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sunday pioneer

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NEW DELHI, SUNDAY NOVEMBER 29, 2020; PAGES 12-4 ₹4



USUAL SUSPECTS

SWAPAN DASGUPTA

West Bengal politics is at a crucial stage

Unlike some Western democracies where the attachment to political parties tend to be lifelong, there is considerable fluidity in political affiliations for activists. This is partly because — with the exception of the Congress, the BJP, Communists and a handful of regional parties — the party system in India is still evolving and is disproportionately dependent on individuals. Additionally, since politics is all about the quest for power and influence — and I don't mean this in a pejorative way — individuals see political parties as vehicles for the fulfilment of their goals. Consequently, the political eclipse of any political party invariably sees a movement of people between parties. Today, to take an example, the erstwhile followers of Ram Manohar Lohia are to be found in nearly all the political parties. That is because the Indian socialists have a terrible record of creating and nurturing political parties.

Impending elections are normally the occasion for activists to switch loyalties. Such defections are also regarded as barometers of public opinion, since local leaders with an eye on their own political futures tend to try and move to the side most likely to win. In January 1977, it was the defection of Jagjivan Ram, HN Bahuguna and Nandini Sathpathy from the Congress that triggered a political avalanche which culminated in the political defeat of Indira Gandhi.

It is difficult at this stage to anticipate the likely impact of the resignation of Suwendu Adhikari from the Mamata Banerjee Government in West Bengal. The resignation was preceded by months of strained relationship centred on the role of the Chief Minister's nephew Abhishek Banerjee in the political dispensation. Adhikari, along with other old-time associates of the Trinamool Congress chief, have resented to growing power of Abhishek and his attempts to undermine them. Mukul Roy, once the de-facto number two man in the TMC, left and joined the BJP in 2017. Now Adhikari, who enjoys considerable influence in the two districts of Midnapur, has joined the ranks. Although he is still nominally in the TMC, it is only a matter of time before he leaves the party along with others. They seem likely to join the BJP before too long.

Over the past 18 months, but mainly in the aftermath of the 2019 general election when it surprised everyone by winning 18 of the State's 42 Lok Sabha seats and winning 40 per cent of the popular vote, the BJP has emerged as the foremost challenger to the TMC in West Bengal. The BJP, once a bit player in the State with no real presence in local politics, has succeeded in eclipsing the Left and the Congress. In the 2019 general election, the Left vote was squeezed considerably, with the lion's share of it going to the BJP.

There are still many problems that the BJP has to overcome if it is to upstage the TMC in next summer's Assembly election. The most important of these is to ensure that the 40 per cent support it received in 2019 is not only intact but supplemented by additional votes. This is a challenging prospect because regional parties such as the TMC tend to perform better in Assembly elections than in elections to the Lok Sabha. The Left, which performed disastrously in 2019 and failed to win any Lok Sabha seats from the State — the first occasion since 1952 — is also hopeful that its alliance with the Congress will add to their kitty in the Assembly poll. In such a situation, the BJP — apart from holding its own — has two options.

First, it needs to chip away at the TMC's existing voter base. In 2019, the BJP failed to make deep inroads in East Midnapur district, the bastion of the Adhikari family. The members of the Adhikari family won their seats in Tamluk and Contai. Additionally, the TMC won the Ghatat seat. If the Adhikaris shift their loyalty to the BJP, the saffron party will be better placed to consolidate its hold all along the perimeter of West Bengal. If Suwendu Adhikari needs the BJP to demonstrate his political relevance in the State, the BJP needs to prevail all over East and West Midnapore to add to its pre-existing strength. Those in the BJP who believe that defectors from other parties should be discouraged because the party is well placed to win on its existing strength are clearly being unrealistic. There are important gaps in support the BJP must fill — if it hopes to form a Government in 2021 in Kolkata

Secondly, for the BJP, the impression that the TMC is crumbling under the weight of its own contradictions is important. In any election there is a bandwagon effect whereby undecided and wavering voters swing to the party that seems to have the clear edge. In West Bengal the Muslim community — whose voter strength is anywhere between 27 and 30 per cent — plays a crucial role. This section has been outside the reach of the BJP and it forms the bulwark of support for the TMC, except in three districts where the Congress has influence. In the event it seems Mamata is crumbling, there will be a temptation on the part of Muslim voters to either swing to the Left-Congress alliance or support those Muslim parties that are campaigning aggressively to give Muslims an independent voice. Alternatively, sensing the BJP threat, the Muslim community may choose to back the TMC as a solid bloc. However, even positing non-TMC options before Muslim voters will become difficult if the perception battle favours the incumbent.

These are the reasons why the next few acts in the Suwendu Adhikari drama need to be closely observed. West Bengal politics is at a very crucial phase.

Farmers dig in heels, Shah reaches out

Farmers stay put along Delhi borders, HM says Govt ready for talks any time

SHEKHAR SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

A day after inviting the agitating farmers for talks on December 3, the Centre on Saturday held out an olive branch to the farmers, who refused to budge from their stand, with the Union Home Minister Amit Shah saying that the Government is ready for dialogue any time and appealed to them to shift to the Burari ground in the national Capital to stage their protests against the farm laws.

"The Government is ready to deliberate on every problem and demand of the farmers... Some farmers' unions and farmers have demanded that talks be held immediately instead of December 3. So, I assure everyone that the Central Government is ready to hold discussions with you as soon as you shift to the ground (in Burari)...the Government has made proper arrangement for you in Burari in Delhi, where you can stage your demonstrations," he said.

Farmers after holding parleys with their leaders and their speeches at Tikri and Singhu borders, announced that they will stay put and not proceed towards the Nirankari Ground and will sit on dharna at borders.

"It is a plan to imprison us



Farmers gather at the Singhu border as part of their Delhi Chalo protest against Centre's new farm laws in New Delhi on Saturday

Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

in one ground as earlier the Delhi Police has demanded nine grounds to be made as temporary prison in Delhi for the protesting farmers. So we have decided to protest at the border as most of the farmers are still coming from Punjab,

Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh to join the movement," said Sukhbir Panwar, a farmer from Fatehabad district in Haryana.

Thousands of farmers marching from Punjab as part of their "Delhi Chalo" cam-

paign against the farm laws, braved water cannons and tear gas shells in Haryana to reach Delhi on Friday. They were, however, not allowed into the national Capital. As the protests continued, the Centre, which looks after the national Capital's

law and order, relented and fixed a place for their agitation.

Hundreds of the protesters, however, refused to go to the outer Delhi protest venue and have remained camped at several places on the outskirts of the national Capital.

UP farmers reach Delhi border to lend support to 'Delhi Chalo'

New Delhi: Some groups of farmers from Uttar Pradesh gathered at the Ghazipur border with their vehicles on Saturday afternoon, lending support to the agitation by their counterparts from Punjab against the Centre's new farm laws. A senior Delhi Police officer said 200 farmers arrived at UP Gate (Ghazipur border) as part of "Delhi Chalo" march call given by farmer organisations in Punjab and police officials were talking to them.

Thousands of farmers from Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan on Saturday stayed put at the Delhi-Haryana Singhu and Tikri border points on the third consecutive day. The farmers on Saturday also refused to move towards the Nirankari ground to hold demonstration. Following the rise in number of farmers at Tikri and Singhu border, the Delhi Police re-installed barricades to maintain law & order.

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Marine Commandos deployed at Pangong

India preparing for long haul at LAC, bolsters its readiness

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As several rounds of talks to defuse tension at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) have failed so far, India is preparing for a long haul and has bolstered its readiness by deploying crack commandos of the Navy at some stand-off points.

While the Army has already positioned its Special Forces and para-commandos, the elite Marine commandos (MARCOS) of the Navy have also joined in by patrolling the Pangong Tso (lake). This lake in Eastern Ladakh is one of the four or five face-off sites where the Indian and Chinese troops are in eyeball to eyeball situation for the past seven months. Having taken positions at



the lake, these commandos may also be rotated at the other flash points, sources said here on Saturday. This will enable them to familiarise themselves with the weather, topography and how to survive in harsh winters. Incidentally, the temperature has already dipped to minus 10 degrees C in several parts of Ladakh and will plummet to minus 30 degrees in the coming weeks.

The Army has already supplied more than adequate pre-fabricated huts for the troops now readying themselves for deployment in the winter months. More than one lakh troops from India and China

are now positioned at the LAC in the 1,700 km long LAC in Ladakh. China has also ramped up its logistical support for its troops for a long winter there.

The MARCOS commandos are one of the world's best trained and were seen in action during the initial phase of Mumbai terror attack in 2008. Some teams of the MARCOS are already working alongside the Indian Army commandos in Jammu & Kashmir as part of the anti-terrorist operations. The Navy commandos are guard some of the key water bodies in Kashmir.

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J&K voters defy boycott call, DDC polls record 51% turnout

3.62L vote to elect candidates; Pak refugees allowed to vote for first time

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Celebrating the festival of democracy at the grassroots level, more than 51 per cent voters on Saturday stepped out of their homes ignoring poll boycott calls and chilly weather conditions to cast their vote in the maiden District Development Council and Panchayat bypolls being held for the first time after the reorganisation of the erstwhile State of Jammu & Kashmir into two Union Territories and the Abrogation of Article 370 and 35-A in August 2019.

The other highlight of the polls was healthy participation of the Pakistani refugees and women electorate in large numbers. The Pak refugees were deprived of their voting rights as long as J&K enjoyed the special status.



Voters undergo thermal screening as they arrive to cast their votes for the first phase of District Development Council elections at Hariganiwan area of Gund in Ganderbal district of central Kashmir on Saturday

Addressing a press conference after the first phase of polling ended, State Election Commissioner KK Sharma said, "The first phase of DDC polls passed off peacefully across the Union Territory of J&K in which over 3.62 lakh voters participated". He said barring one single incident of stone throwing by a youth no other major incident of poll related violence was reported from anywhere during the

polling hours. Sharma added, "Around 46.6 per cent women and 54 per cent male electorate came out to vote during the day". He said Kashmir region recorded little over 40.65 per cent polling while Jammu region recorded over 64 per cent voter turnout. Significantly, terror infested Pulwama district recorded the lowest voter turnout of 6.7 per cent.

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Modi reviews vaccine progress first-hand

PM visits facilities of Zydus Cadila, Bharat Biotech, Serum Institute of India in three cities

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

As part of his effort to review the progress of Covid-19 vaccine development, its launch and distribution, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday visited major vaccine

manufacturing institutions — Zydus Biotech Park in Ahmedabad, Bharat Biotech facility in Hyderabad and Serum Institute of India (SII) in Pune — and interacted with the scientists there to get "a first-hand perspective of the prepa-

rations, challenges and roadmap in India's endeavour to vaccinate its citizens".

Modi began his day-long three-city tour in the morning by flying first to Ahmedabad and thereafter heading to Zydus Cadila's Vaccine Technology Centre located at Changodar Park, where he

went around the place and interacted with the team of scientists behind the ongoing vaccine development effort "to know more about the indigenous DNA based vaccine being developed there". Zydus Cadila is developing its Covid-19 vaccine candidate ZCoV-D.

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STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	18,14,515	46,986	16,76,564
Karnataka	8,82,608	11,750	8,46,082
Andhra Pradesh	8,67,063	6,981	8,48,511
Tamil Nadu	7,79,046	11,694	7,56,279
Kerala	5,93,958	2,197	5,26,797
Delhi	5,61,742	8,998	5,16,166
Uttar Pradesh	5,39,899	7,718	5,06,938
West Bengal	4,77,446	8,322	4,44,587
Odisha	3,17,789	1,783	3,10,549
Telangana	2,68,418	1,451	2,56,330
Rajasthan	2,62,805	2,274	2,31,780
Chhattisgarh	2,34,725	2,830	2,10,917
Bihar	2,34,553	1,253	2,27,714
Haryana	2,30,713	2,375	2,08,422
Assam	2,12,483	980	2,08,187
Gujarat	2,06,714	3,953	1,88,069



Prime Minister Narendra Modi visits the Zydus Biotech Park to review the development of Covid-19 vaccine, in Ahmedabad on Saturday

PTI

CAPSULE

PAWAN BANSAL MADE CONGRESS TREASURER
New Delhi: Congress president Sonia Gandhi has appointed Pawan Kumar Bansal as the party treasurer following the demise of senior leader Ahmed Patel, a statement said on Saturday. Bansal, a former union minister, is the AICC in-charge of administration.

UP GUV OK'S RELIGIOUS CONVERSION ORDINANCE
Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel on Saturday gave assent to an ordinance against forcible or fraudulent religious conversions that provides for imprisonment up to 10 years and a maximum fine of ₹50,000 under different categories.

AIR QUALITY SLIPS TO 'POOR' LEVEL AGAIN IN NCR
Noida: The air quality remained "moderate" in Faridabad but slipped to "poor" level in Gurgaon, Noida, Greater Noida and Ghaziabad on Saturday.

HOME THEATRE

Only for kiddies



THE CHRISTMAS CHRONICLES: PART TWO
Netflix
*ing: Kurt Russell, Goldie Hawn, Judah Lewis, Darby Camp, Kimberly Williams-Paisley, Julian Dennison, Tyrese Gibson
Rated: 6/10

If an adult is watching this, it will be difficult to get past the strange language the elves speak or the near bizarreness of the entire storyline. But first, they are Santa's elves; they can speak whatever they want as long as Santa Claus understands the same. Second, it is a Christmas movie. What else is one going to expect but a good Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus. An evil elf who is hell bent on destroying Christmas forever. Imagine the catastrophe in the child's life if there was no Christmas, no gifts, no stocking to hang, no gingerbread house or cookies; it is akin to a Diwali with no crackers.

Having said that, the kids are going to love this movie. The elves are cute and you want to cuddle them even if one of them is evil. The entire Santa's village is a sight to behold – a giant Christmas tree

in the middle of the square with lights twinkling, guns firing snow at regular intervals (it is a secret village in the North Pole that no one is supposed to know about so it has a shield cover), hot chocolate you revive you instantly and most importantly the idea of a Christmas with healthy food – broccoli cake!

Santa's sleigh is another high point. It is like a high-speed sledge with reindeers managing to dodge the evil elf's hyenas or so they look like. Totally something out of a sci-fi film.

Then there is Kurt Russell and Goldie Hawn, one of Hollywood's most enduring duos who have been together for 37 years. Goldie here has a much bigger part to play than the cameo she did in the original one. She maintains the holiday spirit and does magic at the span of her fingers. The film rests on their shoulders and while one can see the familiarity and ease, they have with each other, the plot doesn't really help them steer it to safety.

Over all it is a movie that the children will love; the adults can give this one a miss

— Shalini Saksena

Feel good family treat

DOLLY PARTON'S CHRISTMAS ON THE SQUARE
Netflix
*ing: Dolly Parton, Jenifer Lewis, Josh Segarra, Jeanine Mason, Treat William, Jenna Hathaway
Rated: 5.5/10

Those who don't know who Dolly Parton is, here is a bit about her. She is one of the most honoured female country performers of all time, achieving 25 RIAA certified Gold, Platinum, and Multi-Platinum awards. She has had 25 songs reach No 1 on the Billboard country music charts — a record for a female artist.

Not only this, she has nine Grammy Awards, two Academy Award nominations, ten Country Music Association Awards, seven Academy of Country Music Awards, three American Music Awards and hit films like Steel Magnolias and 9 to 5 to her credit.

This one, a musical, was bound to create a stir given it is the whole Scrooge thing. This time it is a rich woman who has inherited her father's property and is all set to evict everyone on Christmas Day! But it is a Christmas movie and hence the whole idea of giving rather than receiving. No surprises here how it ends.

The surprise is how beautifully this musical has been curated. The dancers are amazing, the set is beautifully done and how the dialogues have been woven into songs.

While there is nothing much in terms of the story, the fun is in watching the great choreography, a few toe-tapping tunes, creating a fantasy and that miracles happen.

— Shalini Saksena



Plan Your Day

BLACK Friday
Buy 3, Get 3 for free

our '3 + 3' Black Friday special promotion, we expect the sales to grow by multi-folds alongside acquisition of a new customer base."

Mad Over Donuts: India's favorite donut brand — is giving all its patrons another reason to Bite Into Happiness with their Black Friday Sale till today. With exciting offers like buy 3 donuts and get 3 free, buy 4 donuts and get 2 free, and buy 6 donuts and get 6 free across all their specialty stores. Mad Over Donuts is sure to satisfy your sweet tooth cravings in the sweetest possible way. Visit your nearby Mad Over Donuts stores to check the offer. So, what are you waiting for! Bite into Happiness with Mad Over Donuts' Black Friday Sale!

My Protein: Bringing this sense of festivity to India is Myprotein, the world's leader in nutrition products and fitness goods. Myprotein wants to foster this spirit of celebration in India by encouraging a guilt-free shopping spree through their site-wide promotional offers and unbelievable discounts on the big day. It is sure to be the biggest end-of-year sale, with deals too good to pass up on! Keeping in mind India's distinctive tastes, Myprotein has constantly kept things exciting by innovating new and localised products. This November too is earmarked for some incredible new releases. Their bestselling Impact Whey Protein is now

out in the exciting Masala Chai flavour for our legions of tea lovers. The light and refreshingly juicy Clear Whey Isolate, featuring 20g of protein per serving and low in sugar, is available in exciting flavours and has been a best seller in the UK already.

So make the best use of these offers: 27% off @ ₹6,000 | Use code: BF27 or 30% off exclusive on chocolate proteins + 3 Free gifts @ ₹8,000.

Mia by Tanishq: Mia by Tanishq, one of India's most fashionable jewellery brands unveils an exclusive Black Friday sale on the occasion of Thanksgiving and onset of the holiday season. Black Friday is just around the corner and Mia is offering its customers exciting offers. Consumers can now get Upto 25%* off valid on Mia products till November 29, 2020.

The offer is applicable on different jewellery categories from dainty earrings, bracelets, finger rings to an assortment of neck wears and nose pins. To celebrate the Thanksgiving month with family and friends customers can indulge in gifting Mia's 14 Karat light-weight, fashionable and stylish gold and silver jewellery. Get your hands on the best offers and shine with elegance.

Customers can also sport their favourite pieces from the latest festive collection 'Lyana' and together create heart-warming moments.

BLACK FRIDAY DEALS
27% OFF
SPEND RS. 6,000
USE CODE: BF27
[SHOP NOW](#)

TELLY TALE

TUNE IN TO HERO MODE
Get ready for a wonder like never before as Sony SAB's announces its mega-launch of the year *Hero — Gayab Mode On*. With the power of invisibility as a distinctive element in the story, the show promises to be a pure visual delight for the audience blended with a gripping storyline that will leave you asking for more. The show is slated to launch on December 7, every Mon-Fri at 8 pm.

The show is an incredible journey of a common man, Veer (Abhishek Nigam) and his quest to find his father. His life gets fascinatingly exciting as Veer chances upon a miraculous ring, which upon wearing gives him the power of invisibility. The ring can only be worn and owned by someone who has the inherent virtues of kindness, courage, selflessness, nobility and empathy. At the same time, it also has the power to corrupt and degrade the weak hearted making them vicious. But Veer decides to



use this superpower for good, making him the Hero. However, Veer's prized possession is also desired by the evil aliens of the outer world and here begins Hero's real challenge to save humanity.

Introducing Abhishek Nigam in the lead role of Veer aka Hero who promises to live on the screen along with the very talented Manish Wadhwa as Amal Nanda, Ajay Gehi as Shukracharya, the gorgeous Yesha Rughani as Zaara, Nitish Pandey as Mama and the super-cute twins Surabhi and Samridhi as sisters Sweetie & Meethi along with a host of other stars in the show's galaxy.

WHAT'S IN A PROFESSION?

Presenting a heartfelt romantic drama, Colors is set to launch *Namak Issk Ka*, a journey of a flamboyant Chamcham who is looked down upon for her profession but is married off into a reputable family in Mumbai.

Even though Chamcham is a dancer traditionally known as Nachaniya, she is a levelheaded and morally righteous person

Raised in an orphanage, Chamcham became a dancer in order to make ends meet and to take care of those dependent on her. To essay the character of Chamcham,



actor Shruti Sharma has been roped in Shruti Sharma says: "I am very excited to have landed this role. Chamcham is an incredible character, and playing her gives me a lot of scope for performance as an actor. The concept of the show is very strong and the background story of the character and her journey will definitely change social perceptions. I am also grateful to Colors for giving me this very special opportunity and I look forward to working on the show and giving it my all."

Kya aap kareng ek nachaniya ko bahu ke roop mein sweekaar? Watch Namak Issk Ka coming soon only on Colors.

RAGHAV'S ENTRY IN RENUKA'S LIFE

Zee TV recently presented a heart-warming story that captures the essence of the ever-evolving dynamics of the saas-bahu relationship in Indian society. Titled *Hamarwali Good News*, it showcases a unique role reversal between the daughter-in-law Navya (Srishti Jain) and her mother-in-law Renuka (Juhi Parmar) to give their family the much awaited Good News.

Versatile actress Juhi Parmar plays the role of Renuka in the show, who is the mother-in-law and the lifeline of the Tiwari family. Shakti Anand, on the other hand, is seen essaying the pivotal character of Mukund, who is Renuka's husband and Navya's father-in-law.

We've seen how Renuka and Mukund have been distant from each other and while we've seen the duo clash and argue like every couple, recently Renuka was trying to make an attempt to get closer to Mukund once again. However, it looks like a new character is all set to take their arguments to a whole new level. Manish Goel is all set to enter as Dr Raghav in *Hamarwali Good News* and it is his past equation with Renuka that will take the Tiwaris by storm.

Apparently, Raghav and Renuka were in love and he was going to ask for her hand in marriage. However, Mukund's *rishta* came in before he could make his move and the rest is history. While her husband was initially unaware, he came to know after seven-eight

years of marriage and since then his relationship with Renuka has never been the same. Mukund felt that he has been betrayed and has been suspicious of her ever since. When Raghav and Renuka bump into one another after so many years, how will Mukund react? And what will Raghav do after meeting Renuka? Well, the audience is in for a treat as a lot of twists and turns are set to play out in the next few episodes.

With Raghav all set to enter *Hamarwali Good News* and create chaos in Renuka and Mukund's life, the audience will surely want to know what will happen next in the Tiwari *parivaar*.

GET READY TO MEET PHOOL KUMARI

Bhojpuri film icon and bold performer Rani Chatterjee has successfully made a mark in the entertainment industry. The daring actor is all set to make heads turn as she enters &TV's *Gudiya Humari Sabhi Pe Bhari*. Portraying the role of Nanhe's (Sudhir Neema) love interest Phool Kumari, Rani will create a spectacle amongst the men in the family whereas with the women, not so much.

