite clear that there is a need to sustain global momentum on climate action.

At the 75th Session of the UNGA, India highlighted the need for reforms at the UN for responding to challenges of the 21st century. Climate change and the subsequent shift towards a greener, circular economy are of utmost relevance here and require multilateral agencies to support developing countries in addressing these challenges through inclusive participation, coordination and support. Climate change puts the responsibility for a collated response on all the stakeholders, cross-cutting various sectors. Industries, catering to a diverse pool of economic activities, will have a pioneering role here. The UNGA and the New York Climate Week discourses have demonstrated a strong willingness by industries to act on addressing climate change. This momentum towards decarbonisation must be enforced and harboured through partnerships and support.

(Sastri and Raj are Research Associates, TERI)

DID SENA'S POLITICAL FAMILIES (THACKERAYS AND WAIKARS) HAVE ANY BUSINESS RELATIONS WITH ANVAY NAIK, WHO COMMITTED SUICIDE IN 2018?

—BJP LEADER  
KIRIT SOMAIYA

## POINT COUNTERPOINT



WE ARE TRYING TO GIVE JUSTICE TO THE VICTIM'S WIDOW BUT THE BJP IS TRYING TO DIVERT THE INVESTIGATION WHICH IS A SERIOUS MATTER.

—SHIV SENNA LEADER  
SANJAY RAUT

# An alarming trend

The judiciary, in the recent past, has diluted the impact of provisions in the quest for clarity and not been sensitive about the societal chain of oppression



ANURAG TIWARY

The Supreme Court recently held in the Hitesh Verma vs State of Uttarakhand case that, "All insults or intimidations to a person will not be an offence under the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act, unless such an insult or intimidation is on account of the victim belonging to the Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe." The apex court further held that "an offence under the Act is not established merely on the fact that the informant is a member of the Scheduled Caste (or Scheduled Tribe) unless there is an intention to humiliate a member of the SC or ST (community) for the reason that the victim belongs to such a caste." The Supreme Court clarified that a key ingredient to prove insult or intimidation is when it is committed in "any place within public view." It drew a distinction between "public place" and "in any place within public view" and said that if a remark is made inside a building or a place where only some members of the public are present, then it would not be an offence since it is not in public view.

The judgment needs to be read in the context of growing concerns over the misuse of such laws that have been enacted for the socio-economic uplift of the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in the country. But before we go into that concern, let us take a brief look and understand the Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. This Act was enacted due to the rising cases of discrimination against members from such groups. The provisions to curb such incidents in the Civil Rights Act, 1955 and the Indian Penal Code were found to be highly inadequate by the legislature.

The Statement of Objects and Reasons of the Act states that, "SCs/STs are denied a number of civil rights. They are subjected to various offences, indignities, humiliations and harassment. They have, in several brutal incidents, been deprived of their life and property. Serious crimes are committed against them for various historical, social and economic reasons." It further goes on to say, "When they assert their rights and resist practices of untouchability against them or demand statutory minimum wages or refuse to do any bonded and forced labour, the vested interests try to cow them down and terrorise them." The Act was enacted due to an increase in the disturbing trend of certain atrocities against SC/STs, like compelling them to eat inedible substances, human excreta, attacking men and raping women.

The Act, *inter alia*, provides for the prevention of commission of offences and atrocities against SCs/STs. It also ensures availability of Special Courts and Exclusive Special Courts for the trial of offences for the relief and rehabilitation of the victims. It seeks to prevent the commission of such offences by way of stringent provisions such as punishment and enhanced minimum punishment for neglect of duties by a public servant, defining various types of atrocities, creating new types of offences and denial of anticipatory bail, among others.

In the last couple of years, concerns over the alleged misuse of the aforementioned legislation have taken centre stage in political as well as legal discussions. Reports have gone on to state that the Act is being used to blackmail innocents by filing false cases against them. In April 2018, a news report said that a Dalit family at a village in Aligarh

INDIA IS PROBABLY THE ONLY COUNTRY WITH AN EGALITARIAN CONSTITUTION THAT SENDS MANUAL SCAVENGERS FROM A PARTICULAR COMMUNITY TO 'GAS CHAMBERS TO DIE.' SADLY, INSTEAD OF BECOMING MORE INCLUSIVE, TOLERANT, MODERN AND LIBERAL, INDIA IS GOING BACKWARDS. HENCE, COW VIGILANTISM, HONOUR KILLINGS, SOCIAL BOYCOTTS AND CASTE CLASHES HAVE INCREASED IN THE 21ST CENTURY. ON THE OTHER HAND, IGNORANCE BY PRIVILEGED, UPPER CLASS SOCIETY HAS INCREASED TOO



allegedly misused the Act to make money by filing 10 fake cases in three years.

The Supreme Court in March 2018, while taking note of these concerns, in the SK Mahajan vs State of Maharashtra case, had removed provisions for the automatic arrest of the accused from the Act. This provision was the most contentious among all and was highly debated. The apex court, in its judgment, had instead made conducting a preliminary enquiry mandatory before the registration of an FIR. This led to widespread protests by Dalit and Adivasi groups all across the country. The Central Government then came up with an amendment in the Act to overturn the Mahajan judgment. Following the passage of the amendment, the top court later that year upheld its validity in the Prithviraj Chauhan vs. Union of India case. Part of the reason why the "misuse" argument gains significant attention is because of the low conviction rates under the Act. It is argued that there is low conviction because of the false cases registered by fake victims. However, Dalit and Adivasi organisations have argued that this is because of the procedural lacunae that exist within the police force and several other administrative branches of the State tasked with the prevention of such crimes.

They also argue, and rightly so, that misuse of any law is inevitable by certain vested groups within any community. However, that cannot be the sole reason to dilute provisions within the legislation that were inserted in order to check sys-

temic discrimination and historical injustices that have been meted out to such groups. They argue that prejudices and behavioural bias against the community make investigation a mere farcical exercise. The police force, most of the times, is either disinterested or inefficient in tackling such cases.

The judiciary, in the recent past, has engaged in acts of judicial dilution, wherein it has entered into the authority of the legislature. The Hitesh Verma judgment is in line with that trend. Apart from placing an undue burden, it also introduces technical prerequisites by asking the victim to prove that the insult by the accused was specifically on account of the victim belonging to the SC/ST community, that there was an intention to humiliate him/her because of his/her caste and that such a humiliation must have occurred in "public view" and not just a "public place."

While passing a general ruling in a specific case, the court must have taken into account the practical difficulties and the chain of oppression that exists in the status quo against such communities. Three specific issues need to be pointed out. First, the SC/ST community is inadequately represented in our police force and administration. Reserved positions for them have been vacant for years if State figures are to be believed. Hence, cases concerning them get little or no attention. The accused go unpunished most of the times.

Second, financial inequality in the status quo ensures that those belonging to the SC/ST community don't get com-

petent legal representation before the courts. Effective legal aid by the State continues to remain a distant dream in India. Third, social as well as systemic oppression against members of the SC/ST community continues to remain a reality in independent India.

India is probably the only country with an egalitarian Constitution that sends manual scavengers from a particular community to "gas chambers to die." Sadly, instead of becoming more inclusive, tolerant, modern and liberal, India is going backwards. Hence, cow vigilantism, honour killings, social boycotts and caste clashes have increased in the 21st century. On the other hand, ignorance by privileged, upper class society has increased too. These are hard facts and nothing more than that. The purpose of laws like the Prevention of Atrocities Act is to ensure a disruption in the status quo. To unsettle the system and create fear among those who are higher-up — in terms of caste hierarchy, monetarily as well as in the administration.

If the dreams of the members of the Constituent Assembly and the Constitution have to be realised, our courts must become a lot more conversant with reality. So that such issues are dealt with more sensitively and those choosing to fight their legal battles against discrimination and oppression are not made to feel disillusioned about how our systems react to those who need us the most. This is the least we owe them.

(The writer is from the National Law University, Visakhapatnam)

## The last refuge of insecure regimes

Pakistan has a long history of Governments accusing the Opposition of being externally funded and treasonous. But it is not unique in this



NADEEM PARACHA

Ever since the creation of the opposition alliance, the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), the word "gad-daar (traitor)" has been activated by the Prime Minister Imran Khan-led Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) Government. Its targets in this context are mostly high-profile Opposition leaders and journalists who are highly critical of the current Government (and its backers).

There is nothing new in Pakistan about those in power describing their opponents as "traitors" or "fifth columnists." This has been going on since the 1950s. It began with a Government describing Communists as "fifth columnists" and, then, in 1954 — after accusing the Communist Party of

Pakistan of being on the payroll of the erstwhile Soviet Union's Intelligence agency, it banned the party.

When the four provinces of former West Pakistan were abolished in 1955 to create a so-called "One Unit," the words "gad-daar" and "fifth columnist" returned. But this time they targeted Sindh, Baloch and Pashtun nationalist groups that protested against the creation of One Unit.

During the 1965 presidential election, the State media did not even spare Fatima Jinnah, the sister of the founder of Pakistan, who was challenging self-declared Field Marshal Ayub Khan in the polls. She was crudely demonised for "working with anti-Pakistan elements whose sympathies lay with enemy countries." Yet, all this did not stop the fall of the Ayub regime (in 1969), and the State from being forced to abolish the One Unit.

However, because of the antagonistic separation of East Pakistan in 1971, the alarmist exercise of labelling the Opposition "fifth columnists" and "traitors" was revived once again, this time by an elected regime. In 1975, after declar-

ing that its opponents in the National Awami Party (NAP) were working to further splinter the country ("at the behest of hostile foreign powers") the populist Government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto banned the NAP through a court order. Yet, two years later, Bhutto himself was toppled in a reactionary military coup engineered by General Zia. Just before Bhutto's execution in 1979 through a sham trial, General Zia attacked Bhutto as the man who broke Pakistan (in 1971), even though, at the time of East Pakistan's secession, General Yahya Khan was at the helm as "President" and Chief Martial Law Administrator.

Across the General Zia dictatorship (1977-88), Opposition leaders were not only banned from taking part in politics, but they were also constantly demonised as being Soviet and Indian agents. What's more, the dictatorship added another dimension to this ploy, by describing his opponents as "anti-Islam." Again, this did not stop the people from electing Bhutto's party, the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), twice after General Zia's death even though, during the 1988 election,

Bhutto's daughter Benazir was vehemently attacked by the then pro-establishment Pakistan Muslim League (PML) of Nawaz Sharif for allegedly wanting to roll back Pakistan's nuclear programme. Benazir was later accused by the Right-wing Press of "inviting US intervention" when she was removed as Prime Minister by the "establishmentarian" President Ishaq Khan in 1990.

Ironically, by 1999, Nawaz himself began to face the label of being a "traitor" when his second Government was toppled by General Pervez Musharraf. Yet, in 2008, it was General Musharraf who was forced to resign.

During the fourth PPP Government (2008-2013), pro-establishment groups continued to undermine the regime, accusing it of safeguarding the interests of the US in the region, even when, ironically, much of American aid was being pocketed by the Pakistani military to fight terrorism.

Today, one is again witnessing a similarly vicious anti-Opposition campaign unleashed by the Government, in cahoots with its sympathisers. Many in Pakistan are

of the view that the ploy of demonising opponents as "traitors" or "fifth columnists" is very much a Pakistani trait. Not quite. A study published on May 24, 2018, by the British academic and author, Dmitry Chernobrov, demonstrates that the aforementioned ploy has been regularly wielded in various countries, especially by current populist regimes in the US, UK, Russia, India, Brazil, Turkey, Poland, Pakistan and Hungary, and by overtly authoritarian set-ups in Egypt, Belarus and so on.