When Gudiya (Sarika Bahroliya) finds out that Nanhe's medical reports show traces of cancer she is disheartened to learn that he has only a few days left to live. To make the most for Nanhe who longs for a companion, Phool Kumari enters the house, adding an extra dose of entertainment and



humour. Everyone in the house is astonished by her breathtaking looks and latke-jhatkes. They can't resist themselves and always seem to have an excuse to be around her and her kaatil adaayein.

Expressing her excitement, Rani Chatterjee says: "I am thrilled to portray the role of Phool Kumari. It is the first time I will be exploring this genre, and I believe that this show is the perfect fit for me to make a debut in it. As Phool Kumari now enters the show, viewers will be in for a treat. I am sure they will enjoy this new role of mine and continue to shower me with their love and support."

'Replacements come with challenges'

ASHI SINGH, who has recently replaced AVNEET KAUR to play Yasmine in Sony Sab's *Aladdin Naam Toh Suna Hoga*, speaks with MUSBA HASHMI about the challenges that she faced and reveals that she would love to be a part of *Jhalak Dikhhlaa Jaa*

■ **What made you say yes to play Yasmine??**
The character of course. Initially, I was apprehensive about taking up the role because it is a replacement, but when I got know about the storyline and the character brief, I liked it very much. It was something that I wanted to do. It is something that one doesn't get to do in daily life. I am fortunate to have got a chance to play this role.

■ **Was it hard to get into the skin of the character? More so because you have replaced Avneet, and the character was already well-established?**
Yes. It was extremely difficult to get into the skin of the character because if the audience has seen an actor play a character for two years, it becomes hard for them to accept another actor play the same role. Also, I didn't have the scope to play it purely my way, because Avneet portrayed it in her way and comparisons will be drawn. Initially, it took a lot of thoughts to play it differently from the previous actor and still maintain the essence. That was a double pressure. Also, it was out of my comfort zone, it required action that I haven't done earlier. There was so much to do.

■ **Some memories from the sets.**
It's been only a while since I am a part of this show, but having said that I have some great memories already. From eating lunch together with the cast to sharing our life experiences with each other, we already have created that rapport. Sometime, even I wonder *hamare paas itni batein aati kaha se hain*. I share a very good bond with Ginu (played by Raashul Tandon), Sheefan (played by Amit Raghuvanshi), Koyal (played by Shivani Badoni) and Aladdin (played by Siddharth Nigam). We never shy away from pulling each other's leg. There is a very dark location at the sets where we shoot all the haunted scenes, so in our free time all five of us sit there and share ghost stories. It is fun.



I want to play a lot of varied roles in my life. I don't want to keep playing the same kind of roles for five-six years. I am always on a look out for different characters. With that being said, I don't think there will be a role which I will ever turn down

■ **Your character Naina from Yeh Unn Dino Ki Baat Hai earned much love from the audience. How has life changed after the show?**

A lot. When I started shooting the show, it was hard for me to accept that I have got the show and that I am living my dream of acting. During the show only, my life changed for the better. My personality was improved and I got to learn a lot. I went out of my bubble and experienced the world out there. There were instances when I was troubled with certain things but now they serve as a learning experience and help me tackle situations with much ease. It is hard for me to mention all the ways in which my life has changed after it, there's so much.

■ **Is there a role that you would say no to?**

Not really. I want to play a lot of varied roles in my life. I don't want to keep playing the same kind of roles for five-six years. I am always on a look out for different characters. With that being said, I don't think there will be a role which I will ever turn down.

■ **A reality show that you would like to be a part of?**

Yes. I would really want to be a part of *Jhalak Dikhhlaa Jaa*. I like the show since my childhood and would love to be a part of it.

We can vaccinate Delhiites against Covid within 3-4 weeks: Jain

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain said that the Government has enough resources to apply corona vaccine to the entire Delhi in three to four weeks. Addressing the media, Jain said that Delhi Government has the facilities like mohalla clinics, polyclinics, dispensaries and hospitals to provide vaccines to the people. There will

be no issue of storage of vaccines as well, he said. Jain said that the positivity rate in Delhi has decreased to 8.51 per cent as opposed to 15.26 per cent on November 7. Overall more than 9500 beds are available out of which 1200 ICU beds are vacant, he added. "We are waiting for the vaccine to be made available. Delhi has the infrastructure to roll it out and make it accessible to all the citizens within 3-

4 weeks. Delhi is equipped with the latest infrastructure to facilitate the roll-out of the vaccine to Delhi's population. For application, there are Mohalla Clinics, hospitals etc. It depends on how soon we get it from Central Government. As far as Storage is concerned, all amenities have been taken care of," said Jain. Citing the data, he said that there were 5482 new cases in Delhi on Friday. "The positiv-



ity rate was down to 8.51 from 15.26 per cent. It has become less than half since November 7, 2020. At present, more than 50 per cent beds are available in hospitals. Total beds available are more than 9500. The occupancy rate is therefore steadily decreasing. In terms of ICU beds, more than 1200 are available," he said. Commenting on the ongoing farmer agitation, the minister said, "The farmers have

legitimate concerns. They should at least be heard. The bill has been passed by the Central Government. It is their responsibility to deliberate with the farmers." Talking about the issue, he said that the peaceful movement of farmers should not be stopped. "The central government should listen to the voice of their legitimate demands. The Delhi government is welcoming farmers but the central

government is preventing farmers from coming to Delhi," he added. "A fair chance should be given to farmers to put across their points. Delhi Government refused Delhi Police's proposal to convert stadiums into jails. There is no need to carry out arrests. Delhi Government is merely facilitating their visit. For them, all necessary amenities will be taken care of," he added.

Cong targets Govt over health services in city

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Attacking the AAP Government over the situation of health services in the National Capital amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the Congress on Saturday accused it of thriving only on publicity despite failing to do ground-level work.

Addressing a Press conference at the Delhi Congress office, party spokesperson Pawan Khara cited data to claim that in the last five years, the AAP Government has failed to open even one new hospital in the city. "This is a Government which thrives on publicity and advertisement. But the ground reality is exposed at the time of a crisis like the Corona pandemic faced by us," Khara said. Khara said that the Modi

Government was also guilty of misleading the people by selling various types of "packages" instead of checking the fast spread of the Covid pandemic through strong measures at the ground level. He said that the Arvind Government was deriving immense pleasure in personal publicity at the cost of the taxpayer. "The Delhi Government should have made effective utilization of the budgetary allocation for the health sector to tackle the Covid spread, as it has spent only 25 per cent of the budget allocation, when the need was to strengthen the facilities in hospitals and other areas by taking Covid-specific measures. He recalled that the AAP, in its election manifesto, had promised to add 30,000 beds in hospitals, but only increased 716 beds in the last

five years. Khara said that the Arvind Government has not only failed to create any new infrastructure in the health sector but also failed to properly manage the infrastructure created by the Congress Government. The Congress leader further said that during this Covid pandemic, there is 31 per cent shortage of doctors, 21 per cent shortage of nurses and paramedical staff. He said that because the Arvind Government has failed to fill these vacancies, it was using the services of those who are in the third and fourth year of their MBBS courses. Instead of adding to the facilities created by the Congress Government, it has only ruined the facilities and infrastructure created by the Congress Government, he said.

Delhi records 4,998 fresh corona cases

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi recorded 4,998 fresh Covid-19 cases on Saturday and a positivity rate of 7.24 per cent while 89 more fatalities pushed the death toll to 8998.

According to the latest bulletin issued by the Delhi Health Department, these relatively high numbers of fresh cases came out of the 69051 tests conducted on Saturday including 33147 RT-PCR tests.

The national capital had recorded its highest single-day spike of 8,593 cases on November 11 when 85 fatalities linked to the pandemic were also registered.

The active cases tally on Saturday stood at 36,578 and the total number of cases has climbed to 561,742 of which 516,166 have recovered.

The number of COVID-19 containment zones in Delhi rose to 5331. The bulletin said that of the total number of

18389 beds in COVID-19 hospitals, 9793 are vacant.

As the national capital grappled with a surge in the infection, the Delhi government directed private hospitals to reserve ICU and normal beds for COVID-19 patients once these are vacated after the discharge of non-coronavirus patients.

The government has ordered 90 private hospitals to reserve 60 per cent of their total bed capacity for COVID-19 patients, while 42 private hospitals have been directed to reserve 80 per cent of their total ICU bed capacity for such patients.

The National Centre for Disease Control in a report drafted recently had warned that Delhi needs to be prepared for about 15,000 fresh cases of COVID-19 per day taking into account the upcoming winter season-related respiratory problems, large influx of patients from outside and festive gatherings.



Farmers' protests clog road traffic

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Following the ongoing farmers' agitation against the Centre's new farm laws, traffic was affected on key roads in Delhi on Saturday as police kept the Singhu and Tikri borders closed. While, traffic was also seen moving in snail speed at Ghazipur (UP Gate) border after farmers from Uttar Pradesh (UP) gathered at the border to mark their protest.

"Tikri border is closed for traffic movement. Available open borders to Haryana are - Jharoda, Dhansa, Daurala Jhatikara, Badusari, Kapashera, Rajokri NH 8, Bijwasan/Bajghera, Palam vihar and Dundaheera border," said the Delhi Traffic Police on its Twitter.

"The traffic police said the Singhu border was still closed from both the sides. "Please take an alternate route. Traffic has been diverted from Mukarba Chowk & GTK road. Traffic is very very heavy. Please avoid outer ring road from Signature Bridge to Rohini and vice versa, GTK road, NH 44 & Singhu border," it tweeted.

"Traffic movement is closed on Bhairon Road due to agitation of farmers. Motorists who wants to go from Bhairon Road towards New Delhi are

advised to use Barapullah," Delhi Traffic Police tweeted.

"We appeal to commuters to avoid travelling towards the Singhu and Tikri borders, Mukarba Chowk, NH-44, GT-Karnal Road and Outer Ring Road," said Meenu Chaudhary, the Joint Commissioner of Police, Traffic adding that fol-

lowing Saturday being a holiday for most office goers, the traffic situation in other parts is better than Friday.

On Friday, the Delhi Police curtailed movement at several places, including Dhansa, Jharoda Kalan, Tikri, Gurgaon, Singhu and Chilla, to prevent the protesting farmers from

entering Delhi. Sections of Outer Ring Road, Mukarba Chowk, GT Karnal Road, NH-44 were also closed.

The restrictions led to chaos and confusion among commuters who remained on roads stuck for hours.

But some of the chaos eased out later in the day after

police allowed the farmers to enter the national capital. Farmers, representing over 30 farm bodies, had called a 'Delhi Chalo' March through several routes -- Lalru, Shambhu, Patiala-Pehowa, Patran-Khanauri, Moonak-Tohana, Ratia-Fatehabad and Talwandi-Sirsa.



—Ranjana Dimri | Pioneer

Firm director arrested for duping man of ₹3 crores

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 34 year-old director of a company has been arrested by the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Delhi Police for allegedly duping a man to the tune of Rs 3 crores.

The accused has been identified as Pankaj Kumar Agarwal, a resident of Krishna Nagar and also the director of Amenity Promoters Private Limited (APPL).

According to Dr O P Mishra, the Joint Commissioner of Police, EOW, the accused Pankaj Kumar Agarwal in conspiracy with co-accused Pankaj Dayal and Sandeep Kumar misrepresented that their company APPL was in process of purchasing 5.06 acre agricultural land in village Jhatikara for which the company had already paid Rs. 3 Crore (advance money) to the land owner.

"They misrepresented that they will conclude the purchase of the land and find a suitable thirty-party buyer to further purchase land on or before July 28, 2014. The accused Pankaj Dayal, Pankaj Agarwal were shareholders and authorized signatory to the Bank account of accused company," said the Joint CP. "Sandeep Kumar and Pankaj Agarwal are the directors of the company while Pankaj Dayal executed an MOU on behalf of company and received Rs. three Crore and utilized the amount for personal use," said the Joint CP.

"The accused Pankaj Agarwal was arrested while his associate Pankaj Dayal, who is also the main conspirator is already in judicial custody. The accused has been found involved in two cases of cheating registered against them in Delhi. The accused used to lure innocent buyers to invest in the property and duped them," said the Joint CP.

Sisodia inaugurates state-of-the-art Hockey Astro Turf

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

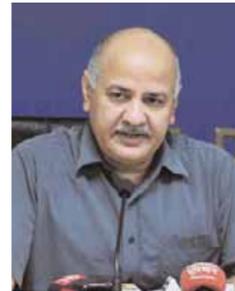
In a major boost to the sports infrastructure of the city, Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia inaugurated Delhi's newly built world-class Hockey Astro Turf at Sarvodaya Bal Vidyalaya in Ashok Nagar on Saturday.

On the occasion, Sisodia said, "We have ensured world-class facilities to the players from a young age. It is now the responsibility of the coaches and players to make the country proud by bringing in medals and showcasing their talent at international events." Sisodia said that Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is providing all the support to the promising players so that no talent is left behind because of basic lack of facilities and finances.

Renowned two-time Olympic medalist, wrestler Sushil Kumar was also present at the inauguration.

"The project cost Rs 5.78 crore to build this world-class hockey astro turf. We are also building four such world-class hockey astro turfs in Delhi government schools. This is the third ground and two other turfs in Ghumanhera and Jhilmil. Additionally, four 400 meter racing tracks and world-class swimming pools have been built. Due to such facilities, the performance of government schools in Delhi has significantly improved in sports, and so has the medal tally," he said.

Sisodia said that the Delhi government has taken up the responsibility in providing every single promising player essential facilities for their sports training and preparation. "This includes building an international-style residential facility for sports people and a sports university. Even players who bring in gold medals worry about their admission but we will give these players admission in Delhi's Sports University," he added. "Every state government



offers financial support to sports persons who bring in laurels and medals. Five years ago, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had said that it is equally important to invest and support the promising players when they are sweating out in the grounds preparing for their sports journey," he added.

"Keeping this in mind, we have started a scheme to help such promising players, in which annual amounts ranging from Rs 3.5 lakh to 16 lakh will be given," said Sisodia. He also added that the Delhi Government rewards medal-winning players more than any other state.

Sisodia said that the world famous field hockey players like Dhyan Chand and Dhanraj Pillai have also come up from similar grounds. "Now we hope to see more sports talent come out of these grounds, and make our dreams come true," he added.

The sports branch of the Directorate of Education is committed to promote grass roots sports and to provide holistic development to school students. With this objective in mind, various new schemes have also been introduced for intensive training of sports people, he said.

This includes upgrading the sports infrastructure of the schools, scaling them up to international standards, and providing facilities like synthetic athletics tracks, synthetic badminton flooring, Astro turf hockey ground and more.

Hindu college alumni to provide grants to needy students

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Old Students Association (OSA) of Hindu College will provide annual study grant to needy meritorious students, alumni members said.

The move comes against the backdrop of financial hardships being faced by students due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The pandemic has created major problems for students from economically weaker sections and they are facing a huge challenge in paying their college fee," president, OSA, Ravi Burman said.

"The association has decided to help such students, whose family annual income is below Rs 5 lakh, with a one-time study grant to cover their annual college fees up to Rs 20,000," he said.

The students who would like to apply for this assistance can submit their application along with family income certificate to the college's accounts department.

"We also appeal to distinguished alumni of the college that we seek your support in this endeavour of ours to pro-

The pandemic has created major problems for students from economically weaker sections and they are facing a huge challenge in paying their college fee

vide much needed relief to needy students in this hour," Burman said.

Several colleges are setting up funds to support students during the pandemic, especially after a student of LSR College died by suicide allegedly over financial constraints in continuing her education.

Mayor: Civic body making all efforts to arrange services at Nirankari Ground

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

North Delhi Mayor Jai Prakash informed that the civic body is making all out efforts to arrange services at Nirankari ground so that farmers coming to Delhi do not have to face any inconvenience.

"We levelled the ground for smooth vehicular movement, 25 mobile toilet vans having approx 200 seats have been provided. One sanitary inspector along with 10 Swachhta Karamcharis have been deputed at the site to maintain cleanliness," he said.



For ensuring cleanliness, the whole area has been divided into six beats, every beat is headed by a sanitary inspector and 10 swachhta Karamcharis to ensure cleanliness in area round the clock, he said, adding that the civic body has also deployed two suction cum jetting machines, three auto tipper, five big bins with separate

compartments for biodegradable and recyclable waste and one JCB to regulate garbage generated and its disposal. Mobile dispensary has also been stationed at the location by the North DMC.

A senior North MCD official said that fogging has already been done in the areas. "The public health department has also put in awareness banners to maintain social distance and wear masks at various locations in the ground. Lights have been provided in the ground with three gensets for power backup," he said.

2 held for cheating people on pretext of EMI default relief

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has arrested two men from southeast Delhi for allegedly posing as employees of a finance company and taking away motorcycles from people on the pretext of non-payment of installments of their loan.

The accused identified as Vijay Kumar (22) and Satpal Singh (28) worked briefly for a finance company but around six months back, they quit their jobs.

However, the duo planned to

dupe the customers of the company they worked for to make easy money. They misused the data of the customers and targeted those who had failed to pay some of their loan installments.

According to Atul Kumar Thakur, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), South district, the matter came to light after 21-year-old Deepak Kumar, a resident of Sangam Vihar, approached the police on Friday after getting duped by the two.

"He had purchased a bike in

November last year and got it financed through a company based in Noida. But owing to financial crisis during lockdown, he missed payment of some of the installments. On November 20, Kumar received a call where the caller introduced himself as an employee of the finance company through which he had got his bike financed," said the DCP.

"Referring to the missed installments, the caller asked Kumar to meet him opposite a mall in Saket along with his bike. When Kumar reached

the mall, he met both Vijay and Satpal, who introduced themselves as employees of the finance company and told Kumar that they had come to take away his bike as he had missed some installments," said the DCP.

"After taking his two-wheeler, they asked him to come to their office with Rs 15,000 and get his bike released. When Kumar went to their Noida office, he discovered that he was cheated by two as neither his bike was deposited in company's vehicle yard

nor did the two men work for the firm anymore," said the DCP. "Based on the complaint, a case was registered at Malviya Nagar police station and both the accused were arrested from Meethapur village in Badarpur. The bike of the complainant along with two other two-wheelers were also recovered from them," said the DCP.

"During interrogation, the duo confessed to have duped at least three other people using the same modus operandi," the DCP added.

Chirag downplays BJP fielding Sushil Modi for seat won by Paswan

Patna: Cold-shouldered by the BJP in the by-election to the Rajya Sabha seat in Bihar, LJP president Chirag Paswan said on Saturday that it belonged to the saffron party which was free to take a decision about whom to field.

The seat had fallen vacant following the death of Chirag Paswan's father and Lok Janshakti Party founder Ram Vilas Paswan. The BJP has nominated former Bihar deputy chief minister Sushil Kumar Modi for the seat.

Sushil Modi is likely to win uncontested unless the opposition Grand Alliance fields a candidate to challenge him. In that event, the polling will take place on December 14.

A Union Minister, Ram Vilas Paswan had got elected from the seat last year after it fell vacant following his cabinet colleague Ravi Shankar Prasad's election to the Lok Sabha from Patna Sahib.

"The seat belonged to the BJP and it is for the party to decide which candidate from

which party to field in the by-election," the 37-year-old leader told reporters at a function held to celebrate his party's 20th foundation day.

Chastened by the drubbing in the recent Bihar elections, Chirag Paswan asked the party rank and file to gear up for the next assembly polls which could take place "anytime".

He reiterated it in a letter addressed to LJP workers and shared with the media.

Responding to questions, Paswan maintained that he

saw "fresh elections taking place any time in Bihar, given the way the new government is functioning".

In a written message to party workers, Paswan defended his decision to go solo in the assembly polls, saying, "We had to make a choice between accepting the NDA's offer of only 15 seats despite being a party with six members in the Lok Sabha and one in the Rajya Sabha, or engage in a friendly fight to preserve our honour".

Responding to questions, Paswan maintained that he saw "fresh elections taking place any time in Bihar, given the way the new government is functioning"

In the one-page letter, Paswan refrained from making any remark against Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, the JD(U) boss whom he had targeted all through the elections and repeatedly accused of being unfair and brusque towards his late father while he was alive.

The letter contained no reference to the BJP or Prime Minister Narendra Modi to whom Paswan has proclaimed loyalty despite his steadfast support to Nitish Kumar.

The Jamui MP also decried the heated exchanges between the chief minister and Leader of the Opposition Tejashwi Yadav on the floor of the assembly on Friday and said both shared the blame for the unsavoury turn of events.

"I would not like to take

sides in this matter. From both sides many personal attacks were made. I do not think the discourse in Bihar assembly has ever touched such depths," said Paswan.

The LJP chief, under whose stewardship the party fought more than half of the seats in the 243-strong assembly but won only one, tried to perk up his supporters and asked them to focus on the bright side.

"We could win only two seats in the previous assembly elections even though we had

contested as part of the NDA. This time, we were alone, without an army of star campaigners to canvass in our favour. But we secured 28 lakh votes and now our party is being talked about across the state," Paswan said in his letter.

"It was the dream of the LJP founder, my late father, to help the party come of its own. We have taken a step in that direction. Let's keep marching," Paswan, who took over the party mantle from Paswan Sr a year ago, added. **PTI**

India, Lanka, Maldives agree to bolster maritime security cooperation

Colombo: Top security officials of India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives on Saturday agreed to further strengthen cooperation and ensure peace for common benefit as they took stock of the current maritime security environment in the region during the high-level trilateral dialogue held here after a gap of six years.

National Security Advisor Ajit Doval took part in the dialogue along with Sri Lankan Defence Secretary Major Gen (Retd.) Kamal Gunaratne and Maldivian Defence Minister Mariya Didi.

Sri Lanka hosted the fourth National Security Adviser-level trilateral meeting on maritime security cooperation with India

and the Maldives. It took place after six years. The last meeting was held in New Delhi in 2014.

According to a joint statement issued by Sri Lanka's Ministry of Defence, the three countries - recognising the significance of the forum for promoting meaningful cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region on common issues pertaining to maritime security - took stock of the current maritime security environment in the region.

They discussed mutual cooperation in the areas of Maritime Domain Awareness, Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief, Joint Exercises, Capacity Building, Maritime

Security and Threats, Marine Pollution, and Maritime Underwater Heritage, it said.

They agreed to further strengthen cooperation in dealing with these challenges, to ensure peace and security in the region for common benefit, the joint statement said.

The three countries also exchanged views on common security threats and agreed to broad base cooperation by expanding the scope to improve intelligence sharing and include issues like terrorism, radicalisation, extremism, drugs, arms and human trafficking, money laundering, cyber security and effect of climate change on maritime environment, it said.

The meeting took place amidst China's attempts to enhance its influence in the resource-rich Indo-Pacific region and the Indian Ocean.

China views the Maldives and Sri Lanka as key to its Maritime Silk Road project in the Indian Ocean. It has already acquired the Hambantota port in Sri Lanka on long lease and established a military base in Djibouti in the Horn of Africa.