According to the Australian researcher and author Robert Loeffel, in his 2015 book, *The Fifth Column in World War II*, the term "fifth columnist" first originated during the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s between Left-wing Republicans and the ultra-nationalists led by the Spanish military.

The nationalist General Mola announced that, although four columns of troops surrounded Republican-held Madrid, the city would fall to a fifth column ready to strike from within. By this he was alluding to secret sympathisers within the Republicans who would weaken them from the inside.

During World War II, Nazis in Germany and the fascist regime in Italy began to demonise and hunt down opponents by labelling them as "traitors" and "fifth columnists" who were working for their enemies.

Does this ploy actually aid regimes to vanquish their opponents? History suggests that it does not. So, if it doesn't, why is it so constantly used? And does it gain any traction from the polity?

The answer to the last question is related to the answer of the first. Nazi Germany and fascist Italy fell in the most violent manner. And a majority of Germans and Italians turned against their fascist past whereas those once demonised as being "fifth columnists" returned to rule and reconstruct these countries. One can say that, in the throes of intense crises, polities may get emotionally invested in looking for scapegoats and support the labelling of people as "fifth columnists." But this does not last.

In their 1997 book, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Jaap de Wilde write that the propensity of a regime to start describing opponents as "traitors" and "fifth colum-

nists" often increases in times of political and economic crises. They write that such regimes identify themselves as being expressions of the State's security and, therefore, their act of branding opponents as traitors can be explained as a "securitising move."

By this the authors mean the regimes club together the Government and those who agree with its point of view as patriots, and discard those who don't as traitors — because they reject a point of view which is supposedly "in the best interest of the State and nation."

Therefore, political Opposition is typically blamed as externally funded, destabilising and treacherous. But as we have seen in Pakistan, this ploy often becomes a caricature of itself and an unintentional self-parody, especially when deployed by a regime which is fluent in rhetoric but entirely inarticulate and even stunted in ways of governance.

The Imran Khan regime has nothing to offer to a polity in a crisis, other than lectures on patriotism and warnings about largely imagined "traitors."

(Courtesy: Dawn)

# What mandate? Biden's agenda faces a divided Congress

**Washington:** President-elect Joe Biden wants to "restore the soul of America." First, he'll need to fix a broken and divided Congress.



Biden is rushing headlong into a legislative branch ground down by partisanship, name-calling and, now, a refusal by some to acknowledge his win over President Donald Trump.

Democratic allies, struggling to regroup after their own election losses, harbor deep divisions between progressive and moderate voices. Republicans, rather than graciously congratulating the incoming president, are, intentionally or not, delegitimizing Biden's presidency while catering to Trump's refusal to accept the election results.

At a time when the country needs a functioning government perhaps more than ever to con-

want to push ahead with his agenda. Emboldened Republicans, though, who didn't lose a single House seat, but in fact expanded their ranks and brushed back many Senate Democratic challengers, see their own mandate to serve as a block on a Biden agenda.

California Rep. Kevin McCarthy, the House's Republican leader, said the election "was a mandate against socialism," stepping up the relentless GOP attacks, even though Biden is a centrist Democrat.

Biden comes to the presidency like few in recent history, with a rare mix of experience but also a potentially divided Congress. Not since President George H.W. Bush has the White House had an executive with such a deep Washington resume.

Rarely in modern times has a Democrat started an administration without a full Democratic Congress. While the House is in Democratic hands, the Senate remains undecided, a 50-48 lead for Republicans heading into a Jan. 5 runoff for two seats in Georgia that will determine party control.

Asked this past week how he will be able to work with Republicans if they aren't acknowledging his victory, Biden said, "They will." What Biden is presenting is a new normal in Washington that he said voters demanded from the election.

"If we can decide not to cooperate, then we can decide to cooperate," he said at his election victory speech.

Much has been made of Biden's relationship with Capitol Hill, where he served as a senator for 36 years, particularly his deal-making as Barack Obama's vice president with Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky. AP

## Explainer: Why poll watcher complaints don't amount to fraud

**Washington:** President Donald Trump's legal allies have launched a flurry of lawsuits arguing that widespread fraud could have been committed because its poll watchers didn't get proper access to the voting process. Most of those lawsuits have been dismissed over lack of evidence of election fraud.

Trump has tried to argue that there is a link between some of the complaints of partisan poll watchers and the results of the election, which was won by Democrat Joe Biden. But there has been no credible information to validate his assertions. In fact, both state and federal officials have praised the 2020 election as safe and secure.

**WHAT IS A POLL WATCHER?**

A poll watcher is a partisan appointee who monitors voting or ballot counting to help ensure their party gets a fair shot. They are not supposed to

interfere in the electoral process, except to report issues to party officials or polling place authorities, and are typically required to register in advance with the local election office.

Tasked this year with monitoring a record number of mail ballots, poll watchers are designated by a political party or campaign to report any concerns they may have.

With a few reports of overly aggressive poll watchers, election officials said they were carefully balancing access with the need to minimize disruptions and social distance concerns over the coronavirus pandemic. In many places, they were ordered to stand 6 feet away.

Monitoring polling places and election offices is allowed in most states, but rules vary and there are certain limits to avoid any harassment or intimidation.

**WERE TRUMP'S POLL WATCHERS DENIED ACCESS?**

The Trump campaign said from the beginning that Republican poll watchers were being improperly denied access to observe the counting of ballots. Not so, countered election officials in key battleground states, who said rules were being followed and they were committed to transparency.

In Pennsylvania, for example, state election officials said poll watchers were certified in every county. Republican lawyers acknowledged in court that they had observers watching polls and mail-in ballots being processed.

In Michigan, a Trump campaign lawsuit included assertions from their observers that poll workers rolled their eyes when viewing votes for Trump, wore masks or clothing supporting the Black Lives Matter movement or appeared

to double-count ballots.

Other lawsuits claimed poll watchers were temporarily denied access in some locations, but there has been no evidence to back it up. Nor was there evidence of votes being miscounted out of political bias. And most of the litigation alleging this has been dismissed.

**WAS THERE ANY VOTER FRAUD IN THE 2020 ELECTION?**

No, not according to multiple election officials in key states. The federal Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency has called the voting and count "the most secure in American history."

Trump's legal allies have tried to argue that if poll workers weren't on hand, anything could have happened out of their view. But they have not provided any evidence of nefarious activity. AP

### CANCELLATION / PARTIAL CANCELLATION / SHORT TERMINATION / SHORT ORIGINATION / DIVERSION OF TRAINS

It is notified for the information of all concerned that Railways have decided to Cancel/Partially Cancel/Short Terminate/Short Originate/Divert following Passengers Special Trains/Festival Special Trains/Parcel Express Trains in view of the Kisan Agitation at Punjab:-

CANCELLATION OF MAIL / EXPRESS TRAINS		
Train No. & Name		Date of cancellation (from the Originating Station)
02425/02426 New Delhi-Jammu Tawi-New Delhi Rajdhani Special		16.11.2020
02053/02054 Haridwar-Amritsar Jn.-Haridwar Express		16 & 17.11.2020
22439/22440 New Delhi-Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra-New Delhi Vande Bharat		16.11.2020
02462 Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra-New Delhi Express		16.11.2020
02461 New Delhi-Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra Express		16 & 17.11.2020
02011/02012 New Delhi-Kalka-New Delhi Shatabdi Express		16.11.2020
02029/02030 Amritsar Jn.-New Delhi-Amritsar Jn. Swarna Shatabdi Express		16.11.2020
05211 Darbhanga Jn.-Amritsar Jn. Express		16.11.2020
05212 Amritsar Jn.-Darbhanga Jn. Express		17 & 18.11.2020

CANCELLATION OF FESTIVAL SPECIAL TRAINS		
Train No. & Name		Date of cancellation (from the Originating Station)
02422 Jammu Tawi-Ajmer Express		16.11.2020
02421 Ajmer-Jammu Tawi Express		16 & 17.11.2020
02231 Lucknow - Chandigarh Express		16.11.2020
02232 Chandigarh-Lucknow Express		16 & 17.11.2020
04888 Barmer - Rishikesh Express		upto 20.11.2020
04887 Rishikesh - Barmer Express		upto 21.11.2020
04519 Delhi Jn.-Bhathinda Express		upto 20.11.2020
04520 Bhathinda-Delhi Jn. Express		upto 20.11.2020
04401 New Delhi-Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra Express		upto 19.11.2020
04402 Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra - New Delhi Express		upto 20.11.2020
02471/02472 Shri Ganganagar - Delhi Jn. - Shri Ganganagar Express		upto 20.11.2020
09611 Ajmer - Amritsar Jn. Express		19.11.2020
09614 Amritsar Jn. - Ajmer Express		20.11.2020
09613 Ajmer - Amritsar Jn. Express		16 & 18.11.2020
09612 Amritsar Jn. - Ajmer Express		17 & 19.11.2020
02587 Gorakhpur - Jammu Tawi Express		16.11.2020
05098 Jammu Tawi - Bhagalpur Express		17.11.2020
02919 Dr. Ambedkar Nagar - Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra Express		16.11.2020
02920 Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra - Dr. Ambedkar Nagar Express		18.11.2020
04997 Varanasi - Bhatinda Jn. Express		16.11.2020
04611 Varanasi - Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra Express		17.11.2020
03256 Chandigarh - Patliputra Express		16.11.2020
05532 Amritsar Jn. - Saharsa Jn. Express		16.11.2020

### PARTIAL CANCELLATION OF SPECIAL TRAINS

Train No. & Name	Short Terminate at/ Short originate from	Partially Cancelled between Stations	Date of cancellation (from the Originating Station)
02903 Golden Temple Mail	at Ambala Cantt.	Ambala Cantt.-Amritsar	of 15.11.2020
02904 Golden Temple Mail	from Ambala Cantt.	Amritsar-Ambala Cantt.	16.11.2020
02925 Banda Terminus-Amritsar Special Express	at Ambala Cantt.	Ambala Cantt.-Amritsar	of 15.11.2020
02926 Amritsar-Banda Terminus Special Exp.	from Ambala Cantt.	Amritsar-Ambala Cantt.	16 & 17.11.2020
02715 Sachkhand Express	at New Delhi	New Delhi-Amritsar	of 15.11.2020
02716 Sachkhand Express	from New Delhi	Amritsar-New Delhi	16 & 17.11.2020
03307 Dhanbad-Firozpur Exp.	at Ambala Cantt.	Ambala Cantt.-Firozpur	of 15.11.2020
03308 Firozpur-Dhanbad Exp.	from Ambala Cantt.	Firozpur-Ambala Cantt.	16 & 17.11.2020
04649/73 Jaynagar-Amritsar Saryu Yamuna Exp.	at Ambala Cantt.	Ambala Cantt.-Amritsar	of 15.11.2020
04650/74 Amritsar-Jaynagar Saryu Yamuna Exp.	from Ambala Cantt.	Amritsar-Ambala Cantt.	16 & 17.11.2020
02057 New Delhi - Una Himachal Janshatabdi	at Ambala Cantt.	Ambala Cantt. - Una Himachal	16.11.2020
02058 Una Himachal - New Delhi Janshatabdi	from Ambala Cantt.	Una Himachal - Ambala Cantt.	16 & 17.11.2020
02237 Varanasi-Jammu Tawi Festival Special	at Saharanpur	Saharanpur-Jammu Tawi	16.11.2020
02238 Jammu Tawi-Varanasi Festival Special	from Saharanpur	Jammu Tawi-Saharanpur	16 & 17.11.2020
09025 Banda T.-Amritsar Jn. Special Clone Train	at Ambala Cantt.	Ambala Cantt. - Amritsar Jn.	16.11.2020
09026 Amritsar Jn.-Banda T. Special Clone Train	from Ambala Cantt.	Amritsar Jn.-Ambala Cantt.	18.11.2020
09717 Jaipur-Daulatpur Chouk Express	at Ambala Cantt.	Ambala Cantt. - Daulatpur Chouk	of 15.11.2020
09718 Daulatpur Chouk-Jaipur Express	from Ambala Cantt.	Daulatpur Chouk-Ambala Cantt.	16.11.2020

### PARTIAL CANCELLATION OF PARCEL SPECIAL TRAINS

Train No. & Name	Short Terminate at/ Short originate from	Partially Cancelled between Stations	Date of cancellation (from the Originating Station)
00901 Banda(T)-Jammu Tawi	At Ambala Cantt.	Ambala Cantt.-Jammu Tawi	of 15.11.2020
00902 Jammu Tawi-Banda(T)	From Ambala Cantt.	Jammu Tawi-Ambala Cantt.	17.11.2020
00468 Amritsar Jn.-Howrah	From Delhi	Amritsar Jn.-Delhi	16.11.2020

### DIVERSION OF SPECIAL TRAINS

Train No. & Name	Diverted Via	Date (from the Originating Station)
05909 Dibrugarh-Lalgarh Spl.	Rohtak-Bhiwani-Hisar-Hanumangarh	of 14.11.2020
05910 Lalgarh-Dibrugarh Spl.	Hanumangarh-Hisar-Bhiwani-Rohtak	16.11.2020

Note : For any kind of information passengers are requested to contact Railway Enquiry No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website [www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in](http://www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in)

Security Helpline No. 182

Integrated Helpline No. 139

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## Biden advisers to meet vaccine firms as Trump stalls handoff

**Washington:** Joe Biden's scientific advisers will meet with vaccine makers in coming days as the presidential transition remains stalled because of President Donald Trump's refusal to acknowledge that he lost the election.

That delayed handoff to the next administration is especially problematic during a public health crisis, the government's top infectious disease expert said.

"Of course it would be better if we could start working with them," said Dr. Anthony Fauci, head of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases who has been through many presidential transitions during 36 years of government service. He likened the process to runners

passing on the baton in a relay race. "You don't want to stop, he said.

The president-elect's outreach to the vaccine manufacturers comes as the coronavirus pandemic in the United States has entered perhaps its most dangerous phase.

The seven-day rolling average for new daily cases stood at 145,400 on Saturday, according to data from Johns Hopkins University. That means the U.S. is adding about 1 million new cases a week, and deaths averaged 820 a day, a 33% increase in just two weeks.

"We're going to start those consultations this week" said Biden's chief of staff, Ron Klain, citing Pfizer and other pharmaceutical companies. AP

## Gilgit-Baltistan assembly election concludes amid tight security; counting begins

**Islamabad:** Wearing face masks, the people of Gilgit-Baltistan in northern Pakistan voted on Sunday in the third legislative assembly election amidst tight security.

India has slammed Pakistan for its decision to hold election in Gilgit-Baltistan and said any action to alter the status of the militarily-occupied region has no legal basis.

The voting which commenced at 8.00 am (local time) ended peacefully without any break at 5.00 pm and no untoward incident was reported.

The counting of votes has started and complete results are expected by tomorrow.

Earlier, the polling officials said that the voters present inside the polling stations would be allowed to cast ballots even after the end of polling time.

There are 24 seats for the contest but polling on one seat was postponed, leaving 23 seats up for grabs. As many as 330 candidates, including four women, are in the contest, they said.

India has opposed

Pakistan's plan to hold election in Gilgit-Baltistan.

"Any action by Pakistan to alter the status of the militarily-occupied so-called 'Gilgit-Baltistan' has no legal basis whatsoever and is totally void ab-initio," Spokesperson in the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Anurag Srivastava said at a virtual media briefing in September.

"Our position has always been clear and consistent. The entire territories of the UTs of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh have been and are an integral part of India and would remain so," Srivastava had said.

It is the third election for the current legislative assembly after political reform introduced in 2010.

Out of 1,141 polling stations, 577 have been declared sensitive and 297 highly sensitive. Over 15,000 security personnel from Gilgit-Baltistan, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh and Balochistan have been deployed at polling stations. However, army personnel have not been deployed. PTI

## Famines of biblical proportions in 2021: WFP

**United Nations:** The head of the World Food Program says the Nobel Peace Prize has given the U.N. Agency a spotlight and megaphone to warn world leaders that next year is going to be worse than this year, and without billions of dollars "we are going to have famines of biblical proportions in 2021."

David Beasley said in an interview with The Associated Press that the Norwegian Nobel Committee was looking at the work the agency does every day in conflicts, disasters and refugee camps, often putting staffers' lives at risk to feed millions of hungry people -- but also to send "a message to the world that it's getting worse out there ... (and) that our hardest work is yet to come."

"It was so timely because we've been fighting to get above

the choir," Beasley said of last month's award, pointing to the news being dominated by the U.S. Elections and the COVID-19 pandemic, and the difficulty of getting global attention focused on "the travesty that we're facing around the world."

"So this was really a gift from above," Beasley said, recalling the surprise and delight of WFP's 20,000 staffers worldwide, and his own shock at being interrupted during a meeting in Niger in Africa's Sahel region with the news.

Beasley recalled his warning to the U.N. Security Council in April that as the world was dealing with the coronavirus pandemic, it was also "on the brink of a hunger pandemic" that could lead to "multiple famines of biblical proportions" within a few months if immediate action

## Gunmen kill at least 34 in bus attack in west Ethiopia

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia:** Gunmen killed at least 34 people in a "gruesome" attack on a passenger bus in west Ethiopia, a part of the country that has recently seen a spate of deadly assaults on civilians, the national human rights body said Sunday. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) said in a statement that "the estimated number of casualties, currently at 34, is likely to rise" from the attack which occurred Saturday night in the Benishangul-Gumuz region.

A spokesman for the commission, an independent government body, confirmed that the casualties were all deaths.

The EHRC statement said the bus attack occurred in the Debate administrative area, and that "there are reports of similar attacks" in three other areas, as well as "of persons who have fled to seek shelter." AFP

## Azerbaijani leader: Christian churches will be protected

**Moscow:** The president of Azerbaijan has promised that Christian churches will be protected when the strongly Muslim country takes possession of areas formerly controlled by Armenians.

President Ilham Aliyev's office said he made the promise in a telephone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin, who is deploying peacekeeping forces in the areas under an agreement that ended six weeks of fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Ethnic Armenian forces had controlled Nagorno-Karabakh and sizeable adjacent territories since the 1994 end of a separatist war. Fighting resumed in late September and ended with an agreement that calls for Azerbaijan to regain control of the outlying territories as well as allowing it to hold on to parts of

Nagorno-Karabakh that it seized during the fighting.

Kalabajar is home to the well-known Dadivank monastery of the Armenian Apostolic Church. A day before the territory's handover, workers removed many of the monastery's sacred objects. Other residents in Kalabajar torched their own homes, fearing what will happen when Azerbaijan forces take over. Azerbaijan is about 95% Muslim and Armenians fear that churches would be damaged when it takes control of the territories.

"President Aliyev said that Christian churches in Azerbaijani territories, which are returned to Azerbaijan in accordance with the trilateral statement, will also be properly protected by the state. Christians of Azerbaijan will have access to these churches," said the statement from his office. AP

## DEMOCRACY IN DISPUTE



A woman gestures as she argues with a counter-protester after supporters of President Donald Trump held marches in Washington

## Violence erupts in Washington as Trump supporters clash with counterprotesters

**Washington:** Violence erupted on the streets of downtown Washington after thousands of supporters of US President Donald Trump held a protest rally to back his unproven claims of massive voter fraud and electoral malpractices during the 2020 presidential elec-

tions. The "Million MAGA March", held a week after Democrat Joe Biden was declared the winner of the November 3 election, was mainly peaceful throughout the day on Saturday, but by late in the

night, clashes erupted between Trump's supporters and counterprotesters. A mass brawl broke out later on Saturday night just five blocks away from the White House as counterprotesters clashed with a group of Trump supporters. PTI

## 500 reported arrested in Belarus protests

**Kyiv (Ukraine):** A human rights group in Belarus said more than 500 people were arrested in protests around the country calling for authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko to step down.

The Sunday demonstrations continued the wave of near-daily protests that have gripped Belarus since early August. In the capital Minsk, police wielded clubs and used tear gas and water cannons to disperse thousands of demonstrators.

The Viasna human rights organization reported detentions at demonstrations in other cities, including Vitebsk

and Gomel. It said the nationwide arrest numbers exceeded 500.

Many of the demonstrators carried placards in commemoration of Raman Bandarenka, an opposition supporter who died Thursday after reportedly being beaten in police detention.

A wide wave of protests, some attracting more than 100,000 people, broke out following the Aug. 9 presidential election that official results say gave Lukashenko a sixth term in office. The opposition and some poll workers say the results were manipulated. AP

# Indian economy to recover faster than anticipated: Experts

**New Delhi:** The Indian economy is seen recovering faster than expected and the Reserve Bank is likely to have come to an end of the rate easing cycle, according to global forecasting firm Oxford Economics.

It further said that inflation is expected to average significantly above 6 per cent in the fourth quarter of the current fiscal and the RBI may hold policy rates in December monetary policy review meeting.

"Consumer inflation rose back to pre-virus highs in October, with almost every broad category other than fuel experiencing a rise in prices. While Q4 is likely to mark the peak for inflation, we have turned more cautious on the trajectory over 2021," it said. Costlier vegetables and

eggs pushed up retail inflation to a nearly six-and-a-half year high of 7.61 per cent in October, keeping it significantly above the comfort zone of the Reserve Bank. Retail inflation stood at 7.27 per cent in September 2020.

"At the same time, robust bottom-up activity data suggest that the economy may be recovering faster than we anticipated. As such, we see an increasing possibility that the RBI's easing cycle has ended," Oxford Economics said.

Moody's Investors Service has also revised upwards its GDP forecast for India to (-) 8.9 per cent contraction in the 2020 calendar year, as the economy reflatates after a long and strict nationwide lockdown but added the recovery is patchy. **PTI**

# Will ask Govt to make employers' contribution, tier-II account tax free for all in Budget: PFRDA

**New Delhi:** Pension fund regulator PFRDA will propose to the Government to make employers' contribution of 14 per cent under NPS tax free for all categories of subscribers in the next Budget, chairman Supratim Bandyopadhyay said.

Employers' contribution of 14 per cent in pension under the National Pension System (NPS) scheme for the central government employees was made tax free from April 1, 2019. "We may propose things like 14 per cent contribution by employers to be made tax free to all. Currently, it is given only to the central government employees.

"There is this tier-II NPS account which was made tax free exclusively for the central government employees recently. So there also, we would request the government to give the facility to all the subscribers. In the tax-free tier II account we are keeping a lock-in period of 3 years because you are getting the tax-free status...And we want it to be extended to all the other employees," he added. A tier-II account under NPS is not a compulsory account, one can have it along with the tier-I account, he said, adding the benefit with tier II account is that it can be withdrawn immediately.