The Heads of Delegations agreed to meet regularly to share, discuss and ensure timely implementation of decisions taken at the meeting. They also decided to hold Deputy NSA level working group meetings biannually for cooperation at

operational level, according to the statement.

Mauritius and Seychelles were represented virtually at senior officials' level, it said, adding that in view of the COVID-19 pandemic, the dialogue was conducted adhering to strict health guidelines using the "Air Bubble" concept for the visiting delegations.

Sri Lanka, India and the Maldives launched the Trilateral NSA level Meeting on Maritime Security Cooperation in 2011 and three meetings have been held so far.

The past deliberations and outcomes have helped the three countries in improving close coordination in maritime security of the region. **PTI**



View of the snow-laden Tandri valley, confluence point of Chandra and Bhaga rivers, during the winter season in Lahaul-Spiti district on Saturday **PTI**

Man on run for 1.5 years after raping sister-in-law, arrested in Bulandshahr

Bulandshahr: A man allegedly absconding for the last one and half years after raping his divorced sister-in-law along with his two brothers, has been arrested, police said on Saturday.

Accused Israr, also carrying a reward of Rs 25,000 on his arrest, was arrested on Friday night by a team of Kotwali Nagar police station officials, said Bulandshahr Superintendent of Police Santosh Kumar Singh.

The accused was also found in the possession of an

illegal pistol, which was seized, he said.

The gang-rape case against Israr dates back to June 18 last year, when his brother Salman gave "triple talaq" to his wife following a quarrel with her, said police.

After Salman divorced his wife, his three brothers -- Israr, Gaffar and Abrar -- took turns to rape her and then turned her out of the house, driving her in a car to a school near her maternal home under Gulauthi police station area. **PTI**

Protest over girl's abduction

Muzaffarnagar: There were protests in a town in Uttar Pradesh's Muzaffarnagar district over the alleged abduction of a girl by a youth, police said on Saturday.

The student, who was allegedly abducted when she was on her way to tuition in Khatauli, was found at a railway station, an officer said. Family members and locals had protested on Friday alleging abduction and demanding arrest of the suspect, according to the officer. A case has been registered against Sameer under Indian Penal Code sections 363 (kidnapping) and 366 (abducting or inducing woman to compel her marriage). **PTI**

Kerala's community police to watch nomads as child missing cases galore

Thiruvananthapuram: The Kerala police is keeping a special watch on nomads and migrant workers in the wake of an increase in child missing cases in the state, a top official said.

The state police chief, DGP Loknath Behera informed the state Human Rights panel that the Janamaithri wing of the police department had been entrusted with the task of tracing children who had gone missing under various circumstances in the southern state.

Information on nomadic

groups and migrant workers were being collected, he said.

The Janamaithri Suraksha Project is a prestigious community policing initiative of the Kerala government.

The rights panel chairman, Antony Dominic, had recently directed the DGP to submit a report on the steps taken to control the disappearance of children.

In the report, the top cop said immediate and effective action is taken if a complaint is received about a missing child and to trace them. **PTI**

Maha logs 75 deaths, 5,965 more test +ve

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a minor drop in the fatalities and infections in Maharashtra, 75 people died of Coronavirus, while 5965 others tested positive for the pandemic in various parts of the state on Saturday.

A day after the State logged 85 deaths and 6185 infections, the deaths dropped by ten, while the infections came down by 220. With 75 fresh deaths, the Covid19 toll in Maharashtra climbed from 46,898 to 46,986. Similarly, with 5965 new infected cases, the total infec-

tions jumped from 18,08,550 to 18,14,515. As 3937 more people were discharged from various hospitals the number of people discharged from the hospitals on Saturday after full recovery since the second week of March this year went up to 16,76,564. The recovery rate in the state dropped marginally from 92.48 per cent to 92.40 per cent.

The Covid-19 toll in Mumbai climbed to 10,847, while the infected cases went up by 963 to trigger a jump in the total infections from 280,818 to 2,81,881.

Meanwhile, the number of

"active cases" total cases in the state went up from 87,969 to 89,905. The fatality rate in the state stood at 2.59 per cent.

Pune district, which continued to be the worst-affected city-district in Maharashtra, saw the total number of cases increase from 350689 to 3,51,784, while the total number of deaths in Pune increased to 7418. Thane district remained in the third spot --after Pune and Mumbai -- after the total number of infections rose from 2,38,754 to 2,39,598 while the total deaths climbed to 5303.

J&K voters...

From Page 1

In Jammu, a large number of first time voters belonging to the west Pakistani refugee community were upbeat as they were lined up outside the polling booths to elect their public representative in the District Development Council polls.

"It is a big day for us and our community. We are feeling empowered for the first time. We had never elected our local representative in the past, said a young female voter Sujata Bharti in Akhnour.

President of the west Pakistani refugee action committee Labha Ram Gandhi said, "We have also fielded our candidates in the different phases. We are going to elect them and send them to the elected bodies

to take decisions for the welfare of the poor people". Voters belonging to all the age groups participated in the maiden polls and came out in large numbers to vote. Among the senior citizens several centurions kept their date with the polling booth and walked on foot to cast their vote.

A 103-year-old Zaitona Bibi, assisted by her son's granddaughter, visited a polling booth on foot in Gandoh tehsil of Doda to cast her ballot. She claimed since 1957 she has never missed any opportunity to vote. She said, every time I step out to vote I pin all my hopes on the winning candidate. "We are waiting for the basic amenities like safe drinking water, better health care and road network till date". A total number of 1427 candidates were in the fray

which included 296 DDC candidates while over 7 lakh voters were expected to cast their vote. Voting took place on 43 DDC seats, 25 from Kashmir and 18 from Jammu region. The state election commission had made elaborate security arrangements across 2146 polling stations to ensure incident free polling.

In Kashmir valley, the Central Kashmir district of Budgam recorded the highest voter turnout of 56.96 per cent followed by North Kashmir's Kupwara district where 50.74 per cent voters stepped out to vote. Ganderbal district recorded 48.62 percent polling. Srinagar district witnessed 33.76 percent polling. Out of four South Kashmir districts, considered hotbed of militancy, the three districts of Shopian, Anantnag and Kulgam recorded a relatively

better voter out of 42.58, 43.32 and 34.35 per cent respectively while Pulwama, the fourth district recorded lowest voter turnout of 6.7 percent. The Shopian and Pulwama districts had earlier recorded less than 3 per cent polling in 2019 Lok Sabha polls. Even Anantnag district had recorded a little over 8 per cent polling during three phases in May 2019. Compared to previous polls held in Kashmir valley, the voter turnout recorded an upward trend.

In the recent 2019 Lok Sabha polls, only 19 per cent voter turnout was recorded across Kashmir valley. Significantly, it was 12 per cent less than the 31 percent voter turnout recorded in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls.

In contrast to this 2014, Assembly polls in J&k had wit-

nessed voter turnout of 65 per cent during five phases while Panchayat polls in 2018 had witnessed over 74 percent voter turnout in Jammu and Kashmir.

In Jammu region the border districts of Rajouri and Poonch scored a march over other districts as they recorded 70.52 and 68.69 per cent voter turnout respectively.

The highest voter turnout was reported from Reasi district as 74.6 per cent electorate stepped out to vote during the DDC polls. Jammu district recorded 61.49 per cent polling while Udhampur recorded 57.13 per cent, Samba district recorded 68.6 percent and Kathua recorded 62.8 percent polling.

Doda, Kishtwar and Ramban recorded 64.49 percent, 55.16 and 64.21 percent polling respectively.

Farmers dig...

From Page 1

Around 400 to 500 farmers who had come to Nirankari ground on Friday were seen shouting slogans, singing songs and carrying flags in reds, greens and blues. Slogans such as 'Narendra Modi Kisan Virodhi' and 'Inquilab Zindabad' could be heard while farmers were also seen dancing to drumbeats and the strains of "Hum Honge Kaamyab" at Nirankari ground.

Meanwhile, on Saturday evening a few groups of farmers from Uttar Pradesh gathered at the Ghazipur border to join the call against the Centre's new farm laws.

The Traffic movement was also closed on both carriageways at both the borders. Till Saturday evening farmers from Uttar Pradesh also started to gather at Ghaziabad-Delhi border.

"Tikri border is closed for traffic movement. Available

open borders to Haryana area -- Jharoda, Dhansa, Daurala Jhatikara, Badusari, Kapashera, Rajokri NH 8, Bijwasan/Bajghera, Palam vihar and Dundahera border," said the Delhi Traffic Police on its Twitter.

The traffic police said the Singhu border was still closed from both the sides. "Please take an alternate route. Traffic has been diverted from Mukarba Chowk & GTK road. Traffic is very very heavy. Please avoid outer ring road from Signature Bridge to Rohini and vice versa, GTK road, NH 44 & Singhu border," it tweeted.

Following the borders sealed by police due to protest, several trucks carrying basic amenities including vegetables were also seen lined up in the traffic queue which was up to 10 kilometers long at Tikri and Singhu borders.

On Friday, thousands of farmers, who had gathered at

various entry points of the national Capital, were granted permission to hold their peaceful protest at Nirankari ground in North Delhi's Burari area.

However, just before the permission was granted, the clashes broke out between Delhi Police and farmers at Singhu and Tikri borders resorting police to use tear gas shells, water cannon and mild lathi charge to disperse the farmers who were part of the 'Delhi Chalo' march.

In the 40 minutes clash at Singhu border, the Delhi Police has erected barb wires as barricades were broken and stones were pelted from upon them and there was retaliation from the force. Senior police officials said that no injury was reported on both sides. Police also used tear gas shells and water cannons at Tikri border to disperse farmers who were trying to pull away a truck placed as a barricade to prevent them from entering the city.

the pioneer CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

I, Rajesh Datt Bajpai son of Late Shri R.D. Bajpai employed as ED in the Ministry of Railways residing at TV-16 Railway officers Enclave, Chanakyapuri New Delhi, have changed the name of my minor daughter Deerghakshi Dutt Bajpai aged 14 years and she shall hereafter be known as Sharvangi Bajpai. It is certified that I have complied with other legal requirement in this connection.

Pondy logs 46 new cases, tally touches 36,902

Puducherry: Puducherry on Saturday added 46 More cases of coronavirus, taking the total infection count to 36,902.

The toll remained 609 as no fresh fatality was reported due to the viral infection for ninth day in succession.

A release from Director of Health and Family Welfare S Mohan Kumar said the new cases were detected at the end of examination of 2,904 samples during last 24 hours ending 10 am today, he said. The fatality and recovery rates were 1.65 percent and 96.94 percent respectively. **PTI**

Accused of molestation, youth forced to eat faeces in Rajasthan

Dholpur (Rajasthan): A youth was allegedly beaten up and forced to eat human faeces for having molested a minor girl in Dholpur district of Rajasthan, police said on Saturday.

A disturbing video purportedly showing the man being slapped and forced to eat faeces has gone viral. The incident occurred on Thursday night when the youth allegedly molested a girl in a house. He was caught by the family members of the girl and thrashed by them. **PTI**

Marine Commandos...

From Page 1

Elaborating upon the objective of positioning the MARCOS at the Pangong lake with the Army commandos and Garud commandoes of the Indian Air Force, sources said it will further infuse synergy and boost integration of the three forces.

The Chinese army has pushed in additional high-powered boats to patrol the Pangong Lake besides building a jetty. While India has asked China to remove the jetty as it is the Indian territory, the security establishment has also flown in sophisticated boats for the commandos for effective functioning, they said.

Focusing on seamless operations by the Army, IAF and Navy, the security establishment has in the past few months brought in Garud commandoes of the IAF and Special Frontier Force (SFF). Both these units are already manning some of the critical heights on the south and north banks of the Pangong lake.

This has forced China to go on defensive and asking time and again in the Corps Commander level talks that these commandoes vacate the strategic heights. However, India has all along refuse and insisted that China has to first withdraw from all the stand-off points.

So far, the two sides have held eight rounds of military level talks and the next round may take place in the coming days. The Corps Commanders will take stock of the situation on the LAC in the forthcoming round and reiterate their commitment to sustain the momentum of the dialogue.

Modi...

From Page 1

In a tweet that he put after his visit to Zydus Cadila's Vaccine Technology Centre, Modi said: "Visited the Zydus Biotech Park in Ahmedabad to know more about the indigenous DNA based vaccine being developed by Zydus Cadila. I compliment the team behind this effort for their work. The Government of India is actively working with them to support them in this journey".

Having spent nearly an hour at Zydus Biotech Park, Modi flew to Hyderabad Bharat Biotech facility at Hyderabad, where the indigenous vaccine Covaxin is being developed.

"At the Bharat Biotech facility in Hyderabad, was briefed about their indigenous COVID-19 vaccine. Congratulated the scientists for their progress in the trials so far. Their team is closely working with ICMR to facilitate speedy progress," Modi tweeted after his visit to the Bharat Biotech facility.

During the last leg of his three-city tour -seen as a crucial stock-taking exercise undertaken by the Prime Minister in the run-up to the launch of vaccine and distribution of vaccine sometime in the early next year, Modi flew from Ahmedabad to Pune where he landed at around 4.30 pm. From the Pune airport, the Prime Minister proceeded

to the Serum Institute of India (SII) by helicopter.

At the SII, Modi interacted with the team members behind the vaccine development, who shared details about their progress about the work done by them so far and plans to further ramp up vaccine manufacturing.

"Had a good interaction with the team at Serum Institute of India. They shared details about their progress so far on how they plan to further ramp up vaccine manufacturing. Also took a look at their manufacturing facility," the Prime Minister said in a tweet, after winding up his visit to SII.

Ahead of the Prime Minister's visit to three vaccine manufacturing units, the PMO had said in a statement on Friday: "As India enters a decisive phase of the fight against COVID-19, PM Modi's visit to these facilities and discussions with the scientists will help him get a first hand perspective of the preparations, challenges and roadmap in India's endeavour to vaccinate its citizens".

Meanwhile, talking to media persons after the Prime Minister's visit to his Institute, SII Chief Executive Officer Adar Poonawalla disclosed late in the evening that the Centre had indicated that it would need 300-400 million Covidshield doses by July, 2021 from his organisation as part of

the Government's combat strategy against the Covid-19 spread across the country.

"As of now, we don't have anything in writing from the Government of India as to how many doses they will purchase. But, the Union Health Ministry has told us that it would need 300 to 400 million doses by July, 2021," Poonawalla said.

Earlier, at the SII, the Prime Minister was received by founder-Chairman Cyrus Poonawalla, Adar and his wife Natasha, who is Executive Director of SII and Chairperson of the Villoo Poonawalla Foundation.

Maintaining that SII's priority for SII is India, Adar Poonawalla said: "Covidshield vaccines will be distributed initially in India, then we will look at the COVAX countries which are mainly in Africa. The UK and European markets are being taken care of by AstraZeneca and Oxford. Our priority is India and COVAX countries".

Replying to a question, Poonawalla said: "We are in the process of applying for emergency use authorization of Covishield in the next two weeks. The SII is sending the results of trials to the Drug Controller of India and every protocol would be followed and there would not be any short-cuts".

On the Covidshield being manufactured from at SII with a masterseed from Oxford

University and AstraZeneca, Poonawalla said: "It is a very good vaccine... There has been zero hospitalisation (during the trials). The virus in the system gets reduced to 60 per cent. There are vaccines that protect you but you can transmit, but in Covidshield global trials, we have seen that infected persons were not infecting others. Hence the sterilising immunity is good".

Asked whether the production and implementation plan was discussed with the Prime Minister, Poonawalla said: "The Prime Minister has very good knowledge on vaccines and vaccine production. There was very little needed to be explained to him. We were amazed at what he knew," he said.

Alluding to the issue of ramping up vaccine production, Poonawalla said: "We have built the largest pandemic level facility in Pune and our new campus in Mandri. We also showed that to the Prime Minister with a tour around the facility and a lot of detailed discussions of the plans ahead".

On the results arrived during the trials, Poonawalla said: "At the moment, the trials are enough for the efficacy... There was a bit of confusion in the communication which we will explain in the coming days. We are looking to conduct trials for the under-18 age group after a few months".

चौधरी चरण सिंह विश्वविद्यालय, मेरठ
Ch. Charan Singh University, Meerut

REVISED-RECRUITMENT NOTICE

Online Applications are invited from eligible candidates (As per UGC notification 18 July 2018 and subsequent UP Government order 28 June 2019 and first Statutes of University as amended from time to time) for the appointment to the following posts in the University:

Advt. No.	Name of Post	Number of Posts with Category & Department Name	Level
Acad. 1185R/01/2020	Professor	Economics (UR-1), Mathematics (SC-1), Sociology (OBC-1), Microbiology (SC-1), Physics (UR-1)	14
Acad. 1186R/02/2020	Associate Professor	History (UR-1), English (SC-1), Psychology (SC-1 & UR-1), Botany (EWS-1), Statistics (OBC-1), Economics (OBC-1)	13A
Acad. 1187R/03/2020	Assistant Professor	Genetics & Plant Breeding (OBC-1) English (SC-1), Physics (UR-1), Political Science (OBC-1), Education (SC-1), Sociology (UR-1)	10

The last date for submitting online application is 21.12.2020. interested applicants may visit website <http://www.ccsuuniversity.ac.in/ccsu/recruitment> in for further details and eligibility conditions.

Registrar

Naidu calls for promoting cycling culture in cities

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu on Saturday called for promoting cycling culture and creating exclusive cycling tracks in cities and for that a mass movement to encourage cycling is required.

He urged the Government to integrate cycling into urban transport system and that the cities must plan city wide bicycle-sharing schemes, implement carbon credit to benefit cyclists and also promote E-Bicycles.

Naidu said cycling benefits include low-cost, zero pollution and improved health.

Virtually delivering the key-note address at an International Webinar on 'Cycling in the post-Covid world', Naidu said there is a need to create a mass movement to encourage cycling through rigorous awareness campaigns and regular promotional events. Terming the webinar theme as timely and important, he called for collective global efforts to make the planet greener and safer.

Observing that the pandemic has changed the way we live, buy, utilise our time and commute, the Vice President pointed out that restrictions in many cities across the world have resulted in a reduction of motorized traffic and an increase in people choosing to walk or ride bicycles.

Pointing out that cycling was one of the best ways to reduce the risk associated with a sedentary lifestyle, he said that cycling provides several benefits in the form of zero dependence on energy sources, zero pollution, and improved health.

"Additionally, bicycles can



The vice President advised urban planners and policymakers to have a re-look at their plans and policies and earmark exclusive cycling tracks

provide critical support to the urban and rural poor who do not have access to the basic mobility", Naidu added.

Stating that the pandemic has provided a rare opportunity to promote and integrate cycling into the urban transport system, he advised urban planners and policymakers to have a re-look at their plans and policies and earmark exclusive cycling tracks.

Observing that many urban cycling networks in Europe, China and USA have seen a surge in traffic, Naidu said that there was a huge potential for promoting cycling in India and called for providing the necessary infrastructure.

Stating that traffic surveys revealed cycle trips account for more than 15% of trips in most towns, he said this was the right time to pro-

mote cycling as it reduces noise pollution, improves road safety and also helps in addressing the increasing energy import bill.

Quoting a recent study, he said it was estimated that the use of bicycles in place of two- and four-wheelers for short-distance trips in India could result in an annual benefit of USD 24.3 billion.

"However, the absence of a cycling ecosystem is preventing it from becoming the preferred mobility solution for all sections of society", the Vice President added.

Stressing the need to ensure that the post-COVID world is greener and more resilient, Naidu urged cities to plan city-wide bicycle-sharing schemes, implement Public Bike Sharing systems, create a mechanism for the carbon credit system to benefit cyclists and promote E Bicycles.

Ms. Raluca Fiser, President, World Cycling Alliance, Christophe Najdovski, Deputy Mayor, Paris and President, European Cyclists Federation, Dharmendra, Chairman, NDMC, Kunal Kumar, Mission Director, Smart Cities Mission, Kamal Kishore Yadav, CEO and Commissioner, Chandigarh Smart City and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

ED attaches ex-babu's properties worth ₹27.8 cr under PMLA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate on Saturday attached properties worth ₹27.86 crore of former IAS officer Babulal Agrawal under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act in cases related to criminal misconduct and cheating by a public servant.

The attached assets include plant and machinery, balances in bank accounts and immovable properties of Agrawal and his family members.

The ED initiated investigation under PMLA on the basis of FIR registered by Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB), Chhattisgarh under Prevention of Corruption Act, leading to disclosure of the disproportionate assets amassed by Agrawal and his family members following searches conducted by the Income Tax Department in February 2010.

The IT Department had then conducted searches at the premises of Agrawal, his CA Sunil Agrawal and his family members. Further, three more FIRs were registered followed by chargesheets filed by the CBI against Agrawal and others. These FIRs were registered under various Sections of the Indian Penal Code and Prevention of Corruption Act.

"Investigation under PMLA revealed that Babu Lal Agrawal in connivance with his CA Sunil Agrawal and his brother Ashok Agrawal and Pawan Agrawal opened more than 400 bank accounts in the name of gullible villagers of Kharora and its nearby villages. Cash was deposited in these

accounts and several other accounts, 13 shell companies owned and operated by CA Sunil Agrawal, 26 Delhi and Kolkata-based other shell companies as well as the sister concerns of Prime Ispat Limited (a company owned and managed by family members of Babu Lal Agrawal) were used in placement and layering of this cash generated from corrupt means which was finally integrated in the form of share capital including share premium in Prime Ispat Limited (PIL)," the ED said in a statement.

Out of the above, the ED had already attached properties of PIL to the tune of ₹35.49 crore in the year 2017, it said.

Now, remaining plant and machinery to the tune of ₹26.16 crore has been attached. Besides this, bank balance of Rs 20.43 lacs lying in 291 bank accounts, a residential plot worth ₹39.52 lacs in the name of Xpress Mining Pvt. Ltd. (an entity owned and operated by family members of Agrawal), Rs 15 lacs recovered during the Income Tax search, balance of ₹4.75 lacs in the bank account of one firm Capstone, a residential plot worth ₹10.25 lacs in the name of another company Shri Ram Vihar (both partnership firms owned and operated by family members of Agrawal), cash of ₹39.81 lacs and two Kg gold recovered by CBI have been attached under PMLA.

Agrawal was arrested by ED on November 9 this year and he is in judicial custody till December 5. Further investigation in the case is under progress, the agency added.

Few misguided farmers will soon understand rationale behind Centre's farm laws: Goyal



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Piyush Goyal on Saturday expressed confidence that the few "misguided" farmers, who are protesting against the Centre's three farm laws, will understand the well-meaning intentions behind these changes while Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Saturday said that the Government is awaiting a proposal from the protesting farmers and then will make a decision based on that.

The Minister has been every day asking the farmers to call off the protests. He said that the Government is ready to hold talks with the farmers and

has invited them for another round of talks on December 3.

"I appeal to them to leave agitation in view of COVID-19 and winter. I am hopeful the farmers will agree to task," he said.