Last month, the Finance Ministry had kicked off the

exercise to prepare the Budget for 2021-22 amid the urgency to revive the economy hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The upcoming Budget will be crucial for the country as it will have to deal with impact of pandemic which has affected all segments of the economy, including revenue collection, disinvestment, expenditure, exports and food prices.

Budget 2021-22 is likely to be presented on February 1.

NPS, administered by PFRDA, is a voluntary, defined contribution retirement savings scheme designed to enable the subscribers to make optimum decisions about future needs.

There are two types of NPS accounts -- tier-I and tier-II. While tier-I is a non-withdrawable permanent retirement account into which the accumulations are deposited and invested as per the option of the subscriber, tier-II account is the one which is allowed only when there is an active tier-I account. **PTI**

# BPCL privatisation: Bid closes today, all eyes on Reliance

**New Delhi:** Initial bids for privatisation of Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL) will close on Monday amid indications of supermajors UK's BP Plc, Total of France and Saudi Aramco unlikely to bid.

The government, which is selling its entire 52.98 per cent stake in India's second largest oil refining and marketing company, had on four occasions extended the date of putting in the preliminary expression of interest (EoI). The current deadline is November 16.

Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey had last month told PTI that there would be no further extension.

Industry sources said BP as well as Total are unlikely to bid for the stake and there are reports of even Russian ener-

gy giant Rosneft or its affiliates and Saudi Arabian Oil Company (Saudi Aramco) not very keen on bidding given the asking price of close to USD 10 billion required to buy the firm at a time when the world is moving away from conventional fuel.

Also, the pandemic has led to demand destruction of conventional fuels and may hasten transition towards cleaner fuels such as hydrogen and battery-operated EVs.

Given the uncertain demand scenario, the investors are weighing if BPCL acquisition makes sense, they said.

At Friday's closing price of Rs 412.70 on the BSE, the government's 52.98 per cent stake in BPCL is worth Rs 47,430 crore. Also, the acquirer would have to make an open offer for buying another 26 per cent

stake from the public, which would cost Rs 23,276 crore.

Sources said BPCL annually makes a profit of about Rs 8,000 crore and at this pace it would take 8-9 years for the investor to recover the bid amount of over Rs 70,000 crore.

The acquisition makes sense for companies which can double the profit by growing the business as well as through operational efficiencies and synergies with existing business in half that timeframe.

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries Ltd, which operates the world's largest single location oil refining complex at Jamnagar in Gujarat and has fledgling ambitions to retail fuel, can be one such company.

Reliance has so far remained tight-lipped about its intentions for BPCL. **PTI**

# G20 summit this week will be a milestone, says Saudi Arabia amid expectations of major economic stimulus

**New Delhi:** The upcoming summit of the G20 will be a "milestone", Saudi Arabia, the chair of the powerful economic bloc, said on Sunday amid mounting expectations of fiscal support, debt reductions and several other monetary measures by the grouping to help the global economy recover from the coronavirus-driven collapse. Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to India Saud bin Mohammed Al Sati said the virtual summit on November 21-22 will largely focus on addressing the implications of the coronavirus pandemic, future health care plans and steps for reviving the global economy.

The G20 comprises the world's largest and fastest-growing economies and accounts for 85 per cent of the global GDP and two-thirds of its population. The summit of the grouping is taking place in the midst of the worst economic downturn the world is witnessing since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

In March, the G20 had announced that over USD 5 trillion would be injected into

the global economy to offset the impact of the pandemic.

"The upcoming meeting on November 21-22 is going to be a milestone. Members of the G20 are going to be meeting virtually for the second time, during this year," Al Sati told PTI in an interview.

There have been expectations that the G20 will unveil an economic stimulus programme as well as a framework for debt reductions for poor countries at the summit as the coronavirus pandemic threatens to leave long-lasting scars on the global economy.

"Among other major agenda points, the summit will work towards addressing the implications of the pandemic, future health care plans and steps to be taken to revive the global economy," the envoy said.

On India's role in the grouping, Al Sati said Saudi Arabia values the knowledge and experience that India has brought to the G20 as well as its remarkable efforts in extending medical supplies to several countries across the globe to deal with the pan-

demic.

"The economic relief package provided by India for its most prominent sectors is commendable. As the fifth-largest global economy and the largest economy in South Asia, the Indian economy has the impetus to recover from the impact of the ongoing pandemic," he said.

The envoy said Saudi Arabia has already engaged with a host of stakeholders including businesses and think tanks across the globe to come up with strong policy solutions for the G20 member nations and beyond to deal with the massive socio-economic disruptions caused by the pandemic.

The much-awaited summit is scheduled to be attended by US President Donald Trump, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Japanese PM Yoshihide Suga, Russian President Vladimir Putin, Chinese President Xi Jinping, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron among others. **PTI**

# Jute regulator plans to conduct search, seizure operations to prevent hoarding

**Kolkata:** In a bid to prevent hoarding, the regulator of the jute industry is planning to carry out search and seizure operations to enforce its order that asked stockists to hold not more than 500 quintal of raw jute from November 17, an official said on Sunday.

In August, the Jute Commissioner's office had capped the stock holding limit at 1,500 quintal on own or third party account and asked traders on November 6 to bring it down to 500 quintal in the next 10 days.

The government's order came at a time when the price of the commodity soared to over Rs 6,000 per quintal, impacting the manufacturing of jute bags.

"We have plans to carry out search and seizure operations as per power vested on us to ensure that the stock limit order is properly implemented.

"We will stay prepared and can take such steps anytime because the control order will be effective from November 17 to make sure that raw jute is

available at a proper price," a senior official of the Jute Commissioner's office told PTI.

Based on the intelligence inputs, the regulator believes that the steep increase in price is the outcome of hoarding by middlemen, and farmers are not benefiting from it, he said.

The price, which had crossed the limit of Rs 6,000 per quintal, has now eased to a range of Rs 5,800-5,850 as the supplies have improved following the order that directed traders to reduce the stock limit to 500 quintal.

According to the Jute Commissioner's office, the price should not exceed the limit of Rs 5,600-5,700 per quintal. Meanwhile, Jute Balers' Association had already announced the suspension of all trading activities from November 23 to protest against the order.

The balers' body also alleged that the control measure has made businesses of its members "unviable" and planned to move a court to challenge it. **PTI**

# Labour Ministry seeks feedback on draft rules under Code on Social Security

**New Delhi:** The Ministry of Labour and Employment has sought feedback from stakeholders on draft rules under the Code on Social Security, 2020.

The feedback is required to be provided within 45 days from November 13, 2020.

Union Ministry of Labour and Employment has notified the draft rules under the Code on Social Security, 2020 on November 13, 2020, inviting objections and suggestions, if any, from the stakeholders, the ministry said in a statement.

The draft rules provide for operationalization of provisions in the Code on Social Security, 2020 relating to Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC), gratuity, maternity benefit, social security and cess in respect of building and other construction workers, social security for unorganised workers, gig workers and platform workers.

The draft rules also provide for Aadhaar-based registration including self-registration by

unorganised workers, gig workers and platform workers on the portal of the Central government, the statement said. The Ministry of Labour and Employment has already initiated action for development of such portal.

For availing any benefit under any of the social security schemes framed under the Code, an unorganised worker or a gig worker or platform worker shall be required to be registered on the portal with details as may be specified in the scheme, it said.

The rules further provide for Aadhaar-based registration of building and other construction workers on the specified portal of the Central government and the state government or the State Welfare Board.

When a building worker migrates from one state to another, he shall be entitled to get benefits in the state where he is currently working, and it shall be the responsibility of the Building Workers Welfare Board of that state to provide benefits to such a worker. **PTI**

# NCLT approves ₹103 cr resolution plan for NIIL Infrastructures

**New Delhi:** The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has approved a Rs 103-crore bid to acquire debt-ridden NIIL Infrastructures, which is developing a housing project in Agra, Uttar Pradesh.

A two-member Principal bench of NCLT, headed by Acting President BSV Prakash Kumar, has approved the Rs 103.18 crore resolution plan by a consortium of Rishabh Verma and Shilendra Khirwar along with N-Homes.

In March 2018, NCLT Delhi had admitted the application seeking resolution for NIIL Infrastructures under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code and appointed Nisha Malpani as the Resolution Professional (RP).

In its order, NCLT has observed that the resolution plan provides no lay off for the workmen of the debt-laden company and for the full and final discharge of their dues for the period of 24 months preceding the insolvency commencement date.

"There appears to be no discrimination in the resolution plan in respective class of creditors as the same treatment is provided to similarly situated each class of creditors," the tribunal said.

The resolution plan by the consortium has already been approved by the lenders of the company.

"The resolution plan has been approved by 77.04 per cent voting share of the member of CoC and has been submitted in compliance of section 30 of the code.

In view of the aforesaid discussions and as no infirmity has been brought out upon screening the resolution plan, we hereby approve the resolution plan," said NCLT.

The tribunal observed that the resolution plan was higher than the liquidation value of the company, which was Rs 90.98 crore. **PTI**

# Reliance Retail Ventures acquires 96% holding in Urban Ladder for ₹182 cr

**New Delhi:** Reliance Retail Ventures Limited (RRVL), a subsidiary of Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) has acquired equity shares of Urban Ladder Home Decor Solutions Private Limited (UrbanLadder) for a cash consideration of Rs 182.12 crore.

The investment represents 96 per cent holding in the equity share capital of UrbanLadder. RRVL has a further option of acquiring the balance stake, taking its shareholding to 100 per cent of the equity share capital of UrbanLadder.

RRVL proposes to make a further investment of up to Rs 75 crore. The further investment is expected to be completed by December 2023.

UrbanLadder was incorporated in India on February 17, 2012. UrbanLadder is in the business of operating a digital platform for home furniture and decor products.

It also has a chain of retail stores in several cities across India. UrbanLadder's audited turnover was Rs 434 crore, Rs 151.22 crore and Rs 50.61 crore, and Net Profit/(Loss) of Rs 49.41 crore, Rs 118.66 crore and Rs 457.97 crore in FY

2019, FY 2018 and FY 2017 respectively.

The aforesaid investment will further enable the group's digital and new commerce initiatives and widen the bouquet of consumer products provided by the group, while enhancing user engagement and experience across its retail offerings.

No governmental or regulatory approvals were required for the said investment. The investment does not fall within related party transactions and none of RIL's promoter/promoter group/group companies have any interest in the transaction.

# 25 held for fake GST invoices across India

**New Delhi:** GST investigation authorities have arrested 25 persons in a nationwide drive against fraud through fake GST invoices in the last four days, sources said on Sunday.

According to the sources, the Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI) intensified the drive against unscrupulous elements for availing and passing on input tax credit (ITC) fraudulently through fake invoices, non-existent or fly-by-night firms and circular trading in the second week of November.

The sources said that the procedure for new GST registration will be further tightened. GST registration in appropriate cases will now compulsorily require physical and financial verification.

During the latest drive, Sunil Gutte, son of a sitting MLA and sugar baron Ratnakar Gutte, was among the 25 persons arrested in around 350 cases registered for issuance of fake invoices against 1,180 entities.

The DGGI Mumbai Zone arrested Sunil Gutte, Managing Director of Sunil Hi-tech, along with his business associate

Vijendra Ranka, the two kingpins of fake invoice scams totalling Rs 520 crore of ITC in Maharashtra.

Following the crackdown on GST fake invoice frauds, DGGI and CGST formations have so far acted in Delhi, Bengaluru, Mumbai, Ludhiana, Chennai, Nagpur, Kolkata, Gurugram, Jind, Ballabgarh, Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodra, Bhilai, Jodhpur, Hyderabad, Mathura, Raipur, Visakhapatnam, Jamshedpur, Patna, Imphal, Meerut, Guwahati, Pune, Siliguri, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, among other places.

Sources said inquiries showed that Sunil Hi-tech Engineers Ltd availed fraudulent ITC to the tune of Rs 304 crore from multiple entities and passed on fraudulent ITC to the tune of Rs 216 crore to multiple entities, based on bogus invoices issued, without any receipt or supply of goods or services.

Another case against Oshiya Ferro Alloys Pvt Ltd was booked for passing on fake ITC amounting to Rs 209 crore involving bogus supply of iron and steel articles. **IANS**

It was found that they allegedly ran the racket of fake invoice for not only evading GST but also to commit a massive bank loan fraud of more than Rs 2,500 crores, said people in the know. Sunil Hitech has gone to NCLT reportedly to get rid of the fraudulent loans burden.

The Delhi CGST Zone booked a case of GST fraud against Krishna Trading Co for issuing invoices without supply of goods and passing on ITC amounting to around Rs 397 crore.

The fake invoices were for the supply of metal scrap. They had created 31 fake firms, the sources said. Owner Lallan Shah has been arrested.

The CGST Delhi (East) Commissionerate arrested a fake billing mastermind Ashish Aggarwal, who allegedly supplied fake invoices to Sanjay Garg, proprietor of Devyaani Agro Industries, Ballabgarh, Haryana, for availing ITC to the tune of around Rs 20 crore and for passing further ineligible ITC to the tune of around Rs 30.04 crore to various entities. **IANS**

# Liquidators can now transfer 'not readily realisable assets' to any person

**New Delhi:** The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) has amended norms for the liquidation process under the IBC to allow liquidators to transfer or assign "not readily realisable assets" of the corporate debtor to any person after consultation with all stakeholders' consultation committee.

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) envisages early closure of liquidation process so that the assets of the corporate debtor are released for alternate uses expeditiously. However, the process takes longer where the liquidation estate includes a "not readily realisable asset".

To facilitate quick closure of the liquidation process, the IBBI brought in the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (Liquidation Process) (Fourth Amendment) Regulations, 2020 on Friday which enables the liquidator to assign or transfer a "not readily realisable asset" to any person in consultation with the stakeholders' consultation committee.

"Not readily realisable asset" means any asset included in the liquidation estate which could not be sold through available options and includes contingent or disputed assets, and assets underlying proceedings for preferential, undervalued, extortionate credit, and fraudulent transactions.

If the liquidator fails to transfer the assets to anyone, he

would have to distribute the assets amongst stakeholders, with the approval of the adjudicating authority.

"Thus, a liquidator shall attempt to sell the assets at the first instance, failing which he may assign or transfer an asset to any person, in consultation with the stakeholders' consultation committee, and failing which he may distribute the undistributed assets amongst stakeholders, with the approval of the AA," said an IBBI notification.

The board also amended the regulations for insolvency resolution process for corporate persons and information utilities regulations, 2020, noting that there may be a creditor who may not be willing to wait for completion of liquidation process for realisation of his debt.

"The IBBI amended the Regulations to enable a creditor to assign or transfer the debt due to it to any other person in accordance with the laws for the time being in force dealing with such assignment or transfer," said an IBBI statement. **IANS**

**SEMAYA LIMITED**  
(Formerly: Sunrise Agro Products Limited)  
CIN: L01111DL1985PLC021288

Flat: No. 211, Antriksh Bhawan, 22, K.G. Marg, Connaught Place, New Delhi-110001  
| E-mail: semayalimited@gmail.com | Phone No. 011-42487936 |  
Website: www.semayalimited.com

**Notice of 35th Annual General Meeting and Remote E-Voting information**

NOTICE is hereby given that the 35th Annual General Meeting ("AGM") of the members of Semaya Limited (Formerly: Sunrise Agro Products Limited) will be held through Video Conferencing ("VC") / Other Audio Visual Means ("OAVM") on Wednesday, the 09th December, 2020 at 04:00 P.M. to transact the Ordinary and Special Business, as set out in the Notice of AGM. The Notice of AGM along with the Annual Report and remote e-voting details have been sent in electronic mode to all the members whose e-mail IDs are registered with the Company/RTA/Depository and the date of completion of email of the notices to the shareholders is 13th November, 2020. In case you have not registered your email ID with the Company/Depository, please follow below instructions to register your email ID for obtaining Notice of AGM and Annual Return and login details for e-voting.

Physical Holding : Send a request to Registrar and Transfer Agents of the Company, Beetal Financial & Computer Services (P) Ltd. at beetalra@gmail.com providing Folio number, Name of the shareholder, scanned copy of the share certificate (Front and Back), PAN, Self attested scanned copy of PAN Card, AADHAR (Self attested scanned copy of Aadhar Card) for registering email address.

Please send your bank detail with original cancelled cheque to our RTA i.e. Beetal Financial & Computer Services (P) Ltd. at Beetal house, 3rd Floor 99 Madangiri, Behind Loka Shopping Centre, New Delhi - 11002. Contact No. - 011-29961281-283 along with letter mentioning folio no. If not registered already.

Demat Holding: Please contact your Depository Participant (DP) and register your email address as per the process advised by DP. Please also update your bank detail with your DP for dividend payment by NACH if declare by company.

These documents are also available on the website of Metropolitan Stock Exchange of India (MSEI) www.msei.in and the company's website www.semayalimited.com for download by the members. Notice is hereby given in compliance with the provisions of Section 108 of the Companies Act, 2013 read with the Companies (Management and Administration) Rules, 2014 as amended and Regulation 44 of SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 that the Company has offered e-voting facility for transacting all the business by Central Depository Services (India) Limited (CDSL) through their portal www.evotingindia.com to enable the members to cast their votes electronically. The remote e-voting period commences on Sunday, 05th December, 2020 (09:00 AM) and ends on Tuesday, 08th December, 2020 (05:00 PM). No e-voting shall be allowed beyond the said date and time. During this period members of the Company, holding shares either in physical form or in dematerialized form, as on the cut-off date of 02nd December, 2020, may cast their vote by remote e-voting. Any person, who acquires shares and becomes member of the Company after dispatch of the notice and holding shares as of the cut-off date i.e. 02nd December, 2020, may obtain the login ID and password by sending a request at helodesk@cdslindia.com or RTA, Beetal Financial & Computer Services (P) Ltd. at beetalra@gmail.com. However, if the members are already registered with CDSL for remote e-voting then they can use their existing user ID and password for casting their vote. The remote e-voting module shall be disabled by CDSL for voting thereafter. Once the vote on a resolution is cast by the member, the member shall not be allowed to change it subsequently. The facility for voting through e-voting shall be made available at the AGM and the members who have cast their vote by remote e-voting prior to the AGM may also attend the AGM but shall not be entitled to cast their vote again. Mr. Naveen Kumar Raslogi (M. No. FCS-3685), Proprietor, M/s. N K Raslogi & Associates, Company Secretaries, has been appointed as Scrutinizer for the e-voting process. The detailed procedure for remote e-voting is contained in the letter sent with the Notice of the AGM. Also the register of members and share transfer shall remain closed (Book Closure) from 02nd December, 2020 to 09th December, 2020 (both days inclusive). Any query/grievance relating to e-voting may be addressed to Ms. Lovely, Company Secretary and Compliance Officer, Semaya Limited (Formerly: Sunrise Agro Products Limited), 211, Antriksh Bhawan, 22, K G Marg, Connaught Place, New Delhi-110001, Phone No.: 011-42487936, Email: semayalimited@gmail.com

For SEMAYA LIMITED  
(Formerly: Sunrise Agro Products Limited)  
Sd/-  
Lovely  
Company Secretary & Compliance Officer

Place : New Delhi  
Date : 16.11.2020

**WESTERN RAILWAY**  
**PROVISION OF OBHS & ACCA IN NOMINATED TRAINS.**

Tender Notice No.: M137-19-Coach Mitra-ST-BL-2020 Dt.: 12/11/2020.  
Name of Work: Provision of OBHS & ACCA (Coach Mitra Pattern) in Nominated Trains of Surat / Udhna & Valsad / Nandurbar Area Trains for a Period of 02 Years. Approx. Cost of Work: ₹ 4,64,07,024.07 (All Inclusive). EMD: ₹ 3,82,00,000. Tender Submission Closing Date & Time: 09/12/2020 at 15:00 hrs. Note: Please visit our website <http://www.treps.gov.in> to download the tender document, corrigendum and further details. Manual offer will not be considered. 0437

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**GOVT. OF MAHARASHTRA**  
**P. W. Division, Chiplun**  
Phone No. 02355/252806  
Web-[www.mahapwd.com](http://www.mahapwd.com) & e-mail-[chiplun.ee@mahapwd.com](mailto:chiplun.ee@mahapwd.com)

**E-TENDER NOTICE NO. 09 FOR 2020-2021 Open Online**

Executive Engineer P.W. Division Chiplun invite B-1 Tender For Registered Open Notice In Ratnagiri District Detail Tender Notice Available On [www.mahapwd.com](http://www.mahapwd.com) and [www.mahatenders.gov.in](http://www.mahatenders.gov.in) Portal.  
Note- Total 18 Works include in Tender notice  
Online Tender Download & Bid Preparation Period Date 17.11.2020 Online Tender Bid Preparation last Date 01.12.2020

No. CHD/AB/TC/Open/2020.21/7155  
Office of the Executive Engineer,  
Chiplun P.W. Division, Chiplun. Sd/-  
Date. 09.11.2020  
Executive Engineer  
Chiplun P.W. Division, Chiplun  
DGIPR/1220/2020-21

Trend Slazer

**Ayushmann's tweet impresses netizens**

Actor **AYUSHMANN KHURRANA's** one-liner about the day after Diwali touched a thread among many netizens' hearts.

"Tum Diwali ke agle din ka khaalipan ho," his tweet about the deserted and quiet look of the day, his thoughts with his trademark one-liner got the reaction he usually does.

Ayushmann's tweet has received hilarious reactions from social media users. "You are the poisonous air followed by Diwali," a user commented.

"Visit Delhi... people burst crackers here, post Diwali too. You won't realise the emptiness here," another one quipped.

A Twitter user praised him, "Poet Ayushmann is back! I was missing these tweets so much."



**'Rooh bankar milunga usko aasmanon mein kahin. Pyaar dharti par farishte se kiya nahi jaata... I still feel like you've (Irrfan Khan) gone for a long shoot for a film, a long schedule underwater and you'll come back to me, to the surface again.'** —Babil Khan (Irrfan's son)

Actor **AMIT SADH** posted a throwback picture of himself, which was taken 10 years ago.

He posted the picture on Instagram, in which he is seen standing in a busy lane and looking at the camera dressed in a white shirt.



"Just came across this photo from 2010, a decade (ago)... so much to thank for and so much still to do a #gratitudealways," he wrote.

Last month, Amit, who will next be seen in the web series, *Zidd*, was training rigorously for the project in Manali.

Directed by Vishal Manglorkar, the series also stars Amrita Puri.