Thousands of farmers started entering the national capital on Friday as part of their 'Delhi Chalo' march against the Centre's new farm laws.

"It is little unfortunate that some political vested interests are misguided our farmers. But I am very confident that just like almost across the country, farmers have welcomed our new initiatives on the farm side, the few misguided farmers will also understand the well meaning intentions behind these changes for the benefit of the farmers, and for a better future for our farmers," Goyal said.

He said that if pen or thermos manufacturers do not have any restriction on where and to whom to market their goods, farmers too deserve the same independence.

The Government, he said, is working at strengthening the hands of farmers by unshackling them from the constraints of the past. "We are preparing the country and our farmers to become stronger, to get the ability to market their own products anywhere in the country," the commerce and industry minister added.

Commander Nishant Singh of crashed MIG-29K traceless even after 24 hours

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Naval pilot Commander Nishant Singh is yet to be traced 48 hours after his MIG-29K fighter jet crashed into the Arabian Sea off Goa on Thursday evening.

However, the rescue teams managed to rescue the other pilot who along with Singh ejected from the jet before it went down.

Scores of warships, helicopters and aircraft of the Navy and other agencies were carrying out an extensive search and rescue mission on the spot where the plane crashed into the sea, officials said here on Saturday.

The twin-seater MIG-29K fighter jet crashed during routine sortie. These aircraft operate from the INS Vikramaditya aircraft carrier.

This is the third mishap involving the MIG-29K in the last one and half years. At least 45 jets manufactured by Russia were inducted into the Navy some years back for flying from the aircraft carrier.

Giving details of the mishap, the navy had said on Friday a board of inquiry was ordered to ascertain the cause of the incident. "A MIG-29K trainer aircraft operating at sea met with an accident at about 1700 hrs on 26 November. One pilot has been recovered and search by air and surface units in progress for the second pilot. An inquiry has been ordered to investigate the incident," the Navy said.

The MIG-29Ks had recently participated in the prestigious Malabar series of maritime exercises with the navies of the US, Australia and Japan. The Indian aircraft carrier along with the US Navy's aircraft carrier Nimitz took part in the second phase of the four nation drill in the North Arabian Sea off Goa earlier this month.

The exercises focused around the Vikramaditya Carrier Battle Group of the Indian Navy and Nimitz Carrier Strike Group of the US Navy. The two carriers, along with other ships, submarine

and aircraft of the participating navies carried out high intensity naval operations over four days from November 17 onwards. These exercises also included cross-deck flying operations and advanced air defence exercises by MIG 29K fighters of INS Vikramaditya and F-18 fighters and E2C Hawkeye from Nimitz.

This is the third mishap of MiG-29K aircraft in the last one year. In February this year, a MiG 29K crashed after being hit by birds over Goa. Both pilots had steered the jet away from habitation before ejecting.

In November last year, a MiG-29K trainer aircraft crashed outside a village in Goa. Both the pilots had then ejected safely. In January 2018, a fighter jet crashed as it veered off the runway at the INS Hansa base in Goa.

The pilot escaped unharmed. The MIG-29Ks of the Navy are based at its base in Goa and operate from the lone aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya.

After Nivar, another cyclone forming over Bay of Bengal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After Nivar, another cyclone is forming over Bay of Bengal. According to the India Meteorological Department, it is "very likely" to concentrate into a depression in the next 48 hours and intensify further before moving towards the Tamil Nadu coast. Under its influence, various parts in southern States were likely to receive rainfall starting December 1, the IMD said in a series of tweets.

"A Low Pressure Area lies over South Andaman Sea SE (south east) Bay of Bengal and Equatorial Indian Ocean. It is



very likely to concentrate into a depression during next 48 hours and likely to intensify further thereafter," it said.

It is likely to move nearly westwards and reach south Tamil Nadu coast around

December 2, it said. Under its influence, scattered to widespread rainfall activity was "very likely" over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karaikal, Kerala, Mahe, Lakshadweep, south coastal

IMD also forecasts isolated heavy to very heavy rainfall with moderate thunderstorm and lightning over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal during this period

Andhra Pradesh and south Rayalaseema on Tuesday and Wednesday, the IMD said.

IMD has issued 'Orange' alert for Pathanamthitta and Idukki districts on December 1 and for Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam districts on December 2.

IMD also forecasts isolated heavy to very heavy rainfall with moderate thunderstorm and lightning over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal during this period.

Isolated heavy falls with moderate thunderstorm and lightning was also very likely over south coastal Andhra Pradesh during December 1 and 2 and over Rayalaseema and Lakshadweep area on Wednesday, it added.

CBI raids 45 locations in 4 States in coal theft case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Saturday carried out multi-city search operation at 45 locations in four States after registering a case against alleged coal pilferer Anup Manjhi who was suspected to be colluding with two general managers and three security personnel of Eastern Coalfields Ltd (ECL) for the theft.

The searches were spread across West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh, officials said.

The CBI registered the case on Friday against Manjhi, ECL General Managers Amit Kumar Dhar (of then Kunustoria area now Pandaveswar area) and Jayesh Chandra Rai (Kajor area) besides ECL Chief of Security Tanmay Das, Area Security Inspector, Kunustoria, Dhananjay Rai and SSI and security in-charge Kajor area Debashish Mukherjee, they said.

It is alleged that accused Anup Manjhi alias Lala is involved in the illegal mining and theft of coal from leasehold mines of ECL in Kunustoria and Kajora areas, they further said.

The CBI case followed inputs from "reliable sources" indicating illegal excavation and theft of coal in the leasehold area of ECL in "connivance" with the officials of ECL, CISF and Railways, they said.



help of large excavation machines and vehicles for transportation that were seized by the team.

"Several instances of installation of illegal weighbridges in concrete form were also detected which confirms illegal coal mining and transportation from ECL areas in an organised manner at a very large scale," reads the FIR.

It is further revealed by the source that illegal mining is going on at the leasehold area of ECL behind Topsi village under Kunustoria Area and at Lachhipur Village under Kajora Area by the coal mafias in active connivance with officials of ECL and those of CISF, the FIR alleged.

The departmental raids on August 7, 2020 led to the recovery of over nine MT of stolen coal from the Railway siding of ECL in the Pandaveswar area. Similar recoveries were also made from other locations.

"It is learnt that this illegal activity is being run at Railway sidings by the criminals with

the active connivance of unknown Railway officials," the agency alleged in the FIR.

The CBI has alleged that Manjhi is the kingpin of most of the coal pilferage in the area arising out of illegal mining. It appears that illegal coal mining in the ECL leasehold area is going on along with theft of coal from Railway sidings in an organised manner, the CBI said.

It alleged that the accused officials and security officers of ECL and CISF, in connivance with unidentified Railway officials, allowed Anup Manjhi alias Lala to misappropriate the national property entrusted to them, committing criminal breach of trust.

Dhananjay Roy, the security inspector of the state-run firm in the Kunustoria area in West Bengal's Pashchim Bardhaman district was taken ill when the search operation was underway, they said.

He was rushed to a hospital where he died, they added.

Pawan Bansal appointed interim treasurer of Cong

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress on Saturday appointed former Rajya Sabha MP Pawan Kumar Bansal as the interim treasurer of the All India Congress Committee (AICC). The post fell vacant after the sudden demise of veteran Congressman and sitting Rajya Sabha MP from Gujarat, Ahmed Patel earlier this month.

Pawan Kumar Bansal's predecessor Ahmed Patel served as the AICC treasurer from August 2018 till his untimely demise earlier this week due to corona.

A four-time Lok Sabha MP from Chandigarh, Pawan Kumar Bansal also served one term as a Rajya Sabha MP for Punjab. In addition, Pawan Kumar Bansal has also served as a national spokesperson of the AICC and chairman of the party's research & reference cell in the past.

The 72-year old Congress leader handled the Minister of

State (MoS) portfolio in Parliamentary Affairs, Finance and Water resources ministries during Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's tenure. He was made the Railways Minister in UPA-2. Pawan Kumar Bansal resigned from the post in 2013 after his nephew was accused in a bribery case.

Towards the beginning of his political career, Bansal entered the limelight when he was appointed president of the Punjab unit of the Indian Youth Congress (IYC).

His appointment to the top job comes at a time when Congress is looking to challenge not just the BJP but other Opposition parties in the upcoming Assembly elections.

Responding to his appointment as AICC treasurer, Bansal said, "I thank Congress President Sonia Gandhi ji and Rahul ji for posing faith in me and discharging the duty with full responsibility shall be my endeavour."

Hawala dealer Naresh Jain moves court seeking bail in money laundering case

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Alleged hawala dealer Naresh Jain, arrested in connection with a case of money laundering related to international hawala transactions worth around ₹20,000 crore, has moved a Delhi court seeking bail.

The bail application is likely to be heard on

December 2. The application claimed that the probe regarding the accused was complete and his further custody was not required. It also said the court may impose any condition on the accused while granting him the relief.

Advocate Naveen Kumar Matta, the special public prosecutor, had appeared for the Enforcement Directorate.

Members of armed forces deserve special treatment, should not be harassed: Delhi HC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Members of the armed forces, who take the oath of laying down their lives for the country, deserve special treatment and are not to be harassed unnecessarily and "made ping pong of" by being sent from one forum of adjudication to another, the Delhi High Court has said.

The high court observed that the oath required to be taken by the President, Vice President, Governors of the States or by the Judges of the Supreme Court and the High Courts does not require them to lay down their lives in the service of the country.

It is only the members of the armed forces who are required under the Constitution and other laws to take an oath of abiding by the command issued to them by the President or any officer set over them, even to the peril of their lives, a bench of Justices Rajiv Sahai Endlaw and Asha Menon said.

The court's observation came on a batch of 40 petitions challenging an order issued by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) granting the benefit of pro-rata pension only to Commissioned Officers of the Defence Services and not to the Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs)/ Persons Below Officer Rank (PBORs).

The petitioners — NCOs/PBORs who joined the Indian Air Force (IAF) as Airmen/Corporals — said the MoD's order is discriminatory and claimed pro rata pension.

Plea in SC against 'retrospective' change in tenure of SK Mishra as Enforcement Directorate director

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A petition has been filed before the Supreme Court seeking to quash the Centre's decision to "retrospectively" amend the tenure of Sanjay Kumar Mishra as the director of the Enforcement Directorate (ED).

The petition, filed by advocate Prashant Bhusan for NGO Common Cause, also sought a direction to the central government to appoint a director for the agency "in a transparent manner and strictly in accordance with the law".

It has contended that the order issued by the Centre extending Mishra's tenure for one more year, was in violation of the provisions of the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) Act, 2003.

The petition, which is likely to come up for hearing in the coming days, has alleged that the government employed a circuitous route to ensure Kumar got one more year as director of ED by way of retrospectively modifying the appointment order itself.

Mishra, an IRS officer, was appointed ED director for two years by an order dated November 19, 2018, the plea said.

However, the Central Government on November 13, 2020, issued an office order in which it was stated that the President has modified the 2018 order to the effect that a period of "two years" written in the 2018 order was modified to a period of "three years", it said. "The Centre has done indi-



rectly what could not have been done directly under the statute," the plea said.

The petition contended that the ED handles a large number of cases involving huge corruption, many of which are politically sensitive in nature, and the agency's director has powers akin to that of the director of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

It added that "such illegalities in the appointment of the Director of Enforcement will shake the confidence of citizens in the institution of Enforcement Directorate."

"Such an action will be totally against the laudable principles highlighting the need of impeccable integrity of persons holding high public offices and the consequent need for insulating the said offices from extraneous influences, as enshrined by the Supreme Court..." it said.

ED director's appointment is governed by the CVC Act which provides that no person below the rank of additional secretary to the government of India shall be eligible for appointment for the post and the director so appointed will continue to hold office for a period of not less than two years from the date on which he assumes office, the plea said.

UP Gov gives nod to Ordinance against forcible religious conversions

Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel on Saturday gave assent to an Ordinance against forcible or fraudulent religious conversions that provides for imprisonment up to 10 years and a maximum fine of Rs 50,000 under different categories. The promulgation of the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020, came four days after the Yogi Adityanath government had

approved the draft of the legislation which also curbs religious conversions only for the sake of marriage. The new law, however, did not go down well with the opposition Samajwadi Party. Hours after the governor's nod, SP president Akhilesh Yadav said his party will oppose the Bill when it comes up in the UP Legislature for passage. "The Samajwadi Party is not in favour of any such law. We will oppose it (when it

comes up in the assembly)," the SP leader said in reply to a question at a press conference here. According to the ordinance, a marriage will be declared "null and void" if the conversion of a woman is solely for that purpose and those wishing to change their religion after marriage need to apply to the district magistrate. It also has a provision under which if someone returns to their original reli-

gion, it shall not be deemed a conversion. While the onus to prove that the conversion has not been done forcibly will lie on the person accused of the act and the convert, it said. In case of contravention of the law, the ordinance says that the court shall grant appropriate compensation payable by the accused to the victim of conversion which may extend to a maximum of Rs 5 lakh in addition to the fine.

The ordinance says no person shall convert, either directly or indirectly from one religion to another by use or practice of misrepresentation, force, undue influence, coercion, allurement or by any fraudulent means or by marriage nor shall any person abet, convince or conspire such conversion. An aggrieved person, his/her parents, brother, sister, or any other person who is related to him/her by blood, marriage or adoption may lodge an FIR about such conversion, according to the ordinance. In cases of mass religious conversion, the registration of the social organisations will be cancelled, and strong action will be initiated against them. If those previously convicted under the ordinance are caught again for the same offence, they shall be subjected to double punishment, it said. Notwithstanding anything

contained in the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, all the offences under this ordinance shall be cognisable and non bailable and triable by the sessions court, the ordinance said. In recent weeks, BJP-run states like Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh have revealed plans to enact laws to counter alleged attempts to convert Hindu women to Islam in the guise of marriage, which Hindu

activists refer to as "love jihad". The Uttar Pradesh cabinet's approval to the ordinance followed the announcement by Adityanath that his government would come out with a law to deal with "love jihad". Addressing bypoll rallies in Jaunpur and Deoria last month, Adityanath had used the Hindu funeral chant of 'Ram Naam Satya Hai' to threaten those who do not respect daughters and sisters. **PTI**

contained in the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, all the offences under this ordinance shall be cognisable and non bailable and triable by the sessions court, the ordinance said. In recent weeks, BJP-run states like Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh have revealed plans to enact laws to counter alleged attempts to convert Hindu women to Islam in the guise of marriage, which Hindu

Dalit man found hanging in Muzaffarnagar

PTI ■ MUZAFFARNAGAR (UP)

A 26-year-old Dalit man was found hanging from a tree on Saturday at Manfura village under Jansath police station limits here, police said. According to SHO Deepak Chaturvedi, the body identified as that of Vikram was brought down and sent for a post-mortem. Police are investigating whether the Dalit man was murdered or he had died by suicide. The SHO said they are awaiting the autopsy report. According to the family of the deceased, Vikram was working as a labourer under one farmer Gulbir and had been missing for a day when he was found dead.

Farmer's agitation spreads to Aligarh

PRADEEP SAXENA ■ ALIGARH

The fire of the farmer's movement of Delhi & Punjab reached Aligarh. In the protest against the Farmer's Bill, farmers here jammed the roads. Although no incident occurred in the district, Farmer leaders returned by giving a memorandum to the administrative officials. A large number of Indian farmers union workers gathered at Galla Mandi in town Chhara. They jammed the Atrauli road with a tractor which led to a queue of vehicles. Inspector Ramsiya Maurya, Naik Tehsildar Atrauli Dinesh Kumar Sharma reached there with the police force and started convincing the farmer leaders, but they were not ready to get up from the protest. Bhakiyu Tehsil President

Jagdish Yadav said that the Central Government has passed 3 black laws, not the Farmer's Bill, which is not in the interest of farmers. The administration is doing everything to stop the farmers from going to Delhi. The jam, which lasted for about an hour, was opened after the order of the National Executive. Jagdeesh Yadav, Arjun Singh, Rajpal Singh, Bobby Chaudhary etc were involved in the protest. Aligarh Palwal Road, near the village of Tappal, was jammed by protesters. The police were stationed at the interchange of Noida Cut and Aligarh Cut of Yamuna Expressway. Farmers started shouting slogans against the government under the leadership of Vimal Tomar and District General Secretary Virender Singh.

Not much time left for MLC poll

Aligarh: Not much hours remaining for the MLC election. The campaign will be allowed only upto November 29. After this, all kinds of the election campaign will stop. This time 16 candidates are fighting for teacher MLA, the candidate for graduate MLA is 22. Independent candidates, along with SP, BJP and Congress, have put their full efforts in this remaining time. SP graduate candidate Aseem Yadav, teacher candidate Hevendra Chaudhary alias Hawwa Chaudhary, BJP's graduate candidate Manvendra Pratap Singh, teacher candidate Dinesh Vasistha, Congress graduate candidate Rajesh Dwivedi are also doing campaign day and night. **PNS**

Rajasthan cut price of RT-PCR test by private labs to ₹800

Jaipur: The Rajasthan government on Saturday fixed the rate for Covid-19 RT-PCR tests by private labs in the state to Rs 800, slashing it by Rs 400. Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said the government ordered the lowering of the Covid test rates from Rs 1,200 to Rs 800 following a drop in test kits' prices. The state government issued the order slashing the Covid-19 test rate by private labs soon after the chief minister digitally inaugurated a 70-bed Covid-19 Intensive Care Unit in RUHS Hospital here and disease testing labs in six towns. Speaking during the programme, Gehlot said his government is making all efforts to strengthen the Covid-19 management infrastructure.

"People should not be worried by the rise in positive cases as they will do due to the increasing number of tests," he said. He sought to assure people of "encouraging" recovery rate in the state, saying Rajasthan has a Covid death rate below one per cent -- one of the lowest in the country. Gehlot said the corona infection must not be hidden at any stage because delaying treatment makes the disease fatal. He said those who did not get themselves screened timely had to undergo treatment in hospital. The chief minister said the health infrastructure has been strengthened throughout Rajasthan for maximum

screening and proper treatment of corona-infected persons and now RT-PCR testing facility is available in every district. Defending a Covid-infected Health Minister Raghu Sharma's visit to newly set up ICU in RUHS Hospital, a dedicated Covid hospital, in Jaipur, the chief minister asked who else will conduct a visit if not the health minister. Gehlot said after testing positive, the minister was admitted in the RUHS Hospital and he inspected the newly set up ICU there. BJP had raised objections after the Covid-positive minister visited the hospital. The BJP leaders had accused him of putting the lives of others including the hospital staff at risk. **PTI**

18 new Covid cases in Mizoram; tally rises to 3,806

Aizawl: At least 18 people, including four security personnel, have tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 24 hours, taking the state's tally to 3,806, an official said on Saturday. Ten cases were reported from Aizawl district and four cases each were reported from Serchhip and Lawngtlai districts, he said. Three Border Security Force (BSF) jawans and an Assam Rifles jawan were among the newly infected people, the official said. He said that five patients have developed symptoms of COVID-19 while the remaining 13 patients were asymptomatic. **PTI**

Spl Exhibition on Constitution Day at Kevadia draws appreciation of Parliamentarians and legislators

Gujarat: Even as India celebrated the 71st Constitution Day with enthusiasm with nationwide reading of the Preamble led by the President Shri Ram Nath Kovind, a Special Exhibition on the Constitution Day at Kevadia in Gujarat, drew appreciation of Parliamentarians and Legislators. This Exhibition, organized by the Bureau of Outreach Communication of Ministry of Information & Broadcasting in collaboration with the Parliamentary Museum and Archives, as part of the 80th All India Conference of Presiding Officers at the Statue of Unity site in Gujarat, was inaugurated by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Shri Om Birla on Wednesday. The Exhibition traced the journey of democratic tradition in the country, right from Vedic Times, through the Lichchavi republic to the making of Modern India. The 1,600 sqft multi media exhibition had 50 panels of still exhibits besides Plasma display, interactive Digital Flip Book, RFID Card Reader, Interactive screen, Digital Touch Wall etc. The Speaker appreciated the use of multi-media and said interactive exhibitions make information dissemination interesting. He said, the exhibition effectively captures the chronology of the framing of the Constitution and such exhi-



bition should be taken to different parts of the country to create awareness about our democratic tradition. The framing of the Constitution of India has been dealt in detail making use of archival material. Rare film footage showing events associated with the framing of the Constitution, speeches made by important members of the Constituent Assembly like Dr. B R Ambedkar, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Shyamprasad Mukherjee among others, were so

urced from the archives of Films Division of India, Mumbai. On one of the Plasma Displays, a visitor could choose to read the Preamble of the Constitution in different Indian languages. A Digital Flip Book gave glimpses of illustrations from the Constitution. A Digital Touch Wall gave information about our various national symbols, while another digital screen displayed the chronology of framing of the Constitution. Another display wall described the influence of other Constitutions of the world in drafting the Constitution of India. RFID Card Reader - an interactive display, where by placing the card bearing the name of the Member of the Constituent Assembly, his/her profile and contribution could be read on the screen was a special attraction. Three category of cards were on display - Members of the Drafting Committee, Women Members of the Constituent Assembly and the Members of the Constituent Assembly from Gujarat with Hansa Mehta and Kanhaiyalal Munshi being the prominent figures. Gujarat Governor Aharya Devvrat wrote in the visitors' book that "the gallery provides an insight into the tremendous efforts put in by hundreds of visionary leaders. The collection has beautifully shown the artifacts of the past and utilized every possible digital effort to project the same". Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Coal & Mines, Shri Pralhad Joshi and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal and Speakers of various State Assemblies were prominent among the dignitaries who visited the exhibition. The archival display of signatures of Members of the Drafting Committee, key functionaries of the Government and Parliament, portraits of past and present Speakers etc were other prominent panels. Another highlight of the exhibition was the section on State Assemblies, where a visitor could see and appreciate the architectural beauty and diversity of different State Assembly buildings. Covid appropriate behaviour protocols were incorporated and special care taken to ensure sanitation, especially with respect to touch screen displays. The two-day All India Conference of Presiding Officers at Kevadia ended with resolve to strengthen institutions of democracy and spread awareness among public about the Constitution and democratic tradition of India.