**Shahid enjoys rainy evening with Mira**

Actor **SHAHID KAPOOR** on Sunday posted a picture with his wife, Mira Rajput Kapoor.

Taking to Instagram, Shahid shared how he has been enjoying rainy winter evening post Diwali with Mira.

"Just what I need on a rainy winter evening," Shahid captioned the post.

"You both look so good together," a user commented.

The two celebrated Diwali at Mira's residence in Delhi.

Shahid will next be seen in *Jersey*, which is a Hindi remake of the eponymous Telugu hit.



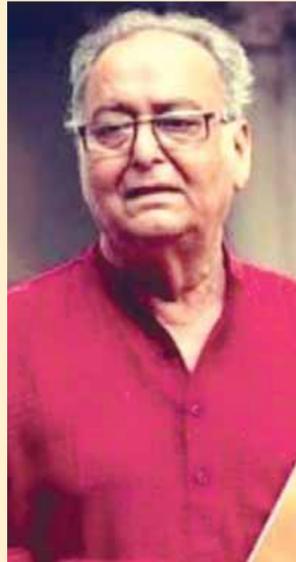
Soumitra Chattopadhyay — Chatterjee to anglicised India — answers to the term 'phenomenon' as absolutely as few actors do, for the sheer ease with which he defied the clichés of image. His stardom was sensational, and yet born out of realism. He was the mascot of the peerless Satyajit Ray's oeuvre, having worked with the maestro in 14 films, and yet he scored with the same assuredness in works of contemporary commercial powerhouses as Ajoy Kar and Tarun Mazumdar. He is the Dadasaheb Phalke Award (2012) and Padma Bhushan (2004) recipient who was also honoured with the Legion d'Honneur (2018) in France for his contribution to world cinema.

Soumitra he had something for everyone. He was not just Satyajit Ray's Apu. Beyond such a nuanced portrayal, he could also simply become Ray's Feluda and reach out to every audience — from eight to 80. Ray was looking for his adult Apu in *Apur Sansar*, final part of the Apu trilogy that started with *Pather Panchali*. A friend introduced Soumitra to the master filmmaker who promptly declared the budding actor looked too old to be Apu, a college student according to his script. Soumitra would eventually bag the role opposite Sharmila Tagore, of course, and the rest is history.

Soumitra's cinematic fate is overwhelmingly dictated by the great cinema of Satyajit Ray, so much so the

**Films and beyond**

**SOUMITRA CHATTOPADHYAY's** roles tell us why he came to be known as Bangla cinema's Alt superstar



maestro's filmography through his most important phase outlines the actor's career graph. Soumitra made his debut with *Apur Sansar* (1959) and, over the next three decades, would work in Ray projects as *Devi* (1960), *Teen Kanya* (1961), *Abhijan* (1962), *Charulata* (1964), *Kapurush O Mahapurush* (1965), *Aranyer Din Ratri* (1969), *Ashani Sanket* (1973), *Sonar Kella* (1974), *Joy Baba Felunath* (1978), *Hirak Rajar Deshe* (1980), *Ghare Baire* (1984), *Ganashatru* (1989) and *Shakha Proshakha* (1990).

Consider a few other diversely pro-

lific filmmakers beyond Ray who worked with Soumitra, and you get the picture. Mrinal Sen, another global icon of Bangla cinema of the era, directed Soumitra for the first time in *Punascha* (1961), and then again returned to collaborate with the actor in *Pratinidhi* (1964), *Akash Kusum* (1965), and *Mahapriithibi* (1991). The iconic Tapan Sinha directed him in projects as *Kshudhita Pashan* (1960), *Jhinder Bandi* (1961), *Atanka* (1984) and *Antardhan* (1992).

Mainstream titans of his era loved working with the affable Soumitra, too.

Asit Sen directed him in *Swayambara* (1961) and *Swaralipi* (1961), while Ajoy Kar made *Otol Joler Ahoaban* (1962), *Saat Pake Baandha* (1963), *Barnali* (1963), *Kaanch Kata Heere* (1965) and *Parineeta* (1969). Tarun Mazumdar directed the actor over the years in *Ektuku Baasha* (1965), *Sansar Simante* (1975), *Ganadevata* (1978), *Agomon* (1988) and *Path O Prasad* (1991).

Most of his directors have often spoken about the insatiable passion he had for his craft. It was something that ensured he would stay busy as ever till his last days, essaying character roles with the same enthusiasm with which he executed starring roles in his heydays. His 300-plus film career probably can be explained by his highly adaptable quality as an actor. He was at home working with new-age Bengali filmmakers as Atanu Ghosh (*Mayurakshi*), Suman Ghosh (*Podokkhep, Peace Haven, Dwando, Basu Paribar*), Partha Chakraborty (*Samantarat*) and Nandita Roy and Shiboprosad Mukherjee (*Posto*).

He moved outside Bengal into the Bollywood industry twice. In 1986, he acted opposite Roopa Ganguly in the Hindi short film *Nirupama*, based on Rabindranath Tagore's story *Dena Paona*. He also bagged a role in the 2002 release, *Hindustani Sipahi*, based on Utpal Dutt's renowned Bangla play *Pherari Fauj*.

—IANS

**AN ODE TO LOVE**

Wedding designer **AMBIKA GUPTA**, the mind behind actor **KAJAL AGGARWAL's** knot ceremony, shares her experience of planning a celebrity wedding amid the COVID pandemic. By **TEAM VIVA**

When actor Kajal Aggarwal and designer Gautam Kitchlu's wedding photographs recently went viral on social media, there was curiosity as to who planned this dreamy affair? Well, thanks to Chennai-based wedding designer Ambika Gupta and her team. With the theme, 'Kashmir to Kanyakumari', the wedding's design focussed on bringing together the best of the worlds the couple comes from.

Here are the excerpts of our conversation with Ambika, founder of the A-Cube Project, as she talks about her experiences of planning a celebrity wedding.

**What were the challenges while planning the wedding, keeping in mind the COVID-19 scenario and limitations?**

Well, yes the distancing had to be maintained. Kajal and her family were extremely particular about safety and we rigorously followed all protocols without compromising on the aesthetics and the keen eye for detail they wanted. We observed COVID-19 precautions as specified by the Maharashtra Government and the 60 to 70 guests and members of the crew who were present at the wedding had to go through health clearances beforehand.

**How did you actually land**

**this project of planning Kajal's wedding?**

It was completely serendipitous! Kajal's sister Nisha took a brief look at my portfolio and after a few calls and meetings, we were on. Not a flashy person herself, Kajal wanted her wedding to be understated but elegant. Keeping that in mind and noticing their roots in the respective cultural legacies that she and her husband share, I came up with the complete idea. During a question & answer round, Gautam told me that he is from Kashmir and hence, I came up with the "Kashmir to Kanyakumari" theme and we brought it all to life in just over 35 days.

**Any special details you focussed on...**

Drawing from diverse cultural references, we ideated and designed the ambience of the Brijwasi Krishna Bagh — a Radha & Krishna-themed Puja at Kajal's home where the bond of the couple was depicted against a pastoral backdrop — Vrindavan with swings, a floral arch dotted with peonies in shades of pink, stunning origami birds and brass bells hanging from a tree, complemented with peacock feathers, flutes and floral details.

For the Haldi and Mehendi ceremonies, the Soufflé S'il Vous Plait — an otherwise tropical

French bistro at Churchgate — was transformed into a Kitsch Mandi as a tribute to the artisans of India who have been hit hard by the onset of COVID-19. Kajal wore a specially-handcrafted weave by Madhuraya creations, which was an initiative to support weavers and revive traditional crafts. She has a soft spot for the unsung weavers of India and her wedding was the perfect opportunity to give back to them in some way.

**How did you give the French ambience an artisanal touch?**

Since Kajal has always supported small businesses, she



walked urged us to turn the French ambience into an authentic artisanal experience. We curated and designed a backdrop made of *Pettis*, or traditional contraptions used by coconut tree climbers. Handmade with love by tree climbers of Kadamba Vanam farms in Parmenkenni, Tamil Nadu, and hand-painted by local artists, we bought them from the farmers itself and that was a beautiful way to support the farmers in these hard times.

We also used Kutch workmanship in furnishings, traditional dry palm weaves all around, and Chettinad consoles and brass pots with banana leaves.

**How did you decide the venue?**

The wedding venue was the Taj Mahal Palace, Mumbai, where Kashmiri design details were incorporated as a special, heartfelt nod to Kajal's husband Gautam, where he comes from. The theme — 'Shikara: A Voyage of Love' — drew from the idyllic and serene beauty of Kashmir, by mirroring mountain ranges and the majestic Dal Lake. The mandap was majestic and reminiscent of a pyramid. This was an ode to

hilly terrains of Kashmir and also representative of the merging of the self and the soul. It was held together by gold frames and translucent baby pink screens. The mandap also bore intricate details of a Shikara, with panelling reminiscent of Kashmir's houseboats with their wooden *jaalis*. Adding to the warmth were powder blue pashmina embroidery pieces captured in diamond set frames. Each guest was given a silver bell with a personalised note.

**How was the overall experience? Any takeaways...**

Well, I think, everyone enjoyed the intimate scale of the wedding along with the layered beauty of each design and detail. The experience for me was even more rewarding because of my client, Kajal, who is an extremely down-to-earth person and her entire family was wonderful. Very sweet and warm. Kajal and her family treated all of us like an extended part of the family. My biggest takeaway from this wedding has been the personal bond I developed with the family. It has only hit me post the wedding that I actually did a celebrity wedding.

**WEBBED**



**DOLLY PARTON'S CHRISTMAS ON THE SQUARE**  
Seasonal cheer comes to a screeching halt when a cold-hearted woman tries to sell her hometown's land. Can music, magic and memories change her mind? The Netflix film releases on November 22.



**MISMATCHED**  
After a disastrous set-up by their families, two teens strike up a tentative friendship at their summer programme — but deeper feelings aren't far behind. Starring Rohit Saraf, Prajakta Koli and Vihaan Samat, the romantic comedy releases on Netflix on November 20.



**UNCLE FRANK**  
Accompanied by his teenage niece, a gay literature professor reluctantly returns home to attend his father's funeral. Directed by Alan Ball, the film releases on November 25 on Amazon Prime Video.



# CREATING A SAFE SPACE



## Change your vision

If we recognise our true spiritual identity, the national, political and social boundaries would become meaningless, says RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI



The world that we live in is divided on the basis of race, religion, language, nationality, political ideology and various other factors, as a result of which there is grave discrimination all over. This discrimination further breeds hatred, rivalry, injustice, conflicts and inhumane behaviour. A lot of time, money and energy is wasted in settling these conflicts at the communal, national or international level. Not only does this discrimination create law & order problems but also affects physical and mental health of people at large. Due to all these negativity, majority of population lives in constant fear and anxiety. One does not find love, friendship, cooperation, unity and concord. Hence, struggle and strife becomes the very way of life.



In order to treat a large part of population suffering from many psychosomatic diseases, caused by tension, insecurity, disunity, lack of love and spirit of enthusiasm, various hospitals need to be run, doctors should be trained, medicines have to be made and supplied, diagnostic instruments need to be invented and manufactured. The efficiency of the nation is reduced and as a result the economic burden on the country increases. In order to have enough money for the maintenance of machinery, healthcare and law, the government has to tax people. This in turn leads to the rise in prices of goods. As a result, everyone tries to make some extra money through tax-evasion or other unfair means. This leads to corruption and rise in economic crimes. The society becomes more materialistic and the values of love, cooperation, service, sympathy, etc. are replaced by profiteering and accumulation of property and wealth.

This analysis leads to the conclusion that there is no alternative to values like love and peace. As long as there is discrimination on the basis of race, religion, language, nationality etc., there will always be partiality, injustice, violence and therefore, no peace. So, the universal philosophy of life enjoins on us to create and maintain an atmosphere of love, harmony, unity, cooperation and sympathy. But this cannot be possible unless and until there is a shift in our self-identity. If our identities are based on race, religion, language, nationality, etc. there will always be conflicts, struggles and strikes. The only factor that can unite us in spite of these differences is our spiritual identity. If we all live in the belief that we are the beings-of-light, i.e. souls and are children of the supreme being of light, only then our attitude and behaviour towards others will be based on a feeling of brotherhood. So, the need of the hour is a change in our world vision. If all humans come to recognise their true, spiritual identity and mutual brotherhood, the boundaries of nations, races, religions, classes etc. would become meaningless, and humanity would be able to live in peace and harmony as one family.

—Charkha Features

The struggle of the LGBTQ+ people, especially children, needs more attention from the world to bring an effective change, says RUCHA SATOOR

Joe Biden, the newly elected President of the USA had vowed to enact the Equality Act in his first 100 days of commencing the office. The said Act would provide consistent and explicit non-discrimination protection for LGBTQ+ people across key areas of life, including employment, housing, credit, federally funded programmes and jury service. In India, after decriminalising homosexuality in 2018, the legality of same-sex marriage is now being raised in our courts. The LGBTQ+ rights across the world are slowly being recognised. However, the struggle of the LGBTQ+ people, especially children, needs more attention from the world to bring an effective change.

When asked if they are comfortable sharing their story, a determined, mature and assertive voice from the other end of the phone said, "My story needs to be heard, so that the society starts growing out of its boxed mentality." Raj lives in Mumbai's Goregaon and belongs to a low-income family. While his mother is a homemaker, their father works for a food delivery application. With three younger siblings who are still in school, Raj is the eldest. Financially, things are stretched at home and the family struggles to make ends meet.

While sharing his story, Raj said, "When I was younger, being myself was much easier. When I turned eight, my parents could tell that I was behaving 'like a girl'. I liked dressing up, which they didn't like. My relationship with my parents got strained once they started fitting me into boxes. For them, their eldest son wasn't being 'normal'. Things slipped out of hands with frequent fights. Quite early in life, I realised that a soul cannot be changed." He faced frequent bullying by their peers and violence at home as they did not fit into the gender binary. Burdened with questions about why he was considered 'different' as a child, he chose to live a life of dignity and self-acceptance very young. "I realised that I need to stand up for myself as only then can I have a dialogue with society about changing their minds," he said.

In 2019, a Child Rights organisation called PratYek invited him and several other children for a session. "I learnt about what child rights are, what is their history. I used to meet a didi who was a counselor and she listened to all my concerns patiently. She helped me get familiar with the term 'LGBTQ+' and I realised this wasn't my 'problem.' It is the society that needs to change! But rights do come with responsibilities, so I decided to take the conversation around queer rights to my community, where people are not even educated," explained Raj.

A team of researchers has discovered that new green materials currently being developed for next-generation solar panels could be useful for indoor light harvesting, paving the way to power smart devices using ambient light at home or office.

In smart devices like smartphones, smart speakers and wearable health and wellness sensors, the can deplete quickly and contain toxic and rare environmentally damaging chemicals. One way to power them is by converting indoor light from ordinary bulbs into energy, in a similar way to how solar panels harvest energy from sunlight, known as solar photovoltaics.

However, due to the different properties of the light sources, the materials used for solar panels are not suitable for harvesting indoor light.

Now, researchers from Imperial College London, Soochow University in China, and the University of Cambridge have detailed a novel way in a paper published in the journal *Advanced Energy Materials*. "By efficiently absorbing the light coming from lamps commonly found in homes and buildings, the materials we investigated can turn light into electricity with an efficiency already in the range of commercial technologies," explained study co-author Dr Robert Hoye from the Department of Materials at Imperial. He added, "We have also already identified several possible improvements, which would allow these materials to surpass the performance of current indoor

## Towards a clean future

A study reveals that green materials being prepared to upgrade solar panels can power smart devices at home and office



photovoltaic technologies in the near future".

The team investigated 'perovskite-inspired materials', which were created to circumvent problems with materials called perovskites, which were developed for next-generation solar cells.

Although perovskites are cheaper to make than traditional silicon-based solar panels and deliver similar efficiency, perovskites contain toxic lead substances.

This drove the development of perovskite-inspired materials, which are instead based on safer

elements like bismuth and antimony. The team found that the materials are much more effective at absorbing indoor light, with efficiencies that are promising for commercial applications.

Crucially, the researchers demonstrated that the power pro-

vided by these materials under indoor illumination is already sufficient to operate electronic circuits. Professor Vincenzo Pecunia, from Soochow University, said: "Our discovery opens up a whole new direction in the search for green, easy-to-make materials to

sustainably power our smart devices".

Lead-free perovskite-inspired materials could soon enable battery-free devices for wearables, healthcare monitoring, smart homes, and smart cities, the authors wrote.

—IANIS

**Optimism is the one quality more associated with success and happiness than any other.**  
—Brian Tracy

**AN EGG A DAY CAN TRIGGER DIABETES**

Scrambled, poached or boiled, eggs are a popular breakfast food the world over but new research warns that excess egg consumption can increase your risk of diabetes.

The study found that people who regularly consumed one or more eggs per day (equivalent to 50 grams) increased their risk of diabetes by 60 per cent and the effect was more pronounced in women than in men.

Conducted in partnership with the China Medical University, and Qatar University, the longitudinal study (1991 to 2009) led by University of South Australia is the first to assess egg consumption in a large sample of Chinese adults.

Epidemiologist and public health expert Ming Li said the rise of diabetes is a growing concern. "Diet is a known and modifiable factor that contributes to the onset of Type 2 diabetes, so understanding the range of dietary factors that might impact the growing prevalence of the disease is important," Ming said.

**VIRUS MAY SEVERELY AFFECT OUR OFFSPRING**

Scientists have claimed that by the end of 2020, approximately 300,000 infants could be born to mothers infected by SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

The study, published in the *Journal of Developmental Origins of Health and Diseases*, revealed that exposure to COVID-19 could pose a risk to the health and ageing of individuals who aren't even born yet.

"Millions more will be born into families who have experienced tremendous stress and upheaval due to the pandemic even if they haven't been infected themselves," said the study authors from University of Southern California (USC) in the US.

While the longer-term effects of COVID-19 on infants is yet to be seen, researchers can find some insight from the past, including the 1918 flu pandemic and previous coronavirus illnesses such as SARS in 2002 and MERS in 2012.

**AIR POLLUTION MAY UP CHRONIC LUNG DISEASE**

Amid the spike in air pollution in Delhi-NCR, a new study has found that early-life events, such as the exposure to air pollutants, increase the risk of chronic lung disease in young adulthood.

The findings, published in the *European Respiratory Journal*, add to the growing evidence that chronic lung disease in adulthood can be traced back to childhood.

Chronic bronchitis and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), with the hallmark features phlegm and irreversible airflow limitation, respectively, are lung diseases known to affect adults with a history of long-term smoking.

"We found the prevalence of chronic bronchitis and irreversible airflow limitation to be rather high considering the young age of the study participants," said study senior author Erik Melen from Karolinska Institute in Sweden.

"Those diseases are usually diagnosed in patients older than 50 years of age," the researchers wrote.

**LONELINESS HIGHEST IN 20S, LOWEST IN 60S**

Researchers, including one of Indian origin, Dilip V. Jeste, have found that levels of loneliness were highest in the people in 20s and lowest in 60s, with another peak in the mid-40s.

For the study published in the *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, the research team used a web-based survey of 2,843 participants from 20 to 69 years across the US.

"What we found was a range of predictors of loneliness across the lifespan," said senior author Dilip Jeste from the University of California, San Diego, US.

The researchers noted that lower levels of empathy and compassion, smaller social networks, not having a spouse or a partner and greater sleep disturbances were consistent predictors of loneliness across all decades.

**COVID MASKS CAN TRIGGER SKIN ALLERGIES**

Researchers, including one of Indian-origin, have revealed that face masks worn to stop the spread of COVID-19 can trigger bouts of eczema in people with sensitive skin and allergies.

Eczema is a condition that causes inflamed, itchy, cracked, and rough skin. The most common type is atopic dermatitis.

A medically challenging case presented at this year's virtual American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI) Annual Scientific Meeting revealed that for a man with several skin allergies, mask-wearing triggered his contact dermatitis.

"We treated a 60-year-old Black man with adult-onset eczema, contact dermatitis and chronic nasal allergies in our clinic after he presented three times to our hospital emergency room (ER) because of an uncomfortable face rash," said study author Yashu Dhamija, ACAAI member.

# SEVEN HEAVEN

## Hamilton equals Schumacher's record for most F1 titles

AFP ■ ISTANBUL

Lewis Hamilton secured a record-equalling seventh Formula One world title on Sunday after winning the Turkish Grand Prix.

The Briton matched Michael Schumacher's haul of drivers' crowns with three races of the season remaining.

The defending champion was sixth in qualifying with his teammate Valtteri Bottas in ninth but finished the race top of the podium. This was the first time this season that neither Hamilton (nine) nor Bottas (four) have topped qualifying.

The 35-year-old sealed his latest title with a typically measured masterclass, handling treacherous wet early conditions to claim his 94th career win despite his unaccustomed start position.

A breathless Hamilton said: "I'm lost for words. This is way beyond my dreams."

The superstar also dedicated his win to kids who dream the impossible.

Hamilton, who sealed his first title in 2008, was adding to his unprecedented roster of records - most wins with 94, most pole positions (97), most podium finishes (163) and most consecutive finishes (47).

It was widely declared as one of his finest triumphs and entirely appropriate on the day he drew alongside



Mercedes driver Lewis Hamilton celebrates after winning the Formula One Turkish Grand Prix in Istanbul

AP

Schumacher in the record books.

He lapped his teammate and only remaining title rival Valtteri Bottas, who finished 14th after a desultory outing, to claim his 10th victory in 14 races this season.

Hamilton came home over half a minute clear of

Sergio Perez for Racing Point. Both chose to make only one pit-stop and spend most of the race on a single set of intermediate tyres as their rivals pitted several times to cope with the slippery conditions.

Hamilton's old rival, four-time former champion Sebastian Vettel, finished

third ahead of his Ferrari team-mate Charles Leclerc, Carlos Sainz of McLaren and, after a wild and impulsive afternoon, Max Verstappen in the leading Red Bull.

Alex Albon came home seventh in the second Red Bull ahead of Lando Norris in the second McLaren,

Lance Stroll, who had started from his maiden pole position for Racing Point, and Daniel Ricciardo of Renault.

This latest triumph gave Hamilton an unassailable lead over Bottas, with two races in Bahrain and the season-closing Abu Dhabi Grand Prix to come.

# Tears of Joy

AP ■ ISTANBUL

After winning a difficult race to equal Michael Schumacher's record of seven Formula One championships on Sunday, the hardest thing for Lewis Hamilton was containing his emotions.

His voice could be heard breaking as he thanked his team over the radio moments after crossing the line at the Turkish Grand Prix, while underneath the helmet the tears were starting to build up.