Thane: Two persons have been arrested for allegedly molesting a woman and attempting to throw her off a moving local train in Maharashtra's Thane district, police said on Saturday. The incident took place late on Wednesday night, when the accused got into the ladies compartment of the local train and one of them molested the 21-year-old victim who was travelling to Kasara, inspector V D Shardul of Kalyan railway police station said. When the victim resisted their advances, the accused tried to throw her off the moving train between Khardi and Umbarnali stations, the official said. The victim managed to escape from the accused and she later lodged a complaint, he said. **PTI**

2 held for molesting, attempting to throw woman off train

K'taka CM's political secy hospitalised after 'suicide' attempt, stable

Bengaluru: Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa's political secretary and relative N R Santosh, who was hospitalised following an alleged suicide attempt, is 'stable and cheerful' and may be discharged in a day or two, doctors treating him said on Saturday. Responding to the incident, the state Congress demanded an investigation into the matter to enable the truth to come out and claimed that some confidential matters are linked to it. An FIR has been registered against Santosh for allegedly attempting to kill himself, police sources said. According to sources, Santosh is said to have attempted suicide by consuming sleeping pills on Friday night. On finding him uncon-

scious at his Dollars Colony residence here, family members rushed him to the Ramaiah Memorial Hospital. Santosh (31) was brought at about 8.30 pm with an alleged history of consumption of sleeping tablets at around 7 pm, the Hospital President Dr Naresh Shetty said in a statement. Noting that on admission he was drowsy, the doctor said appropriate treatment was administered immediately and all investigations were carried out. "He has been taking sleeping tablets occasionally for his sleep disturbance as per past history. This morning, the patient is stable. He had his breakfast and is cheerful. The plan is to shift the patient to the ward post noon today. He may be discharged in a day or two, based on his health status and recovery," the statement added. Addressing the media, ICU specialist at the hospital Dr Deepak said Santosh was stable without any drowsiness and all his parameters BP, pulse and heart rate was good. To a query, the doctor said Santosh had taken sleeping pills alprazolam. Yediyurappa had rushed to the hospital late last night to inquire about Santosh's health. "This morning, we walked together for 45 minutes. Even yesterday I saw him, he was happy. I don't know why this happened. I will find out and talk to his family," he said. Meanwhile, the Sadasivanagar police have registered an FIR against Santosh, police sources said. **PTI**

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WB spent ₹4K cr on Covid mgmt so far, got no assistance from Centre: TMC

Kolkata: The Trinamool Congress on Saturday claimed that the Mamata Banerjee administration has so far spent Rs 4,000 crore on COVID-19 management in West Bengal and has not received any assistance from the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre to deal with the pandemic situation. State Women and Child Development and Social Welfare Minister Shashi Panja said that starting from scratch, the West Bengal government has expeditiously built the necessary infrastructure to tackle the pandemic. "With no assistance from

the Centre, the Mamata Banerjee government has spent Rs 4,000 crore to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic in the state. "It has spent Rs 1,200 crore before June and the remaining Rs 2,800 crore after that," she told reporters at the TMC headquarters here. The state had faced the double disaster of COVID-19 and super cyclone Amphan, in which losses amounted to Rs 1.02 lakh crore, Panja said. "The West Bengal government has spent Rs 6,500 crore in providing relief and rebuilding infrastructure affected by the super cyclone," she said.

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An aerial view of Cyclone Nivar affected areas during Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's aerial survey on Saturday **PTI**

Cold conditions prevail in J&K; Gulmarg shivers at -5.6 deg C

Jammu: Cold weather conditions prevailed in most parts of Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday with Gulmarg tourist resort in the Valley being the coldest place at minus 5.6 degrees Celsius, the meteorological department said. It has predicted dry weather in the union territory till December 4. While the minimum temperature settled several degrees below the normal at most places, the day temperature was almost near to normal, a MeT department official said. Srinagar recorded a minimum of minus 2.2 degrees Celsius, while Qazigund (Anantnag) and Kupwara experienced a low of minus 1.8 degrees Celsius and minus 1.0 degrees Celsius respectively, he said. The famous health resort of Pahalgam in south Kashmir's Anantnag district recorded a low of minus 5.2 degrees Celsius. In the Jammu region, Bhandarwah belt in Doda district recorded the minimum temperature at 0.8 degrees Celsius, followed by Banihal in Ramban district which recorded a low of at 5.2 degrees Celsius, he said. Jammu, the winter capital, recorded the minimum temperature of 8.6 degrees Celsius, 1.7 degrees below normal, the official said. "There will be mainly dry weather till December 4. As of now, a spell of light snow or rainfall is expected between 5-6 December," he said. **PTI**

AP records 625 new corona cases

Amaravati: The number of fresh Coronavirus came down to 625 in Andhra Pradesh even as the cumulative count rose to 8,67,063 on Saturday. The latest bulletin said 1,186 patients got cured and five more succumbed in 24 hours ending 9 am today. The number of active cases fell to 11,571 after a sum of 8,48,511 recoveries and 6,981 deaths, the bulletin added. Only Krishna district reported 103 fresh Covid-19 cases in a day while all other districts added less than 100 cases each to their tally. Krishna, along with West Godavari, reported two fresh fatalities while Visakhapatnam added one. As per government data, the overall infection positivity rate in AP now stood at 8.70 per cent after a total of 99.62 lakh sample tests. **PTI**

The recovery rate improved to 97.86 per cent while the mortality rate remained stable at 0.81 per cent. **PTI**

TRUMP SUFFERS ANOTHER JOLT US court rejects Pennsylvania lawsuit

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

In a fresh setback to US President Donald Trump's efforts to reverse the November 3 presidential election result in the battleground state of Pennsylvania, a court has dismissed a lawsuit filed by his team, observing that "voters, not lawyers choose the president."

The judgement came four days after Pennsylvania certified Trump's Democratic rival Joe Biden as the winner in the state which has 20 electoral college votes.

Trump, a Republican, has refused to accept defeat in the November 3 presidential election, and told reporters on Thursday that it would be "hard" to concede to Biden, a Democrat.

The President has said that he would leave the White House if the Electoral College declares Biden as the winner, but made clear he is not prepared to "concede" the election.

He has launched a slew of lawsuits in key states, but has not provided any evidence to back his claims of electoral fraud. Many of the lawsuits have been dismissed by courts.

The three-judge panel of the 3rd US Circuit Court of Appeals on Friday upheld a previous ruling that dismissed the Trump campaign's request for an injunction in the case in Pennsylvania to challenge the election results and slammed the lawsuit.

"Free, fair elections are the lifeblood of our democracy. Charges of unfairness are serious, but calling an election unfair does not make it so. Charges require specific allegations and then proof. We have neither here," Judge Stephanos Bibas said in his order. "The campaign cannot win this lawsuit," said Bibas, who was appointed by Trump.

He authored the order along with two other judges on the bench, Chief Circuit Judge Brooks Smith and Judge Michael Chagares, who were appointed by former Republican president George W Bush.

Trump has refused to concede the November 3 election to Biden and has filed multiple lawsuits challenging the poll results in several states.

Former vice president Biden was declared the winner of the US presidential election

on November 7 after flipping Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin to the Democrats' column.

Biden has 306 electoral votes to Trump's 232 votes. To win the race to the White House, the successful candidate should have at least 270 electoral votes out of the 538-member Electoral College.

Biden's tally is far more than the 270 needed to win the race for the White House, and he also leads the popular vote by more than six million.

In his Thanksgiving Day remarks, Trump, however, said it will be a mistake if the Electoral College were to elect Biden.

The president-elect leads by more than 80,000 votes in the battleground state of Pennsylvania.

Trump's lawyers Rudy Giuliani and Jenna Ellis said they will now appeal to the Supreme Court.

"The activist judicial machinery in Pennsylvania continues to cover up the allegations of massive fraud. We are very thankful to have had the opportunity to present proof and the facts to the PA state legislature. On to SCOTUS!" they said.

According to the local Philadelphia Inquirer, "Bibas pointed out that despite the campaign's speculative claims and fiery rhetoric, it never alleged - let alone offered any evidence to suggest - that any vote had been improperly counted or cast."

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

White House as President if he can prove that his ridiculous "80,000,000 votes" were not fraudulently or illegally obtained. When you see what happened in Detroit, Atlanta, Philadelphia & Milwaukee, massive voter fraud, he's got a big unsolvable problem!" Trump tweeted.

"Big Tech and the Fake News Media have partnered to Suppress. Freedom of the Press is gone, a thing of the past. That's why they refuse to report the real facts and figures of the 2020 Election or even, where's Hunter!" he said in another tweet.

The Electoral College is scheduled to meet on December 14 and is expected to formally declare the 78-year-old Biden as the 46th US President.

Under the US electoral system, voters do not directly choose the president. Instead, they vote for 538 officials, who are allocated to American states based on their population size.

Earlier this week, Trump allowed the official start of Biden's transition to power without conceding defeat. Biden is due to be sworn in as president on January 20.

"Biden can only enter the

White House as President if he can prove that his ridiculous "80,000,000 votes" were not fraudulently or illegally obtained. When you see what happened in Detroit, Atlanta, Philadelphia & Milwaukee, massive voter fraud, he's got a big unsolvable problem!" Trump tweeted.

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"Biden can only enter the

Biden to let health experts decide who will get a Covid-19 vaccine first: Gounder

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US President-elect Joe Biden will let health experts decide who will get a Covid-19 vaccine in the country first, according to Dr Celine Gounder, a member of his coronavirus advisory board.

Since the risk for Covid-19 can vary among different groups of people, prioritisation for a vaccine will be tricky, and Biden will leave those decisions to health experts, the Indian-American infectious disease physician said. It is expected that there will likely be a limited supply of coronavirus vaccine doses available immediately after a vaccine is authorised by the US food and drug administration.

"Other than health care workers, others who will be first in line to get it will be people who do have chronic underlying medical conditions who are older, as well as communities of colour who have been disproportionately impacted by this pandemic," Gounder told CNN on Friday.

The country's death toll since the pandemic's start is now more than 264,000. And nearly another 60,000 people could lose their lives over the next three weeks, according to an ensemble forecast published by the US centers for disease control and prevention (CDC) this week. "Now among those groups is where it starts to get a little bit more contentious," she added. "How do you prioritise between the 85-year-old woman in a nursing home, versus the 65-year-old African American — especially when that 65-year-old may be as just as high-risk of significant disease?" The CDC's advisory committee for immunization

practices (ACIP) will recommend groups to receive the vaccine first. "That's where it gets a bit more political and frankly, this is where the President-elect is leaving it to the public health experts and scientists to figure out how best to allocate the limited supply first," said Gounder, who was named by Biden earlier this month to his coronavirus advisory board.

The ACIP called an emergency meeting for December 1, where they will vote on the very first group to get a vaccine.

"Because we know that the vaccine will be available in very limited doses, even if they prioritise health care workers and older people in their population, it's going to be really important to be a little more granular," said Rick Bright, another member of Biden's coronavirus advisory board.

"They're going to discuss that granularity in health care workers. If I only have so many doses available, how do I prioritise those health care workers first and make those recommendations to the states?" he said. Typically, the ACIP meets after a vaccine is authorised by the FDA to make recommen-

dations, but they are working proactively in anticipation of a quick decision by the FDA, the report said. "We foresee imminent authorisation if this vaccine is shown to be effective and safe in the near future and we want to be at the point where we are providing appropriate guidance to the states and jurisdictions for the use of these vaccines," ACIP chair Dr Jose Romero told CNN.

US pharmaceutical major Pfizer has applied to the FDA for emergency use authorisation for its vaccine. An independent panel of experts, the FDA's vaccines and related biological products advisory committee, is slated to meet on December 10 to discuss the application, the report said.

FDA officials say a decision should be made within a few weeks of the meeting and possibly much sooner. The US on Friday marked the 25th day in a row with more than 100,000 new cases. Hospitalisations hit a new high on Thursday — for the 17th consecutive day — with more than 90,400 Covid-19 patients nationwide, according to the Covid Tracking Project.

Biden will be a President who represents the best in us: Kamala

Washington: Joe Biden will be a president who represents the best of America, his deputy and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris has said, asserting that he is a leader the world will respect. Lavishing praise on the 78-year-old US President-elect, Harris on Friday said that Biden will be a president for all Americans.

"Know that" Biden "will be a president who represents the best in us. A leader the world will respect and our children can look up to," Harris said in a tweet. Harris, 56, the daughter of an Indian immigrant from Chennai, has created history by becoming the first Black American woman to be elected as the country's Vice President.

PTI



A crowd of protesters march in Bangkok, Thailand, on Saturday. Pro-democracy demonstrators are continuing their protests calling for the Government to step down and reforms to the constitution and the monarchy, despite legal charges being filed against them and the possibility of violence from their opponents or a military crackdown

Iran's supreme leader vows revenge over slain scientist

AP ■ TEHRAN

Iran's supreme leader on Saturday demanded the "definitive punishment" of those behind the killing of a scientist who led Tehran's disbanded military nuclear program, as the Islamic Republic blamed Israel for a slaying that has raised fears of reignited tensions across the Middle East.

After years of being in the shadows, the image of Mohsen Fakhriadeh suddenly was to be seen everywhere in Iranian media, as his widow spoke on state television and officials publicly demanded revenge on Israel for the scientist's slaying.

Israel, long suspected of killing Iranian scientists a decade ago amid earlier tensions over Tehran's nuclear program, has yet to comment on Fakhriadeh's killing Friday. However, the attack bore the hallmarks of a carefully planned, military-style ambush, the likes of which Israel has been accused of conducting before. The attack has renewed fears of Iran striking back against the US, Israel's closest ally in the region, as it did earlier this year when a US drone strike killed a top Iranian general. The US military acknowledged moving an aircraft carrier back into the region, while an Iranian lawmaker suggested throwing out UN nuclear inspectors in response to the killing.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei called Fakhriadeh "the country's prominent and distinguished nuclear and defensive scientist." Khamenei, who has the final say on all matters of state, said Iran's first priority after the killing was the "definitive punishment of the perpetrators and those who ordered it." He did not elaborate.

Speaking earlier Saturday, President Hassan Rouhani blamed Israel for the killing. "We will respond to the assass-

ination of Martyr Fakhriadeh in a proper time," Rouhani said. "The Iranian nation is smarter than falling into the trap of the Zionists. They are thinking to create chaos."

Both Rouhani and Khamenei said that Fakhriadeh's death would not stop the nuclear program. Iran's civilian atomic program has continued its experiments and now enriches a growing uranium stockpile up to 4.5% purity in response to the collapse of Iran's nuclear deal after the US' 2018 withdrawal from the accord. That's still far below weapons-grade levels of 90%, though experts warn Iran now has enough low-enriched uranium for at least two atomic bombs if it chose to pursue them. Analysts have compared Fakhriadeh to being on par with Robert Oppenheimer, the scientist who led America's Manhattan Project in World War II that created the atom bomb.

Fakhriadeh headed Iran's so-called AMAD program that Israel and the West have alleged was a military operation looking at the feasibility of building a nuclear weapon. The International Atomic Energy Agency says that "structured program" ended in 2003. Iran long has maintained its nuclear programme is peaceful.

Fakhriadeh's widow appeared unnamed on state television in a black chador, saying his death would spark a thousand others to take up his work.

"He wanted to get martyred and his wish came true," she said.

Hard-line Iranian media has begun circulating memorial images showing Fakhriadeh standing alongside a machine-gun-cradling likeness of Revolutionary Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani, whom the US killed in the January drone strike.

UK, EU resume face-to-face trade talks with time running out

AP ■ LONDON

Teams from Britain and the European Union resumed face-to-face talks on a post-Brexit trade deal Saturday, with both sides sounding gloomy about striking an agreement in the little time that remains.

EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier returned to London to meet his U.K. counterpart David Frost. Talks have been held virtually for the past week as Barnier completed a spell of self-isolation after a member of his team tested positive for the coronavirus.

COVID-19 is just one complication in negotiations that remain snagged over key issues including fishing rights and fair-competition rules. Barnier said Friday that the remote talks had made little progress and the "same significant divergences persist."

The U.K. left the EU early this year, but remained part of the bloc's economic embrace during an 11-month transition as the two sides tried to negotiate a new free-trade deal to take effect Jan. 1. Talks have already slipped past the mid-November date long seen as a deadline to secure a deal in time for it to be approved and ratified by lawmakers in Britain and the EU.

If there is no deal, New Year's Day will bring huge disruption, with the overnight imposition of tariffs and other barriers to U.K.-EU trade. That will hurt both sides, but the burden will fall most heavily on Britain, which does almost half its trade with the EU.

US imposes sanctions on Russian, Chinese companies for supporting Iranian missile programme

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The US has imposed sanctions on four companies from China and Russia for supporting Iran's missile programme that remains a "significant proliferation concern," Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said.

The announcement was made on Friday as the US continues to take tough measures against Iran for continuing their activities related to nuclear arms.

"The US has sanctioned four entities in China and Russia for their support of Iran's missile programme, which remains a significant proliferation concern. We will continue to use all our sanctions tools to prevent Iran from advancing its missile capabilities," Pompeo said.

The companies are Chengdu Best New Materials Co Ltd and Zibo Elim Trade Co, Ltd. in

China and Nilco Group, which is also known as Nil Fam Khazar Company and SanTERS Holding and Joint Stock Company Elecon in Russia for transferring sensitive technology and items to Iran's missile programme.

President Donald Trump withdrew the US from the landmark Iran nuclear deal in 2018. After withdrawing from the Iranian nuclear deal, Trump has asked all countries to reduce their purchase of oil from Iran to zero or face secondary sanctions.

Iran insists its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes. Pompeo said all countries need to be vigilant to efforts by Iran to advance its missile programme. "These measures are part of our response to Iran's malign activities. These determinations underscore the continuing need for all countries to remain vigilant to efforts by Iran to advance its missile programme," Pompeo said.

UK appoints vaccines minister to oversee Covid inoculations

AP ■ LONDON

The British Government appointed a vaccines minister on Saturday as it prepares to inoculate millions of people against the coronavirus, potentially starting within days.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said Conservative lawmaker Nadhim Zahawi will oversee the country's biggest vaccine programme in decades.

The UK medicines regulator is currently assessing two vaccines — one developed by Pfizer and BioNTech, the other by Oxford University and AstraZeneca — to see if they are safe and effective.

The Guardian newspaper reported that hospitals have been told they could receive the first doses of the Pfizer shot the week of December 7, if it receives approval.

had to do in school and outside of school, so I have to award them for being exceptional kids."

Before Black Friday, GameStop teased that it would have a limited supply of the new \$500 PlayStation 5 game console for sale only at its stores, in contrast to other retailers that sold it only online.

Kelly said "people were on top of each other" in the line. At a Garden State Plaza mall in Paramus, New Jersey, police monitored a crowd outside a GameStop, but few people kept their distance.

GameStop said it was taking several safety precautions, including contactless pickup.

Many retailers beefed up their safety protocols to reassure wary customers about coming in on Black Friday. But

of America's senior vice president of business development.

"It feels good, and it's the right thing to do to keep everybody safe," Renslow said. "Everyone is shopping a little differently but that's OK."

Only a trickle of shoppers showed up at Macy's Herald Square in New York an hour after it opened, offering 50% off handbags and 60% off women's and men's coats. Workers sanitized door knobs and windows.

A Christmas tree towered over the largely empty streets around The Domain, the most popular outdoor mall in Austin, Texas. Store employees counted masked shoppers trickling in to stay within the state's 75% capacity limit.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention has labeled shopping in crowded stores during the holidays a "higher risk" activity and says people should limit any in-person shopping.

The National Retail Federation, the nation's largest retail trade group, predicted that shoppers will be looking for reasons to celebrate. The trade group expects sales for the November and December period to increase between 3.6% and 5.2% over 2019, compared with a 4% increase the year before. Holiday sales have averaged gains of 3.5% over the past five years.

"We think there's going to be a psychological factor that they owe it to themselves and their families to have a better-than-normal holiday," said NRF Chief Economist Jack Kleinhenz.

Virus keeps Black Friday crowds thin, shoppers shift online

AP ■ NEW YORK

The raging coronavirus pandemic kept crowds thin at malls and stores across the country on Black Friday, but a surge in online shopping offered a beacon of hope for struggling retailers after months of slumping sales and businesses toppling into bankruptcy.

In normal times, Black Friday is the busiest shopping day of the year, drawing millions of people eager to get started on their holiday spending.

But these are not normal times: A spike in coronavirus cases is threatening the economy's fitful recovery from the sudden plunge in the spring. Crowds at stores were dramatically diminished as shoppers

shifted online.

Game consoles, cookware, robotic vacuum cleaners, slippers and pajamas were popular among shoppers preparing to spend a lot of time indoors this winter. Many were still eager to get into the holiday spirit and delight their loved ones after a tough year.

Eric Kelly, a boxing gym owner, camped outside a store on Black Friday for the first time in his life, trying to score a PlayStation 5 for his 13-year-old twin sons as a reward for persevering through remote learning during the pandemic.

"They've been away from their friends," said Kelly, who failed to get the console at a GameStop in New York City's Union Square but said he would keep trying online. "They've done everything they

OFFICE THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PWD (R&B) CONST. DIV. NO. II, JAMMU
SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER
 e-NIT No. 108 of 2020-2021/Div-2 Dated 27-11-2020
 Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) Construction Division No. II, Jammu Department Jammu on behalf of Lt. Governor of Union Territory of J&K, invite tenders by e-tendering mode from approved and eligible contractors registered with J&K Union Territory Govt. upto 1800 Hrs on 03-12-2020 for the following work.
S.No. 1 Name of Work :- Construction of road from Kanna Chargal to Dhoon by way of laying of Wet Mix Macadam, 50mm thick BM, 25mm thick SDBC. (Under Languishing Scheme)
Name of Division :- PWD (R&B) Const. Div. No. II Jammu
Estimated Cost (Rs. in lacs):- 102.99, Cost of document (in Rs.) :- 6000
Earnest Money (in Rs.):- 205980/-, Time Allowed for completion :- 01 month, Time & date of opening of tender :- 04-12-2020 1400 hours
Class of Contractor :- Hot Mix Plant Holder/ "A" Class Contractor
NOTE: Contractors who have got Contractors cards issued from Kashmir Province, it is mandatory for them to upload their verification certificate of Crime Branch alongwith other qualifying documents failing which their tenders will be declared non-responsive.
 1/ Date of Publishing from :- 27-11-2020
 2/ The Bidding documents can be downloaded from the website <http://jtenders.gov.in> from on 27-11-2020 to 03-12-2020 (1800 Hrs).
 Sd/- Executive Engineer
 No. DIP/J-7887/20 PWD (R&B) Const. Div. No. II Jammu
 Dated: 28.11.2020

IMPORTANT NOTICE
 It is notified for the information of all concerned that the 02823/02824 Bhubaneswar-New Delhi - Bhubaneswar (via Tatanagar) Rajdhani Special Express will run four days in a week instead of daily as per the following detail :-

Train No. & Name	Frequency	Days of Run	Date from Originating Stations
02823 Bhubaneswar-New Delhi Rajdhani	4 days in a week	Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri	01.12.2020
02824 New Delhi - Bhubaneswar Rajdhani	4 days in a week	Tue, Wed, Thu, Sat	02.12.2020

02823/02824 Bhubaneswar - New Delhi - Bhubaneswar Rajdhani Special (Four Days in a week)

Train No. 02823	STATIONS		Train No. 02824
ARR. DEP.			ARR. DEP.
-- 09:30		Bhubaneswar	17:25 --
10:00 10:02	↓	Cuttack Jn.	16:40 16:42
11:38 11:40	↓	Bhadrak	15:12 15:14
12:25 12:27	↓	Balasore	14:02 14:04
13:40 13:50	↓	Hijilli	12:35 12:45
15:50 15:55	↓	Tatanagar Jn.	10:35 10:40
17:58 18:00	↓	Muri Jn.	08:25 08:27
19:15 19:20	↓	Bokaro Steel City	07:35 07:40
20:33 20:38	↓	Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Jn. Gomoh	06:30 06:35
21:36 21:38	↓	Koderma	05:19 05:21
23:03 23:06	↓	Gaya Jn.	04:05 04:08
01:15 01:25	↓	Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn.	02:05 02:15
05:17 05:22	↓	Kanpur Central	21:50 21:55
10:45 --	↓	New Delhi	-- 17:05

Accommodation : First AC, AC 2Tier and AC 3Tier.
Train No. 02823/24 Bhubaneswar-New Delhi-Bhubaneswar Rajdhani Special Express will run in the existing timings & stoppages of regular Time Tabled train No. 22823/24.