"All these emotions were running through me and I was trying to stop it," Hamilton said in his post-race news conference.

"I was thinking about my whole career, from when I was five when I drove in a go-kart, from when we won the British championship, driving home with my dad and singing 'We Are The Champions' and dreaming of being here."

Moments after victory No. 94 and title No. 7, he sat in his car with his head in his hands.

"It really hit me and I just burst into tears. I couldn't get out of the car because I just couldn't believe it," Hamilton said.

"I didn't want the visor to come up and people to see tears flowing, because I had always said I would never let you see me cry. I remember watching drivers in the past crying and I was like 'I'm not going to do that.' But it was too much."

Speaking a short time after his win, Hamilton was wiping away those tears as he prepared to mount the podium.

"I'm definitely a bit lost for words," he said, thanking his family.

"I dreamed of this as a kid. This is way, way beyond our dreams."

Hamilton only had one title, with McLaren in 2008, when he replaced Schumacher at Mercedes in 2013.

"Dream the impossible. You have got to chase it and never give



up," Hamilton said.

"That's for all the kids out there who dream the impossible. You can do it."

Hamilton only needed to finish ahead of his teammate Valtteri Bottas to seal his sixth title for Mercedes, and Bottas placed a lowly 14th after making a poor start.

The British driver started from sixth place but still won a fourth straight race and 10th of another hugely dominant season.

"I know I often I say it is beyond wildest dreams but my whole life secretly I have dreamt as high as this," said Hamilton.

"It felt so far-fetched. I remember watching Michael win those world championships. To get one or two or even three is so hard."

"Seven is unimaginable. There is no end to what we can do together, me and this team."

Hamilton placed about 30 seconds ahead of Racing Point's Sergio Perez and Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel, who overtook teammate Charles Leclerc for his first podium of a difficult season.

"It is a bit of a surprise to

snatch the podium, but I am certainly very happy," Vettel said.

"It was quite intense but good fun."

It was also Perez's first podium of the campaign, while teammate Lance Stroll finished only ninth despite leading from pole position for much of the 58-lap race.

Vettel, a four-time F1 champion, was quick to congratulate his longtime rival, crouching by his cockpit and shaking his hand as he spoke.

Hamilton won his first title with Mercedes in 2014, and every one since except for 2016 when then-teammate Nico Rosberg beat him in an acrimonious battle that saw the teenage karting friends fall out. "Surely one of the greatest achievements in the history of sports," Rosberg said on Twitter.

"Congratulations Lewis and enjoy the celebrations with your family and friends."

Former England and Manchester United defender Rio Ferdinand Tweeted that Hamilton is "the greatest sportsman this country has ever produced."



## Taylor backs Pucovski to open innings

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Former Australia captain Mark Taylor has urged the national selectors to pick in-form Will Pucovski to open the batting against India in the upcoming four-Test series.

Taylor also praised the youngster for taking a six-week break from cricket to deal with mental health issues during the 2018-19 home summer.

"I would play Will Pucovski and leave Joe Burns out. Burns averages 38 in Test cricket he's been a solid player for Australia without being a great one," said Taylor.

"Pucovski said he's ready - he's made two double hundreds. Pick him while he's in form. He has the potential to be a player for the next decade."

Very few young Australian cricketers have generated as much buzz in recent years as the 22-year-old, thanks to his prolific form in Sheffield Shield.

Victoria's Pucovski has produced successive double hundreds, scoring 202 against Western Australia in a Sheffield Shield clash after an unbeaten 255 against South Australia.

Despite missing the opening two rounds of the competition, he has scored 495 runs so far this season in three innings and is currently the tournament's highest run-scorer.

On the other hand, incumbent opener Joe Burns averaged 32 for Australia last summer and has had below-par start to the Sheffield Shield season, scoring 57 runs from five innings.

Pucovski was on the brink of making it to the Test squad in late 2018 but stepped away from the game, citing mental health concerns.

"He's been open and honest about it from the word go that wouldn't have been easy. In the sides I played in it would have been seen as a sign of weakness now it's seen as a sign of strength," Taylor said.

"I like the fact Victorian coach Chris Rodgers has had a word to him about batting at the top of the order. He's done that, made two double hundreds, and he's once again publicly come out and said, 'I now feel good, I'm enjoying my cricket, I'm ready.'"

"His openness and his transparency with his mental health issues have really helped him, and I think has set a really good example for young sports people."

# Kohli is powerful guy in world cricket: Taylor

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Virat Kohli is "a very powerful guy" in world cricket who can perform both the roles of an aggressive cricketer and a statesman with great aplomb, feels former Australian captain Mark Taylor.

The talismanic Indian skipper has grown in stature over the years notching up brilliant record-breaking knocks.

"I think he is a very powerful guy in world cricket, but I think he does a very good job to walk that fine line in being an aggressive cricketer and also a statesman. I think he's doing it very well," Taylor was quoted as saying by *Sydney Morning Herald*.

The former Australia opener said Kohli carries the responsibility of being an influential personality with great respect.

"I think he treats that responsibility with great respect. He's still very much his own person when you watch him play."

"I've always found him in the times I've spoken to him to

be very respectful to the game and those playing it and those who have played it," Taylor added.

Greg Chappell, who coached India from 2005-07, said the Indian skipper is "one of the most influential players in world cricket" who is not afraid to express his opinions.

"I think he's certainly one of the best players and one of the most influential players in world cricket at the moment."

"He has strong views, he's quite happy to speak those views, he's quite happy to put himself out there and back himself to back up his words," Chappell said.

The 72-year-old Australian great said it augurs well for Test cricket that an influential player like Kohli enjoys playing the longest format of the game.

"He loves Test cricket and while he's playing India will treat Test cricket with respect because he has a big say in Indian cricket. That's a good thing," Chappell said.

"If you have a captain of



India who is not interested in Test cricket that will impact the scene. Virat loves Test cricket, he champions Test cricket, and while that's happening India will play Test cricket," he added.

"He always pushes the boundaries, but that's what great players do. He wants to win every game. That was one of the more fiery ones [2017 series] going around in recent years," Lehmann said.

## Langer can't wait to see his 'two years better' pacer vs India

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Australia head coach Justin Langer says his pacers have improved in the last two years since the Test series defeat to India and he can't wait to see them have a go at Virat Kohli and his men in the upcoming Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

India had stunned Australia 2-1 to win their maiden Test series Down Under in 2018-19.

The two teams are set to lock horns again on Australian soil in a four-Test series with the opening Day-Night game in Adelaide starting December 17.

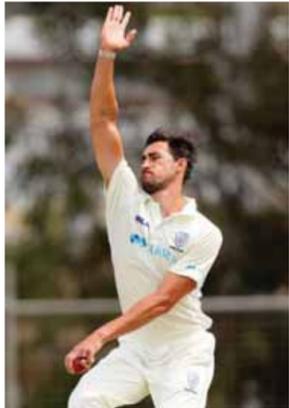
"If I go back to that time (2018-19), we lost a toss at the MCG after winning the Perth Test match - lost the toss on possibly the flattest wicket I've seen in Test cricket... And they (India) bowled for nearly two days," Langer was quoted as saying by *Sydney Morning Herald*.

"And then we had to back it up and play at the SCG the next Test match on a pretty flat wicket as well. Not making excuses, but it was tough going back then."

"India were on top of their game, they deserved to beat us for the first time in their history. But our guys are two years better and a lot of the Indians are the same, more experienced. I can't wait to see them go. Can't wait."

India had won the first and third Test at Adelaide and Melbourne respectively, while Australia claimed a victory in the second game at Perth with the final match ending in a draw.

The trio of Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood and Pat Cummins is likely to be the first choice in the pace department this time too but the selectors also have a lot of options such as James



Pattinson, Queenslander Michael Neser and Sean Abbott to choose in the 17-member squad. Pattinson, who had replaced an Hazlewood in the Melbourne and Sydney Tests against NZ last summer, is however short of red-ball form as he was busy in the recently-concluded IPL in UAE.

Neser is yet to make his Test debut despite being with the Test squad for more than a year, while NSW's Abbott has emerged as a potential Test all-rounder in last two years, displaying good form in the Marsh Sheffield Shield season.

"James Pattinson who has come back from that back injury, we saw how powerful that was during the last Ashes in England. Michael Neser keeps playing well over and over again," Langer said.

## 'Bowling against India will be test for me'

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Drafted into the Australian four-Test series, in-form leg-spinner Mitchell Swepson says he is itching to test his skills against India's world class batting unit led by skipper Virat Kohli.

Included in the Australia A squad for the two warm-up games against India, Swepson is now hoping to get a chance to bowl to Kohli and company.

"You want to challenge yourself against the best, and it's no secret he's (Kohli) up there with the best," Swepson was quoted as saying by *cricket.Com.Au*.

"For me it's another challenge and another thing that



excites me to be able to test myself against a great cricketer."

"Their whole batting lineup is world class. So any opportunity to bowl at those guys is a test for myself and a challenge I can't wait to get."

Swepson took 23 wickets in three Marsh Sheffield Shield

matches this season at an average of 21.17 to present a strong case for himself but says he is not "counting his chickens" yet as he knows veteran Nathan Lyon will be the first choice.

"He's (Lyon) proven himself time and time again in Test matches. I'm not counting my

chickens too much there with getting a go above him," the 27-year-old said.

"But if conditions suit, there may be a chance they play two spinners."

"I'll be preparing to play all four games. If the chance comes, I'll hopefully take it with two hands. And if not, so be it. I'm sure there'll be more chances in the future."

India are scheduled to play three ODIs, three T20s and a four-Test series on the tour, starting with T20s from November 27.

The Test series will begin with a Day-Night game at Adelaide from December 17. Skipper Virat Kohli will miss the last three matches as he will be on a paternity during that time.

## France clinch Nations League finals spot

AP ■ LISBON

The winner-takes-all showdown between Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal and world champion France was decided by one of the least likely scorers on the quality-packed pitch at Lisbon's Stadium of Light.

Midfielder N'Golo Kanté, whose prowess is tackling, not scoring, notched the only goal of a 1-0 win that ended Portugal's bid to defend its Nations League title and sent the French into the final-of-four.

Joining the fray in a crowded area in search of a loose ball or rebound, Kanté was rewarded when goalkeeper Rui Patrício fumbled a ball into his path for him to finish off in the 54th minute.

It was Kanté's second international goal in his 44th appearance for France. His other strike came in 2016 in a friendly against Russia. France clinched a first-place finish in Group 3 with three more points than Portugal and the tiebreaker on head-to-head goals with one game to play. Portugal won last year's inaugural Nations League.

France outplayed Portugal and was denied a lead by halftime thanks only to Patrício.

"Given the quality of the opposition, it's of course one of our best performances of recent times," Didier Deschamps said. "We deserved the win and we've fulfilled our objective of finishing top. I'm very proud of the players. They proved tonight that

France are still a great team." Starting for the injured Kylian Mbappe, Anthony Martial hit the post on the half-hour mark and had two more good chances denied by Patrício.

Patrício closed quickly to smother Martial's attempt to tap in a great through-ball by Antoine Griezmann in the 12th. Martial's header from a well-executed set-piece hit the crossbar on the half-hour mark, and Patrício stood firm to block another tap-in by Martial of Lucas Hernández's low cross in the 41st.

Patrício kept his side in the match until shortly after the restart when he failed to keep his grip on a shot by Rabiot. Instead, he spilled the ball into the path of Kante to finish off.