Note: All norms of the State and Central Government regarding COVID-19 including Social distancing, sanitization etc., may be followed in the trains and at the Railway stations. All other precautions associated with COVID-19 should also be ensured.

Beware of Touts Always Buy Train Tickets from Railway Counters/Authorized Railway Travel Agents only

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

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SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

Q2 GDP surprising resilience: Is it good enough to last?

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The surprise resilience shown by the manufacturing sector that restricted GDP contraction to only 7.5 per cent in September quarter could be a result of massive purge in costs such as employee cost by corporates and businesses, which could turn a potential headwind in future, economists at SBI wrote on Saturday.

India's July-September (Q2) of 2020-21 fiscal) GDP growth showed surprising resilience with contraction of only 7.5 per cent in real terms, while the market consensus was higher, wrote Soumya Kanti Ghosh, Group Chief Economic Adviser, State Bank of India, in Ecowrap.

With improvement in manufacturing, due to lifting of lockdown measures GDP contraction has slowed down significantly. Agriculture sector continued to perform well with growth at 3.4 per cent. Services remained in the negative territory, although the decline was contained as trade, hotels, transport, communication and services related to broadcasting showed recovery.

"The most astonishing number is the positive growth in manufacturing Q2. Despite being the worst affected sector in Q1 (due to lockdown), it is quite puzzling how manufacturing turned itself around," he wrote in the Ecowrap issue.

The IIP manufacturing and manufacturing GVA growth are highly correlated (almost more than 0.90) and this correlation collapsed in Q2 when IIP manufacturing declined by 6.7 per cent (average of July-September) while manufacturing GVA grew by 0.6 per cent. "We believe one possible reason for this could be stellar corporate GVA numbers in Q2 on the back of massive purge in costs. Further, we observed small companies, with turnover of up to Rs 500 crore, are more aggressive in cutting cost, displaying reduction in employee cost by 10-12 per cent," Ecowrap said.

This, it said, could turn a potential headwind in future in terms of a drag on consumption. "Additionally, there is evidence of inventory buildup that could act as a drag on future manufacturing growth." Interestingly, government

consumption expenditure has also nosedived in Q2, that is difficult to explain, as such expenditures are typically pro cyclical, Ecowrap said.

SBI economist said the absolute numbers of services sector in Q2FY21 is Rs 17.19 lakh crore, while in Q3FY20 it was Rs 17.35 lakh crore, only Rs 15,000 crore less. This indicates that the services sector has reached the pre-COVID-19 level.

"Is it because of behavioural changes during pandemic like massive transport of goods once the economy opened up and a massive boost to communication and broadcasting with people mostly working from home?" it asked.

One good thing is that the investment demand has improved with resumption in COVID-19 induced stalled projects. However, the patchy growth across sectors reflects in domestic demand figures, which are showing modest recovery sequentially.

The falling imports and continued contraction in investment suggest a poor domestic absorption and intermediate demand.

Retail inflation for industrial workers rises to 5.91% in Oct

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Retail inflation for industrial workers rose marginally to 5.91 per cent in October from 5.62 per cent in September this year mainly due to higher prices of certain food items.

"Year-on-year (retail) inflation based on all-items stood at 5.91 per cent for October, 2020 as compared to 5.62 per cent for the previous month and 7.62 per cent during the corresponding month of the previous year," a labour ministry statement said.

Similarly, it stated that food inflation stood at 8.21 per cent in October against 7.51 per cent of the previous month (September 2020) and 8.60 per cent during the corresponding month (October 2019) a year ago.

The all-India Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers (CPI-IW) for October 2020 increased by 1.4 points and stood at 119.5 points.

On one-month percentage change, it increased by (+) 1.19 per cent between September and October, 2020 compared to (+) 0.93 per cent



increase between corresponding months of the previous year. The maximum upward pressure in the current index came from the food & beverages group contributing (+) 1.29 percentage points to the total change.

At item level, arhar dal, poultry (chicken), eggs (hen), goat meat, mustard oil, sunflower oil, brinjal, cabbage, carrot, cauliflower, chillies green, gourd, ladyfinger, onion, peas, potato, electricity domestic, doctor's fee, bus fare, etc. Are responsible for the increase in index. However, it said that this increase was checked by wheat, fish fresh, tomato, apple, etc., putting downward pressure on the index. At centre level, Doom-Dooma Tinsukia,

Patna and Ramgarh recorded the maximum increase of 4 points each. Among others, 3 points increase was observed in 9 centres, 2 points in 24 centres and 1 point in 33 centres. Rest of 19 centres' indices remained stationary. Commenting on the index, Labour Minister Santosh Gangwar said, "The increase in CPI-IW will have a positive effect on wages/salaries of industrial workers engaged in the organized sector besides government employees and pensioners." The CPI-IW is the single-most important price statistics which has financial implications. It is primarily used to regulate the dearness allowance of government employees and workers in industrial sectors.

Punjab accepts Centre's borrowing option to meet GST shortfall

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Congress-ruled Punjab has accepted the Centre's borrowing proposal and will get Rs 8,359 crore through the special window to meet GST revenue shortfall.

"Government of Punjab has communicated acceptance of option 1 to meet the revenue shortfall arising out of GST implementation. The number of states which have chosen this option has gone up to 26. All the 3 Union Territories with Legislative Assembly (i.e. Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir and Puducherry) have also decided in favour of option 1," a finance ministry statement said.

The Centre has already borrowed Rs 24,000 crore on behalf of the states in four instalments and has passed it on to 23 states and three Union Territories on October 23, November 2, November 9 and November 23. From the next round of borrowings, Punjab, Kerala and West Bengal too would receive funds raised through this window. Earlier

this week, Kerala and West Bengal too had communicated to the Centre about accepting the borrowing option to meet GST revenue shortfall.

Under the terms of option 1, besides getting the facility of a special window for borrowings to meet the shortfall arising out of GST implementation, states are also entitled to get unconditional permission to borrow the final instalment of 0.50 per cent of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) out of the 2 per cent additional borrowings permitted by the Government of India, under 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' mission. This is over and above the special window of Rs 1.1 lakh crore. On receipt of the choice of option 1 from the Government of Punjab, the Government of India has granted additional borrowing permission of Rs 3,033 crore to Punjab (0.5 per cent of Punjab's GSDP), the ministry added. Separately, Punjab will get Rs 8,359 crore through special borrowing window to meet the GST implementation shortfall.

Sany India celebrates new milestone

New Delhi: Sany India, a leading manufacturer of construction equipment & heavy machinery which has been advocating and practising "Vocal for Local", has rolled out its 15000th machine from the company's India facility. Sany India South Asia managing director Deepak Garg said, "Rolling out the 15000th machine is a remarkable achievement that reaffirms our commitment to the domestic construction equipment market."

Market's bull run may stay, 'too strong' derivatives data a concern

IANS ■ MUMBAI

The bull run in the equity market is likely to continue in days ahead, but the only concern at this point is the "too strong" derivatives data, which may lead to a rapid sell-off in case of a course reversal, according to a report by Motilal Oswal Retail Research.

The report said that at current juncture, market is in bulls grip and dips are getting bought into quickly. Nifty's derivatives data is also positive

and it indicates continuation in ongoing momentum.

It however said FII's index futures data signifies they are overbought in Indian market and any unwinding of longs or fresh shorting may lead to a correction in the market.

Thus, some cautious approach should be adopted at these levels it said.

"As far as levels are concerned, index is moving in uncharted territory and 13,500 would be a hurdle as per options data. On the flipside, major

support exists at 12,700 then 12,350 zones.

The only concern at current juncture is too strong derivatives data and in case of any reversal, the sell-off can be fast," said the report.

It was a historic month for the market as Nifty posted highest ever series on series gains (in absolute term).

Bulls were aggressive from the start of the November series and kept the ball in their court throughout the series, said the report.

GST officers arrest one for ₹129 cr tax evasion through illegal manufacture, supply of cigarettes

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Officers of GST investigation arm DGGI have arrested a Haryana resident on charges of manufacturing and supplying cigarettes illegally and thereby evading taxes of over Rs 129 crore, the Finance Ministry has said.

"The Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI) Gurugram Zonal Unit (GZU), Haryana has arrested one Satyender Sharma, resident of Haryana, on charges of manufacturing and supplying illegally manufactured cigarettes without the requisite tax paying documents and without payment of applicable GST and cess," the ministry said in

a late night statement on Friday.

The total tax evasion of more than Rs 129 crore is pegged to have been committed by the accused, it added.

Investigation conducted across Delhi and Haryana revealed that Sharma manufactured and supplied cigarettes under his registered brands 'Nidhi Black' 'Gold queen' and 'E-10.

"Apart from these, the investigation also revealed that Sharma was illegally manufacturing cigarettes under the brand names of 'Paris', 'Pine', 'Black Djarum' 'Esse Lights' which are international trademarks owned by other companies. All these cigarettes were being cleared clandestinely

without payment of applicable GST/cess," the ministry said.

Sharma transported these illegally manufactured cigarettes to New Delhi for further supply across India, it added.

"Based on documentary evidence and statements recorded of all persons during investigation, it was ascertained that Satyender Sharma is the key person in running this racket of manufacturing cigarettes without payment of applicable GST as well as illegally manufacturing cigarettes under international brand names," the ministry added. Sharma was arrested by DGGI officers on November 27.

Another increase in prices of petrol, diesel

New Delhi: Petrol and diesel prices were increased by oil marketing companies on Saturday as global oil prices remained firm, reaching its highest levels this fiscal. Petrol prices increased by 24 paise to Rs 82.13 per litre on Saturday from Rs 81.89 per litre the previous day. Diesel prices, on the other hand, increased by a higher margin of 27 paise to Rs 72.13 a litre, up from Rs 71.86 a litre on Friday. Oil companies began increasing pump prices of the two petroleum products from last Friday after a nearly two-month-long hiatus in fuel price revision.

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General Public is hereby informed that one girl namely **Chandni D/o Subodh R/o H.No. Bobby Ka Makan, Alipur, Delhi** has been missing/kidnapped since 11.11.2020 from her house the area of P.S. Alipur, Delhi. In this regard a case vide FIR No. 542/20 U/S 363 dated 13.11.2020 has been registered at P.S. Alipur, Delhi.

The description of missing/kidnapped girl is as under :-

Name : Chandni, **Father's Name :** Subodh, **Age :** 17 yrs., **Height :** 5'0", **Built:** Thin, **Face :** Oval, **Complexion :** Wheatish, **Hairs:** Black **Wearing :** Red Colour Suit & Salwar. **ID Mark:** Bali in Nose.

If anyone having any clue/information, kindly inform the undersigned.

Website : <http://cbi.nic.in>
e-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in
Fax : 011-24368639
Ph. : 011-24368638, 24368641
DP/622/ON/2020

SHO
P.S., Alipur, Delhi
Ph.: 011-27202290
27202265, 7065036325

SEARCH FOR MISSING

The general public is hereby informed that a girl namely **Akhatri Khatoon D/o Mohd. Momirul R/o Village- Bari Lal Ganj, PS Etahar, District - Uttar Dinajpur, West Bengal.** Presently at Vanjiya Bhawan, Man Singh Road, New Delhi has been missing since 12.11.2020 from the present address at about 6:00 p.m. In this regard, **DD No. 34A, dated 14.11.2020 has been registered at PS Tilak Marg, New Delhi.** Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out the missing girl, but no clue has come to light so far. The description of the missing girl is as under:

Name: Akhatri Khatoon, **Gender:** Female, **Age:** about 19 years, **Height:** 5'2", **Face:** Round, **Complexion:** Shallow, **Built:** Medium, **Wearing:** Blue colour with white colour dotted suit, blue colour pajami, yellow colour dupatta and black colour slippers on her feet.

If anyone has any information regarding this missing girl, kindly inform SHO/Tilak Marg, New Delhi.

E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in
Ph.: 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax : 011-24368639
DP/165/NDD/2020

SHO
P.S. Tilak Marg, New Delhi.
Ph. No. 011-23382100, 23385571

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General public is hereby informed that one girl namely **Najma, D/o Mohd. Aabid, R/o H.No. A-1201, J.J. Colony, Bawana, Delhi, Age: 17 years, Height: 5'2", Complexion: Fair, Face: Long, Built: Strong, Hair: Black, wearing Navy Blue Suit & Pink colour Salwar, Blue Dupatta and Hawai Chappal in feet,** has been missing/kidnapped from her house since 09.11.2020 at 12:00 PM. In this regard a FIR No. 604/2020 U/S 363 IPC, dated 13.11.2020 has been registered at P.S. Narela Industrial Area, Delhi.

Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out the girl but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information about her please inform undersigned.

Website : <http://cbi.nic.in>
E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in
Fax : 011-24368639
Ph. No. : 011-24368638, 24368641
DP/625/ON/2020

SHO
P.S. Narela Industrial Area, Delhi
Ph. No.: 011-27787592, 27787593

SEARCH FOR MISSING

General public is hereby informed that a person namely **Ganesh Sahu, S/o: Shambhu Sahu, R/o: H. No. 104, Near DAV School, Gym Wali Gali, Budhpur, Delhi has been reported missing since 11.11.2020 at 08:50 AM from his house. In this regard DD No. 47A, dated 15.11.2020 has been registered at P.S. Alipur, Delhi.**

The description of missing person is as under:

Name: Ganesh Sahu, **Age:** 23 Years, **Height:** 5'7", **Face:** Round, **Complexion:** Fair, **Built:** Medium, **Wearing:** Orange Shirt, Blue Jeans and Hawai Chappal in feet.

If anyone having any information about this missing person please inform P.S. Alipur, Delhi

Web: <http://cbi.nic.in>, Email: cic@cbi.gov.in
Ph.: 011-24368638/24368641, Fax: 011-24368639
DP/627/ON/2020

SHO
Police Station Alipur, Delhi
Ph: 011-27202265, 7065036325

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that one male was found dead on 11.11.2020 at Govt. Toilet, S.N. Marg, Delhi in the area of PS Lahori Gate, Delhi. In this regard a DD No. 84A U/S 174 CrPc, Dated 11.11.2020 has been lodged at P.S. Lahori Gate, Delhi. The dead body has been preserved in mortuary of Subzi Mandi, Delhi for 72 hrs for identification. The description of the dead body is given as under:

Name: Unknown, **S/o:** Unknown, **R/o:** Unknown, **Age:** about 60 years, **Height:** 5'6" Feet, **Face:** Long, **Complexion:** Shallow, **Built:** Thin, **Wearing:** Black Colour Jacket, White Colour Kurta and Grey Colour Dhoti.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the information about the dead male but no clue has come to light so far. If any one is having any information about this dead male please inform the undersigned.

S.H.O
P.S. Lahori Gate, Delhi
Ph.: 011-23953776, 23958234

DP/748/N/2020

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that an unidentified dead body of male **Namely:** Unknown, **S/o:** Unknown, **R/o:** Unknown, **Age:** approx. 35 years, **Height:** 5' 6", **Complexion:** Wheatish, **Face:** Long, **Built:** Thin, **ID:** Rajesh is written on his right hand, **Wearing:** Blue colour linedar shirt and salet/cream colour pant, who was found dead at Nepali Park Kashmere Gate, Delhi. In this regard a case **DD No. 46-A U/S 174 Cr. P.C. Dated 20.11.2020 has been registered at P.S. Kashmere Gate, Delhi.**

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

Sd/- SHO
P.S. Kashmere Gate, Delhi
Tel.: 011-23967889

DP/751/N/2020(UIDB)

Manufacturing GVA growth in Q2 'surprising': SBI Report

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

The manufacturing sector played a major role in narrowing down the India's GDP contraction in Q2 of FY21. An SBI Ecwrap report, however, dubbed the growth in manufacturing GVA as "astonishing" as the IIP manufacturing for the same period declined by 6.7 per cent. India's GDP in the July-September period contracted 7.5 per cent, compared with 23.9 per cent more than the preceding quarter. The GVA in Q2 2020-21 from the manufacturing sector grew 0.6%, as compared with a degrowth of 0.6% in the corresponding quarter of the previous fiscal.

The report by Soumya

Kanti Ghosh, Group Chief Economic Adviser, State Bank of India, said. "Though the whole press release is full of surprising numbers, the most astonishing number is the positive growth in manufacturing in Q2." He noted that despite being the worst affected sector in Q1 (due to lockdown), it is quite puzzling how manufacturing turned itself around. The IIP manufacturing and manufacturing GVA growth are highly correlated (almost more than 0.90) and this correlation collapsed in Q2 when IIP manufacturing declined by 6.7% (average of July/August/September) while manufacturing GVA grew by 0.6%.

Demand for holiday homes gains traction amid pandemic

New Delhi: As the pandemic has significantly impacted operations of businesses and people's working model, housing preferences also have changed and the demand for holiday homes or second homes has increased in the past few months. According to Aditya Kushwaha, CEO & Director Axis Ecorp, the need for a perfect balance between work and personal life has fuelled the concept of a weekend retreat in a holiday home. "Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the concept of a holiday home or a second home has gained widespread acceptance. With most of the corporate professionals working from home, geography is no longer a constraint," he said. He

also noted that from the investment perspective, second homes in non-metro cities are a relatively safe investment option with higher capital appreciation compared to homes in metros, especially during COVID-19, when alternative options such as mutual funds, shares have seen diminishing returns. These properties can be rented out to home-stays and tourism businesses, a booming market promising an assured and stable source of income to investors, Kushwaha said. He noted Axis Ecorp has witnessed a rise in demand from NRIs and has around Rs 50 crore worth of stock at its project 'Axis Blues' in Goa, since lockdown was announced in India.

Total FDI inflow during Q2 FY21 stands at \$28.1 bn

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

The total foreign direct investment (FDI) during the second quarter of financial year 2020-21 stood at \$28.1 billion, out of which FDI equity inflows were \$23.44 billion.

"This takes the FDI equity inflows during the financial year 2020-21 up to September 2020 to \$30,004 million, which is 15 per cent more than the corresponding period of 2019-20," said an official statement.

In rupee terms, the FDI equity inflows of Rs 2,24,613 crore are 23 per cent more than the last year. August 2020 was a significant month when FDI equity inflow of \$1.74 billion was reported in the country.

According to data from the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Mauritius and Singapore were the biggest sources of FDI in India with 29 per cent and 21 per cent contribution respectively.

NCPEDP pushes for hike in Union Budget allocation for differently-abled

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP) has said the budgetary allocation for people with disabilities has been too low in the past few years. It has urged the Central government to increase the allocation in the upcoming Union Budget.

In a letter to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, NCPEDP said, "Over the past few years the budgetary allocation for person with disabilities has been 0.04 per cent which is disheartening and inadequate to meet the needs of this particularly vulnerable and marginalised section of society."

It noted that people with disabilities have been the worst-hit by the Covid-19 pandemic this year.

"Loss of access to health-

care, support systems, education, livelihood and even basic food supplies are the new normal for the vast majority of India's differently-abled community. At this time especially and in the near future, access to support has become a survival issue."

Among its recommendations, the rights' body for the disabled people said the Union government should ensure inclusive tax policy measures for the differently-abled.

The NCPEDP said no GST should be levied on aids and appliances for persons with disabilities and no tax should be imposed on the purchase of cars and wheelchairs available in the national and international markets.

It also sought an increase in Standard Deduction under Section 80 U and 80 DD of Income Tax for persons with disabilities.

JNPT says it is adhering to all green norms for Vadnavan port development

Mumbai: The country's leading container port JNPT on Saturday said it is adhering to the terms of reference issued by the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change for prior environmental clearance for development of Vadnavan port. The Govt had in February approved a proposal to set up a new major port at Vadnavan near Dahanu in Maharashtra at an investment of ₹65,544 crore. The new port will be developed on a landlord model under a special purpose vehicle with Jawaharalal Nehru Port Trust as the lead partner with equity participation equal to or more than 50% to implement the project. Of this, ₹16,140 crores will be implemented by the SPV in constructing basic infrastructure like breakwaters, rail line/yard and road connectivity, power and water line, internal roads and common amenities, as per JNPT.



Amid soaring COVID-19 cases and deaths in the Capital, MUSBA HASHMI speaks with doctors and experts to bring you a report on why Delhi is struggling in navigating the third wave

DELHI SURGE: ALL TO BLAME

On Thursday, the Delhi Government informed the High Court that it is considering lockdown, night curfew in order to curb the virus. The fact that Delhi is one of the worst-hit States obviously leave the Government with no second choice.

But, what has led Delhi to this troublesome zone? Is it irresponsible public behaviour, festooning of throats with masks to escape penalty? Or is it the decision to relax the lockdown in the face of crashing economy, joblessness and societal depression?

Whatever the reason, fatalities have rocketed. Alarming, experts fear this is just the tip of the iceberg.

With 5,000 fresh cases daily and deaths peaking to over a 100, in the Capital a whopping 6 lakh have been impacted by coronavirus infection.

"The increasing death toll is a matter of worry for everyone. No one specific reason can be attributed for this surge. The causes are diverse and need to be dealt with accordingly. The toll is proportionate to the infected cases. Due to the rising number of cases, the hospitals are overburdened, hence providing timely treatment to all the patients is a big challenge. This can be one of the reasons for the deaths," Dr Shiba Kalyan Biswal, Consultant, Pulmonary and Sleep Medicine, Narayana Hospital, Gurugram, tells you.

Another reason can be that although COVID is a respiratory disease, it affects the immune system and the blood vessels as well. Such conditions aggravate co-morbidities that a person may have. Hence, if a person is suffering from some underlying disease, he is more prone to suffer from a serious condition after he contracts COVID infection. Such patients are also unfortunately adding to the toll," he said.

The ongoing festive and wedding season has added to the danger.

"Many people attended gatherings and social meetings. This also added to the problem. Also the fall in temperature can propagate any flu or infection. Dense population is also another factor in big cities and often people fail to follow social distancing norms. The lockdown was lifted because of economic constraints but as a result, the careless attitude of people in public places is reflected. It is time people avoid stepping out if unnecessary," he said.

Hans Raj Hans, Member of Parliament, North-West Delhi, said that Government laxity along with several other factors has led to high number of cases in the Capital.

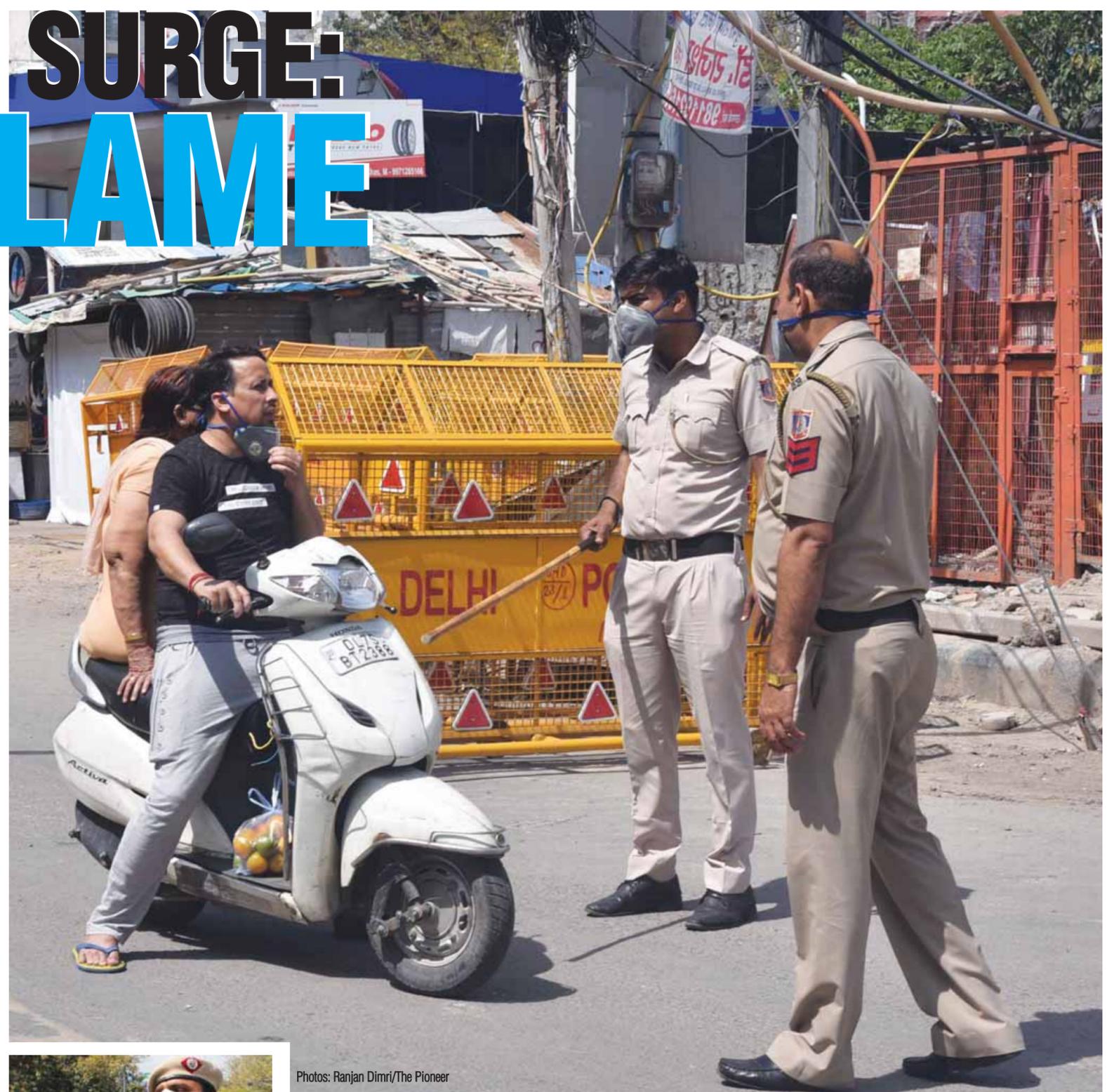
"Poor mask discipline, the decision to open all the markets, more than 50 people at weddings and other related functions, social gatherings during festivities, the deteriorating air quality index and rising respiratory disorders are reasons for the rise of COVID-19 in the National Capital. Besides, the casual approach of Delhiites is also one of the reasons for this rise. The Central Government is working with the State Government to control the situation in Delhi, but the residents should cooperate by taking all possible care. Without this cooperation, the situation will not abate anytime soon," Hans said.

It's been only nine days since the Delhi Government implemented a fine of ₹2,000 for not wearing a mask in public and within four days of the rule, the Delhi Police collected nearly ₹1.5 crore as challans. According to the data shared by the Delhi Police, a total 7,655 challans have been issued from November 20 to November 24. The figure, which then started to see a dip, is sufficient to explain how masks is not at all an option worth considering for Delhiites, who seemingly don't fear the deadly virus.

Varun Gupta, a social activist and environmentalist, agrees with Hans and says that Delhiites are extensively responsible for the current situation.

"To a great extent, Delhiites are responsible for the increase of COVID in the Capital. People should consider their mask as the only vaccine at present. During the festival time, what I analysed was that people almost forgot that the world is fighting a pandemic. The markets and some of the public places were crowded just like it used to be in the pre-COVID time. Adding to that, maximum people were not wearing masks or the same was and is below their nostrils. Such cases were seen in the metro too. Not only this, even vegetable sellers, shopkeepers, food stall owners, rickshaw man were seen without masks. Government, doctors, academics, social organisations, police, media and others keep telling peoples to take precautions, but people are living in oblivion. I would just say to everyone that there is still time to protect yourself," Gupta said.

Dr Shuchin Bajaj, Founder Director, Ujala Cygnus Group of Hospitals, tells you that the intensity of the second and third wave of a disease is always much widespread and it is the time when people need to take more precautions.



Photos: Ranjan Dimri/The Pioneer



STEPS TAKEN BY DELHI GOVERNMENT

- Challan of ₹2,000 for not wearing a mask in public
- Not more than 50 people allowed in marriages
- Aggressive testing. Daily RT-PCR tests limit has been increased to 37,200
- Atleast 205 ICU beds added in hospitals run by the Central and Delhi Governments
- 120 ventilators arrived from Bharat Electronics Limited, Bangalore, given to hospitals

"Historically, the intensity of second and third waves are always much widespread in case of any pandemic. People are now tired of the guidelines and are coming out in large numbers this leads to a much extensive viral load and more chances of getting exposed to the virus. If you remember, in the beginning of the pandemic the deaths of doctors were much higher because they had the higher viral load and they didn't know much about the virus. They didn't know the exact way of donning and doffing the PPE kits. But doctors have learnt rapidly and are following all the precautions. But the general public doesn't know the etiquette of wearing a mask. They keep taking it off just to speak and never shy away from touching the outer surface of the mask. So doing all these things proves to be very dangerous especially in crowded settings like markets and offices," he said.

He tells you that Delhi is now open to people accessing healthcare from the nearby cities which was not the case earlier. "People were not allowed to cross State boundaries during the first wave. Usually people come to Delhi when their case is critical and that's why the mortality in Delhi is higher," Bajaj added.

Bajaj feels that the guidelines of marriages should have been made permanent instead. "I feel that the limited crowd in weddings help us as a community also. It prevents poor people from getting exploited and also curtails the unnecessary expenditure. Undoubtedly, during COVID it prevents marriages from acting as super spreaders of infection," he said.

He points out that aggressive testing is necessary in any pandemic. "We can't keep chasing the virus all the time. We have to test and identify the people upfront those who are symptomatic. That's the reason South Korea got a handle on the pandemic very quickly because of the massive aggressive testing policy that they implemented," Bajaj said.

Even when Maharashtra and other States of India saw a surge in cases, Delhi managed to keep the case count as low as 2,000. Dr Sandeep Nayar, Senior Director, Centre of Chest and Respiratory Disease, BLK Super Speciality Hospital, tells you why things have gotten worse now.

"There are many factors, one of which is overcrowding. Now that all the markets are opened, people are out there and not following any social distancing norms or proper hygiene. If you see the scenario outside, people are climbing on each other. Not even 10 per cent of the people are wearing their mask properly. It is something that has troubled us. It goes without saying that this has contributed in the rising cases," Nayar explains.

The second reason is that because of the pollution the symptoms are getting worse. Earlier patients with mild symptoms were opting for home quarantine, but now COVID along with pollution is resulting in worsening of the symptoms and patients are rushing towards the hospital.

He believes that the high cases are not only a result of aggressive testing in the State. "States like UP have also increased the testing rate. Our positivity rate has gone up to 13 per cent. Aggressive testing is happening but then about 25 days back, the occupancy had come down to 70-80 per cent. Now things have gone from bad to worse and we had to add more beds. It is not only because people have tested positive, but because they are in a bad shape and have to be rushed to the hospital," Nayar tells you.

He adds the increasing mortality rate in Delhi can be attributed to the severity of the COVID-19 symptoms. "We are witnessing about 100 deaths

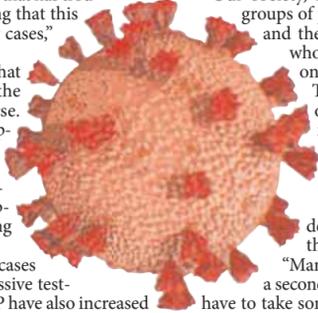
everyday. This is not acceptable by any means. The severity of symptoms have increased and people are not getting beds easily. The patient is moving from one hospital to another in search of a bed, this too and fro will surely make their symptoms worse. We are worried about this situation," he said.

The new rules implemented by the Delhi Government should help in curbing the cases. "These regulations should help. Initially, there were a limit of only 50 people in marriages. But then they removed it and now they have come back to it again. They have realised their mistake," he said.

Our society, Nayar says, is divided in two groups of people. One, who wears masks and the others who don't. "The ones who wear masks think that the later ones are fools and vice versa. They think that just because of one disease they will not wear a mask. It is only when they suffer from it they realise its severity. It is just that they learn the hard way," he said.

When can Delhi expect a decrease in the cases, Nayar says, that we can only hope for it. "Many European countries went for a second lockdown. Who knows we too have to take some stern steps. I am not saying we should go for a lockdown, it is purely the Government's call. But some strict steps should be taken to tackle this situation. Though, the Government has recently revised some rules, they have to be very strict and make sure that they are also implementing it. Just announcing won't make a difference," he said.

Lastly, he has a request to make to the general public. "Masks are a must. Take care of yourselves. Keep your body hydrated. Eat fresh fruits and vegetables. Avoid junk food," he said.



Team India need an ace

With no Plan B, Men in Blue have no option but to perform in 2nd ODI

India missing 'skill and character' of Dhoni: Holding

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Australia vs India
Live from 9:10am IST
SONY TEN 1, 3 & SIX NETWORK

PTI ■ SYDNEY

India's battered bowling unit will have little time to regroup and limited resources at its disposal in a desperate bid to perform a redemption act and save the ODI series against a turbo-charged Australia in the second game on Sunday.

It wasn't just about the margin of defeat — by 66 runs — but the manner in which the home team exposed India's vacant cupboard of all-rounders that will give Virat Kohli and Ravi Shastri numerous points to ponder.

Hardik Pandya's 76-ball-90 was at best a good innings but just like the Champions Trophy final in 2017, the sparkling knock was never going to help India win the contest.

Adding insult to injury the was Pandya's frank admission that he is not bowling anytime soon and even if he rolls his arm over, it is likely to be in 20-over World Cups.

So with no back-up all-rounders or a plan B in place, India will have to execute their plan A perfectly.

That leaves Kohli with bowlers who can't bat and a top-order where none can bowl. Kohli did bowl an over or two but that is history as far as the skipper is concerned.

With Australia's top three — captain Aaron Finch, David



Indian openers Shikhar Dhawan and Mayank Agarwal run between wickets during 1st ODI against Australia. BCCI/Twitter

Warner and Steve Smith — hitting the straps right away, Jasprit Bumrah and company will have no option but to pick up the pieces and give a better account of themselves on a strip that promises to be a belter.

It is highly unlikely that India's combination will change unless both Yuzvendra Chahal and Navdeep Saini are declared unfit.

The duo collectively conceded 172 runs in 20 overs between them and the wiry wrist-spinner did leave the field after sustaining an on-field injury just after the completion of his spell.

Saini, on the other hand, has

ONE DAY INTERNATIONALS AT SYDNEY					
Team	P	W	L	N/R	Success%
Australia	133	88	39	6	68.42
India	21	5	15	1	26.19
Aus vs Ind	18	15	2	1	86.11

HIGHEST INNINGS TOTALS		
Australia	376-9 in 50 overs vs Sri Lanka	08-03-2015
India	331-4 in 49.4 overs vs Australia	23-01-2016

FOR THE RECORD
 • Virat Kohli will become the eighth Indian and 43rd player overall to appear in 250 or more ODIs.
 • David Warner who scored 907 runs in 19 innings of 20 matches, needs 93 runs to become 11th Australian to score over 1000 runs against India in ODIs.

Faisal Features

back spasms and Thangarasu Natarajan has been inducted in the 50-over squad as a cover.

In case they are ruled out, Shardul Thakur, with decent batting abilities could replace Saini and Kuldeep Yadav's inclusion will be a forced change.

For Australia, it is possible that highly-rated all-rounder Cameron Green will be rewarded with an ODI cap as Marcus Stoinis picked up a side strain during the first game.

While a five-bowler theory is certainly hurting India, some of the shot selections at the top of the order left a lot to be desired.

Especially Shreyas Iyer, whose dismissal was an embarrassing sight as he fended awkwardly to a well-directed bouncer from Josh Hazlewood.

For Mayank Agarwal too, extra bounce became his undoing but he is too good a player to fail consistently.

Skipper Kohli, the man who is revered by the Australian team, media and public at large, would love to play a signature ODI knock, glimpses of which were on display during his 21 in the first ODI.

The lack of a sixth bowling option will put tremendous pressure on Bumrah, whose erstwhile ODI form has deserted him since he came back from his stress injury.

While he was brilliant in the IPL, just like the New Zealand series in February, the Gujarat slinger looked pedestrian at best at the SCG.

An equaliser on Sunday will be easier said than done.

West Indies fast bowling great Michael Holding feels that despite a star-studded batting line-up, the Indian team is missing the "skill and character" that the peerless Mahendra Singh Dhoni used to display during big run chases.

The Indian team looked completely out of sorts as a unit in the opening ODI against Australia.

After a listless bowling display that helped the home side reach 374 for 6, the Men in Blue crumbled under pressure, slumping to a 66-run defeat.

"It was always going to be difficult for India to chase that down. One thing India will struggle with is the loss of Mahendra Singh Dhoni," Holding said in a YouTube chat show *Holding Nothing Back*.

The 66-year-old further said that India missed the composure and control of Dhoni, who retired from international cricket in August this year.

"Dhoni comes in to this Indian batting order halfway down and he usually takes control while chasing. India have chased so well in the past with MS Dhoni in the team."

"This batting line-up that they have got is still very talented — we saw some talented players and fantastic strokeplay. Hardik played a beautiful knock but they still need a player like Dhoni. Not just his skills but his strength of character," he added.

Holding said the Indian team felt more confident going about run chases with Dhoni in the side.



"They have never been afraid to win the toss and insert the opposition because they know what MS Dhoni is capable of. Dhoni's calmness was a big factor in run-chases."

"We never see Dhoni panicking at any stage while India are chasing. He usually paces that chase so well because he knows his ability and he knows how to go about the chase."

The former pacer added that Dhoni not only assessed the situation well but also provided support and insights to the person batting alongside him.

"Whoever is batting with him, he is always talking with them and helping them. Fantastic batting line-up, but MS Dhoni was a special man in the run-chase," Holding said.

The former cricketer

turned commentator also slammed India's sloppy display on the field.

"India didn't help themselves with their fielding. The SCG is a big ground but the boundary rope was still in from the extremes of the boundary."

Kohli and company dropped at least four catches, missed a run out opportunity apart from several sloppy fielding efforts.

"India slipped up on quite a few occasions, with balls going over the fielders' heads and not going for sixes. There's no way you should be that far within the boundary."

"In any ground, it's a basic principle that you should not be that far in that the ball can go over your head and land within the boundary. If it goes over your head, it should be six and that is just basic," he added.

India cop 20% fine for slow overrate

PTI ■ DUBAI

The Indian cricket team was fined 20 per cent of its match fee for maintaining a slow over-rate against Australia in the series opening first ODI in Sydney.

India took an unprecedented four hours and six minutes to complete their 50 overs during their 66-run loss in the first ODI.

ICC match referee David Boon imposed the sanction after India was ruled to be one over short of the target after time allowances were taken into consideration.

Even Steve Smith after the match conceded that it was the longest 50-over game he had been part of.

"It was the longest 50 overs in the field I've ever had, that's for sure."

"I don't know what to put that down to. Obviously a few people came on the field in the first innings which took a bit of time and I think they (India) went 45 minutes over the scheduled time and we were something similar," Smith said.

If Hardik is unfit where's the replacement? asks Gambhir

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India opener Gautam Gambhir feels Virat Kohli's team will keep facing the problem of imbalance till it finds a suitable replacement for a half-fit Hardik Pandya as his nearest competitor Vijay Shankar is not of same level.

Pandya is playing currently as a specialist batsman and is not sure when he would be fully fit to bowl in ODI cricket.

Asked if there is a problem of balance, the hero of two World Cup triumphs couldn't agree more.

"Big time and this has been happening what — since the last World Cup. If Hardik is not fit (to bowl), where is your sixth bowling option," Gambhir was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo.

"It's only Vijay Shankar that I can think of but does he have the same impact batting at No 5 or 6. Can he give you seven or 8 overs, I have my doubts," the straight-talking Gambhir said.

According to

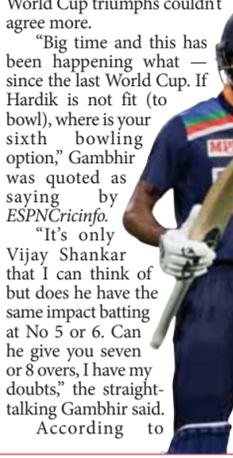
Gambhir, this is the kind of problem which can't be sorted even if an opener of Rohit Sharma's calibre comes back.

"You can talk (about) putting in Manish Pandey, even if and when Rohit Sharma comes back in the XI, the problem you are facing now you will be facing then. There is no one in the top six who can actually give you a coupe of overs," he said.

While Marcus Stoinis and Glenn Maxwell are already in the playing XI as pace and spin bowling all-rounders respectively, Australia have a number of back-up men with multiple skill-sets, including rookie Cameron Green, who is set to make his international debut.

"And if you see the Australian side, there is Moises Henriques, who can give you couple of overs, there is Sean Abbott who is bowling all-rounder. They have Daniel Sams who can both bowl and bat."

"From Indian point of view, if Hardik is unfit where is the replacement?"



Bairstow takes Eng home

AFP ■ CAPE TOWN

Jonny Bairstow powered England to a five-wicket win over South Africa in the first T20I at Newlands in Cape Town on Friday.

Bairstow smashed 86 not out off 48 balls as England chased down a victory target of 180 with four balls to spare.

England were struggling at 34/3 before Bairstow and Ben Stokes (37) changed the momentum of the match with a fourth wicket stand of 85.

Even so, South Africa still had a realistic chance of winning as England went into the last four overs needing 51 runs.

But left-arm fast bowler Beuran Hendricks conceded 28 runs in the 17th over, including three wides which cost eight runs, as Bairstow and England captain Eoin Morgan went on the attack.

Morgan said the win was "extremely pleasing, given that we were pretty average apart from two or three players."

Morgan said England's bowlers "missed areas", although left-arm Sam Curran claimed a career-best three for 28 in South Africa's innings of 179/6.

And he was disappointed with the batting start, although he praised Bairstow and Stokes.

"Jonny and Ben rebuilding



Jonny Bairstow attempts to play shot against South Africa during 1st T20I. AP

the way they did set up the win nicely," he told *SuperSport* television.

Bairstow batted at number four instead of opening as he often does in white-ball cricket.

"It's something you've got to enjoy," he said. "You learn to craft your innings in different ways."

Bairstow hit nine fours and four sixes, finishing the match in style with his fourth six which sailed into a building sight on the northern end of the ground.

Former captain Faf du Plessis top-scored for South

Africa with 58 off 40 balls after his side were sent in on a cool evening.

South Africa's first international match since March was staged without spectators because of Covid restrictions.

South African captain Quinton de Kock refused to blame the Hendricks over.

"I don't think it was just the one over. It was the way Jonny and Ben played. We didn't play badly. They played really well."

The teams meet again in a day game in Paarl on Sunday.

7th Pak cricketer tests Covid +ve

AFP ■ WELLINGTON

A seventh Pakistan cricketer tested positive for Covid-19 as the team remained confined to their hotel in Christchurch on Saturday, unable to train and with a question mark over their New Zealand tour.

The Pakistanis, who only arrived four days ago, are already on a "final warning" for breaching New Zealand's tight quarantine restrictions, with the growing number of coronavirus cases adding pressure to preparations for their opening match on December 18.

Despite all members of the squad returning negative tests before flying to New Zealand, six came up positive after testing on day one in the country.

"One additional member of the Pakistan cricket squad has today tested positive," the Ministry of Health said in a statement on Saturday, confirming the seventh patient.

"The remainder of the results from the squad's day-three swab testing, apart from the six who have already returned a positive result, are negative."

All overseas arrivals to New Zealand must spend two weeks in quarantine.



The 53-man squad will undergo further tests on Monday and in the meantime they remain confined to their rooms after permission to train while in isolation was revoked by New Zealand authorities.

The ministry said exemptions allowing teams to train while in managed isolation "are very difficult to obtain" and Pakistan's exemption was put on hold after several players were caught flouting social distancing protocols inside the quarantine hotel.

LAMICHHANE ALSO +VE

HOBART: One of T20 cricket's well-known journeymen, Sandeep Lamichhane has tested positive for Covid-19, the Nepalese leg-spinner said on Saturday, less than two weeks before the start of Big Bash League in which he'd signed to play for Hobart Hurricanes.



Sydney Thunder player poses with WBBL trophy after win. cricket.com.au/Twitter

Sydney Thunder win WBBL title

SYDNEY: Fine bowling helped propel Sydney Thunder to an upset seven-wicket win over Meg Lanning's Melbourne Stars and claim the women's Big Bash League title on Saturday.

Rachael Haynes' team restricted the Stars to just 86/9 off their 20 overs after losing the bat flip at North Sydney Oval and chased down the total easily with more than six overs to spare.

Knight (26 not out) and captain Haynes (21 not out) steered them home after fast bowlers Shabnim Ismail (2-12) and Sammy-Jo Johnson (2-11) left the Stars' top-order in tatters.

It was the Thunder's second title in the tournament's sixth season, having won the inaugural championship in 2016.

"It's an incredible feeling. It's an amazing effort from everyone at the club," said skipper Haynes. AFP

Hamilton takes 98th career pole

AFP ■ MANAMA

Seven-time Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton took his 98th career pole position in qualifying for the Bahrain Grand Prix on Saturday, with Mercedes team mate Valtteri Bottas alongside on the front row.

The Mercedes pair delivered their 11th front row lockout of the season and Hamilton's fastest lap of 1 min 27.264 sec was a track record time, endorsing his status as the outstanding man to beat at Sakhir's Bahrain International Circuit.

With two races to go, the Briton could reach a remarkable total of 100 pole positions at the final race while he is also seeking to increase his season total of wins from 10 to a record-equaling 13 triumphs.

It was his 10th pole this season and third in Bahrain, which puts him level with Sebastian Vettel as the most successful qualifier at the Sakhir track.

Max Verstappen was third ahead of his Red Bull teammate Alex Albon, who made a remarkable recovery in a car built with a new chassis overnight following his heavy crash in second practice on Friday.

Bahrain Grand Prix
Live from 6:15pm IST
STAR SPORTS SELECT 2

Sergio Perez was fifth for Racing Point ahead of the Renault pair of Daniel Ricciardo and Esteban Ocon with Pierre Gasly eighth for Alpha Tauri. Lando Norris was ninth for McLaren and Daniil Kvyat 10th in the second Alpha Tauri.

Ferrari, dominant in Bahrain last year when they locked out the top two spots in every session of practice and qualifying, failed to make it into the top 10 this time around.

They will start with Vettel in 11th and Charles Leclerc 12th. Racing Point's Lance Stroll, on pole in Turkey, was only 13th.

"I think with the pressure a little bit off, it was a release to go and drive like that," said Hamilton. "I am on the ragged edge, naturally, and it is about trying to find that perfect balance and chipping away."

"The lap started well, but a little bit of time was lost in Turn 1 — and Turn 6. I could have been a little bit better."

Otherwise, it was a very clean lap so I was really happy with it."



CWI team arrives Dhaka to inspect Covid-19 arrangements

PTI ■ DHAKA

A two-member Cricket West Indies (CWI) team arrived in Dhaka on Saturday to take stock of the Covid-19 management plans put in place by the Bangladesh Cricket Board ahead of their series in January.

CWI director Dr Akshai Mansingh and the board's security manager Paul Slowey, who arrived here to inspect the BCB's bio-security plans and health protocols, are also expected to travel to Chattogram. The duo will stay in the country till December 3.

"They arrived to come and see our Covid-19 management plan and the security plan ahead of their scheduled tour in January," BCB cricket operations chairman Akram Khan told *Cricbuzz*.

The two officials are likely to undergo a Covid-19 test on Saturday and begin their inspection, subject to clearance.

During the tour, West Indies are scheduled to play a full series comprising three Tests, as many ODIs and two T20Is.

The development comes close on the heels of CWI president Ricky Skerritt's recent statement that West Indies are keen to tour Bangladesh as scheduled, in January next year.

I'm in race for Olympics: Saina

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Indian badminton star Saina Nehwal on Saturday said she's definitely in the race for the Tokyo Olympics but before that she has to get back to her rhythm and win tournaments.

The 2012 London Olympics Bronze medalist, who has slipped to 22nd in Badminton World Federation's Tokyo Olympics qualification rankings, has recently struggled with niggles and is likely to return to action in next year's Asian Tour.

"I know Olympics is in everyone's head. It's something very big but before that you have to think about so many tournaments. I've to get back to my rhythm and win against the players who are in top-20," Nehwal said on Saturday.

"There's some two-three months' of training before that. You have to be perfectly fine and play seven-eight tournaments, after that only I will think about the Olympics. But yes, I'm definitely in the race. I want to do well and I'm working hard for that."

A big fan of tennis superstar Roger Federer, the 30-year-old Saina said if the Swiss ace along with the likes of Novak Djokovic, Rafael Nadal and Serena Williams can go strong at not so a young age, she too can.

"I can see great examples in Djokovic, Federer, Nadal, Serena doing so well. Why not you have to see how it goes? I'm a fighter and I will get back. When he can do it, why can't I?" she said.

"Yes, there were times when I felt



I have to 'stop playing' and 'I can't win anymore'. But then I thought I could push it.

"I love to fight. What will I do sitting at home. This is my life, this is my job," she added.

The former world number one, who recently pulled out of the Denmark Open that restarted the international calendar post Covid-19 pandemic halt, further said she can become the best in the world again.

"I'm doing well. Injuries play a big role and that happened to me. As of now, I feel good. I can do it, I can be the best in the world. It's always been there in my head. I've to correct my niggles. Improvement is definitely happening."

"That's how I play. I don't want to take that action suddenly. I want to see how badly I lose, if I'm not capable of playing anymore," she signed off.

VAR drama at Brighton

Liverpool saw two goals disallowed by VAR before the Seagulls were awarded a late penalty to clinch 1-1 draw



Brighton's Pascal Gross, second from left, scores the equalizer from spot during Premier League match between Brighton and Hove Albion and Liverpool at Amex stadium

AFP ■ BRIGHTON
Liverpool were frustrated by VAR as Pascal Gross's controversial late penalty rescued a dramatic 1-1 draw for Brighton at the Amex Stadium on Saturday. Jurgen Klopp's side took the lead through Diogo Jota's second half strike after Brighton's Neal Maupay had missed a penalty in the first half. But Liverpool were stunned in stoppage-time when Andrew

Robertson's challenge on Danny Welbeck was ruled a penalty after Stuart Attwell overturned his initial decision. Gross converted from the spot, leaving Klopp sarcastically applauding the officials at the end of a disappointing week for Liverpool after their shock Champions League defeat at home to Atalanta. Liverpool went back to the top of the table as a result of their draw, but the champions are just one

point ahead of previous leaders Tottenham. Tottenham would regain pole position if they avoid defeat at Chelsea on Sunday, while the Blues will go top if they win. It was one of those days for Liverpool, who also saw goals correctly disallowed by VAR for offside against Mohamed Salah and Sadio Mane. There was more bad news for injury-ravaged Liverpool as James Milner was forced off in the sec-

ond half. Klopp had claimed it was almost a "crime" that Liverpool had to feature in the early Saturday match after playing in the Champions League just three days earlier. He made six changes from the Atalanta game as Jota, Fabinho, Roberto Firmino, Andrew Robertson, Takumi Minamino and Nathaniel Phillips came into the starting line-up. Liverpool should have taken

Chelsea vs Spurs
Live from 10:00pm IST
STAR SPORTS SELECT 1

the lead in the opening moments when Fabinho unfurled a perfectly-weighted long pass that picked out Salah's run, but the Egyptian fired wastefully wide from just inside the Brighton area.



PENALTY DRAMA

With Virgil van Dijk and Joe Gomez injured and Joel Matip rested, Klopp's makeshift defence were exposed when Maupay's pass sent the unmarked Aaron Connolly racing through on goal. But with just Liverpool 'keeper Alisson Becker to beat, Connolly lost his nerve and timidly guided his shot well wide.

Connolly's runs were causing Liverpool problems and when the Brighton forward made another well-timed incursion in the 20th minute, he was tripped in the penalty area by the panicked Neco Williams after he was caught out of position.

Maupay stepped up to take the spot-kick, but his side-foot effort went wide despite

Alisson diving the wrong way. It was a lucky escape for Liverpool and Maupay's misery was compounded when he limped off injured moments later. Liverpool thought they had hit back with a sucker punch when Salah sprinted onto Firmino's pass and scuffed his shot past Brighton keeper Mat Ryan. But VAR curtailed Salah's celebrations as he was ruled offside by the tightest of margins.

After a spluttering first half, Klopp's men finally found some rhythm following Jordan Henderson's introduction at the break.

In a warning that Brighton failed to heed, Jota turned to flash a shot narrowly wide and in the 60th minute the Portugal forward put Liverpool.

Robertson found Salah and his pass teed up Jota on the edge of the Brighton area. Skipping past two Brighton defenders, Jota cleverly drilled low shot back into the bottom corner.

Jota has enjoyed a superb start to life with the Premier League champions, scoring nine times in 14 games since signing from Wolves in September.

Salah was substituted just after the goal, but he didn't seem happy with Klopp's move, gesticulating with his hands and ignoring the German when he walked past



FIGURATIVELY

- 6** Liverpool have dropped more points from winning positions this season (6) than they did in the whole of last season (5)
- 2017** Saturday was the first time Liverpool have dropped points in the Premier League thanks to goals scored after 90+ minutes since August 2017, with Miguel Britos' strike earning a 3-3 draw for Watford
- 9** Diogo Jota has scored nine goals in 14 appearances for Liverpool in all competitions, including eight in his last eight
- 1998** Neal Maupay is the first player to start a Premier League game, miss a penalty, and be subbed off before half-time since Dennis Bergkamp against Derby in April 1998
- 2** Riyad Mahrez is only the second African to score a Premier League hat-trick for Man City after Yaya Toure against Fulham in March 2014
- 1** Benjamin Mendy has scored his first goal for Man City (60th appearance in all competitions), finding the back of the net for the first time since March 2017, for Monaco against Marseille in the Coup de France
- 2016** Riyad Mahrez's second strike against Burnley was the first goal Man City have scored from a throw-in in the Premier League since April 2016 against Bournemouth (Aleksandar Kolarov)
- 100** Riyad Mahrez's opener for City was his 100th goal involvement in the Premier League (59 goals, 41 assists), becoming the sixth African player to reach this milestone in the competition after Drogba, Adebayor, Yakubu, Mane & Salah

AFP ■ VALENCIA

Atletico Madrid warmed up for their Champions League clash with Bayern Munich in midweek by picking up their sixth straight win in La Liga with a 1-0 victory at Valencia. Saturday's victory at the Mestalla, earned with a late own goal from the unfortunate Toni Lato, moved them level on points with leaders Real Sociedad, who have played a game more and will be in action on Sunday against Villarreal. Diego Simeone's team were missing Luis Suarez, still waiting to return from a positive test for coronavirus, and Diego Costa, who has been diagnosed with deep vein thrombosis. They also had Joao Felix resting on the bench but with Thomas Lemar in inspired form

Simeone's men go joint-top

Lato's own goal 11 minute from time gives Atleti 1-0 away win



Yannick Carrasco celebrates with Atletico Madrid teammates after goal

Barcelona vs Osasuna
Live from 6:30pm IST
FACEBOOK

trate Atletico. But the home side were ultimately beaten by an own goal on 79 minutes. Substitute Yannick Carrasco got to the byline and crossed from the left where Valencia full-back Lato, running onto the ball, turned it into his own net. "Luck plays a part," said Carrasco of the breakthrough. "We are just happy to have come here and won. The game against Bayern

Munich will be another difficult one but we have a big squad and we are ready for Tuesday." Domenech added: "We are really disappointed because we put so much into the game and I think we deserved a point from it." **MESSI RETURNS** Lionel Messi, Sergio Busquets and Frenkie de Jong are all back in the Barca squad for Sunday's LaLiga clash with Osasuna. Messi and De Jong were afforded rests in midweek, meaning they missed the 4-0

Champions League win away to Dynamo Kiev.

But both are likely to come straight back into the starting XI at Camp Nou on Sunday, when Messi will be hoping to continue his fine run against Osasuna, having scored 22 goals in 18 LaLiga meetings with the Pamplona side.

Busquets has not played for Barca since the 5-2 win over Real Betis on November 7 as he sustained a knee injury on international duty with Spain.

It is unclear if Busquets is to start, but he has seemingly been deemed fit enough to at least be on the bench.

Sergino Dest has also been included in the selection after reportedly suffering with a muscular problem.



Alexis Sanchez hugs Inter teammate Lautaro Martinez after scoring

Inter end Sassuolo's unbeaten start

AFP ■ MILAN
Inter Milan powered back from their midweek Champions League defeat by Real Madrid to sweep aside Sassuolo 3-0 and move second in Serie A on Saturday. Antonio Conte's side are on the brink of elimination from the elite European competition, but inflicted a first defeat this season on high-flying Sassuolo at the Mapei Stadium. "We always play great games, but we still lack something in the finishing," said Chilean Alexis Sanchez, who scored after just four minutes. "Against Real Madrid we made a lot of mistakes and we were timid coming onto the pitch. "But I have faith in my teammates and we have to do well against both the big and the small teams." Top Inter scorer Romelu Lukaku started on the bench along with Ashley Young, with Sassuolo without their No 1 scorer Francesco Caputo. Sanchez scored the first minutes into the game following

good work from Lautaro Martinez and poor defending from Sassuolo's Vlad Chiriches. It was a nightmare match for Chiriches, who then accidentally turned a powerful Arturo Vidal centre into his own net, with the Romanian later limping off with a muscular problem. Filip Djuricic missed a chance to pull the hosts back into the game, rattling the woodwork after 21 minutes.

Roberto Gagliardini added a third after an hour, sealing a win to boost Inter before next week's European trip to Borussia Moenchengladbach. Lukaku and Young came on in place of Lautaro and Sanchez for the final 10 minutes, with the Belgian forward having a goal ruled offside.

Conte also brought on Christian Eriksen, who looks set to leave Inter in January after just one year. The Danish midfielder came on for Ivan Perisic for the final five minutes.

Inter move second ahead of Sassuolo, with both teams on 18 points after nine games, two points behind AC Milan, who host Fiorentina on Sunday.

All Blacks pay touching tribute to Maradona

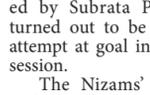
AFP ■ NEWCASTLE
Diego Maradona's death has saddened the world and rugby players feel no different. It was evident after New Zealand captain Sam Cane laid an All Blacks No 10 jersey emblazoned with Diego Maradona's name in the centre circle ahead of their match against Argentina in memory of the football legend on Saturday. The 1986 World Cup winner, a rugby fan, died in his sleep on Wednesday aged just 60, plunging his South American homeland and football globally into mourning. Both teams gathered in the middle at McDonald Jones Stadium in Newcastle, north of Sydney, ahead of their Tri-Nations clash for the tribute. It saw Cane symbolically place the shirt on the ground as a mark of respect ahead of their traditional haka. There were suggestions that the 10 shirt of the Pumas' Nicolas Sanchez could be retired for the game in honour of Maradona, who wore that number when playing for Argentina. But he donned it as normal. "I think he's a legend for everybody, but in Argentina, he was almost a god," Pumas coach Mario Ledesma, who played 84 times for his country, said shortly before kick-off. "He had the capacity of getting everybody together so we will miss him." Maradona was a huge fan of any Argentine sporting team, and Ledesma met him several times. "He came to many games, and he came once to our changing room after a game against the All Blacks in La Plata; we'd lost on the last ball," he said on Thursday. "I crossed paths a couple of times, but not many. He had an attraction, the world stopped when he was there. "He would watch tennis, hockey, rugby, football, whenever there was an Argentina jersey he was there and he was an example of how to represent that jersey." The All Blacks received praise for their touching gesture on social media.

BFC remain winless after goalless draw

PTI ■ FATORDA
Hyderabad FC and Bengaluru FC played out a drab draw in their Hero Indian Super League encounter at the Fatorda Stadium, on Saturday. The Nizams recorded their second successive clean sheet, grabbing four points in two outings — their best start in the league. However, it was a frustrating evening for Bengaluru FC, who are yet to taste a win this season. While Carles Cuadrat fielded an unchanged eleven from their 2-2 draw against FC Goa, Hyderabad coach Manuel Marquez made two changes to his line-up with the win against Odisha. Chinglensana Singh and Joel Chianese came in for Hitesh Sharma and Mohammed Yasir. The sides showed attacking intent from the word go and BFC had their first attempt as early as the fifth minute. Ashique Kurunian tried his luck from a distance but his effort took a deflection before being collected by Subrata Paul. This turned out to be the only attempt at goal in the first session. The Nizams' adamant defending frustrated Bengaluru, who struggled to take the ball up to their attacking trio of Sunil Chhetri, Kristian Opseth and Udanta Singh. Trying to find an alternative, Bengaluru engaged in long-range shots, which proved futile. Going forward, Hyderabad were the better side in the first half. The men in yellow nearly took the lead in the 25th minute from a Lluís Sastre set-piece. Bengaluru keeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu denied Aridane Santana's header with a full-stretch save to keep the scores level. Hyderabad pushed Bengaluru



Kurunian tried his luck from a distance but his effort took a deflection before being collected by Subrata Paul.



deep in their territory with Halicharan Narzary, Joel Chianese and Santana making regular inroads. However, the visitors suffered a blow before the break as their foreigners — Chianese and Sastre limped off the pitch with Yasir and Sharma replacing the duo. Despite making a half-time change, replacing Kristian Opseth with Dimas Delgado, Bengaluru had nothing different to offer as their opponents continued to dominate the play. Santana's struggle continued as he missed a great opportunity to put his side ahead in the 55th minute. After dribbling past the Bengaluru defence, the Spaniard's shot was way off target. With some fine defending from either side, frustration was clearly visible on the pitch. Both sides repeatedly tried to find the net from distance with the attempts being either blocked or going way off target.

Normal service is resumed

Lewandowski hits 15th goal of season as Bayern come from behind to stay top



Robert Lewandowski celebrates after scoring Bayern's second goal

home to Cologne. Tunisia midfielder Ellyes Skhiri tapped in both Cologne goals from corners by ex-Dortmund winger Marius Wolf after being left unmarked at the far post on both occasions. With Dortmund 2-0 down on 60 minutes, coach Lucien Favre brought on three forwards — 16-year-old sensation Youssoufa Moukoko, Giovanni Reyna and Thorgan Hazard. Reyna, 18, set up Hazard to pull a goal back, but it was too little, too late. After scoring six goals in his previous two games, Dortmund striker Erling Braut Haaland was held in check, squandering a golden chance to equalise just

before the whistle. Cologne avoided a club record 19th match without a win with their first victory in Dortmund since 1991. Leipzig climbed above Dortmund to second, two points behind Bayern, thanks to a 2-1 home win over plucky strugglers Arminia Bielefeld. Manchester City loanee Angelino gave Leipzig a first-half lead after a superb pass by 18-year-old Lazar Samardzic split the Bielefeld defence. Just 60 seconds after coming off the bench, forward Christopher Nkunku netted Leipzig's second goal early in the

second half. However, Bielefeld, who are second from bottom, finished the stronger. Their captain Fabian Klos pulled a goal back, just after Leipzig striker Alexander Sorloth had his penalty attempt saved on 73 minutes. The Norway international, bought to replace Timo Werner who joined Chelsea, is yet to score in 10 games for Leipzig after netting 24 goals in 34 games for Trabzonspor last season. Union Berlin are sixth after their action-packed 3-3 draw at home to Eintracht Frankfurt. Max Kruse converted a penalty as Union raced into an early 2-0 lead, only for Portugal forward Andre Silva to net twice as Frankfurt led 3-2 late on. Freiburg are winless in their last eight games after a 1-1 draw at Augsburg.



'Chhalaang was slated to do well'

■ Were there surprises that Chhalaang did so well?

I was pretty sure that it would do well. It is an inspirational film; it has a sports background; the repertoire of actors was brilliant. There is Rajkumar (Rao) and Nushrat (Bharucha). Luv Ranjan is a great producer, Hansal (Mehta) is a great too. Sometimes while shooting you come to know that

film will do well. For me, this movie was important since I had to adapt to the new style of acting which is more life-like. For me, this is a new beginning in some ways because now I am getting to play more serious characters rather than do comedy. Now, good roles are coming to me that are meaty and powerful. I am grateful that people have loved it.

■ How did you come on board the project?

I was contacted. I had met Hansal (Mehta) at the Melbourne Film Festival two years back. I am a great fan of his style of work; it is fantastic. I had out in a word with him back then and it is always good to do this when there are certain directors one wants to work with. One should not shy away from telling a director you want to work with them. Much later, I got a call from Luv Ranjan's office. I had a great time shooting.

■ How was it to work with Hansal Mehta, Rajkumar Rao and Nushrat Bharucha?

It was great. They are all cool people. We were shooting in Haryana in a village that was quaint and quiet and the weather was good. Actors like Rajkumar and Nushrat are today's actors. You learn from them.

There is a terrace scene in the movie where Rajkumar says that he has not been able to do anything in life and 'I have left everything'. The shot was so brilliantly done. I knew the next was my shot and knew that I had to give it more than my best. Hansal directs you softly and directs you in the right direction. The actor must do his lines properly and deliver them with utmost conviction. I used to record my lines and Luv Ranjan told me that I was so child-like in my approach to acting — re-working on my lines. I told him that Raj has delivered his lines so well I need to just as well.

■ What next — acting or directing?

My directorial venture *Kagaaz* stalled mid-way due to the pandemic but it is ready now. The movie stars Pankaj Tripathi in the lead. It is releasing in December-January. It is based on a true story and is being presented by Salman Khan. In fact, I was inspired to make this film after I read an article in *The Pioneer* back in 2003. So, *The Pioneer* was the inspiration for it. The title of the article was — *Yes, I am Alive*. I took the rights for it. I took time to make a movie because back then nobody had heard of biopics. I waited for the right time. I am excited about this movie. As an actor, there are many projects. Anupam (Kher) and I have just finished shooting for a movie in Bhopal titled *The Last Show* by Vivek Ranjan Agnihotri. The film is

about two friends. I am a producer of this film as well.

■ What is your take on big movies releasing on OTT platform?

In terms of reaching masses, OTT is the best option. At one go you reach a huge audience. The number is viewers increases exponentially for a product that you have made with heart. But cinema (going to the theatre) has its charms. It is unfortunate that the present pandemic has disrupted that. Here the OTT becomes important and this medium has to be the forefront. This is also a positive. One can have a wider audience and experiment with wider subjects. Theatres and cinema will take time to attract people.

■ You are a director and producer as well. How tough is it to follow another?

My training has been that of an actor. I became a director much later. When I go on the sets, I let the director take over my personality. I don't let my own director in me come to the fore. I am an obedient actor and always looking to grasp things that the director wants and follow his instructions. I can't bring in my directorial experience into the equation. But when I am acting, the director in me helps to give the shot my best.

■ What makes roles like Calendar, Pappu Pager and Sharafat Ali so popular even today?

It is because the common man on the street identifies with the characters I have played over the years. Kunj Biharilal in *Haseena Maan Jagegi* to German in *Hum Aapke Dil Mein Rehte Hain* to Sharafat Ali in *Bade Miya Chote Miyan* to Calendar in *Mr India*, all these characters — it is the actor's duty to make them come alive and connect with the people. I am from Delhi, Karol Bagh. I roamed the streets and met people from the lower strata. All these characters that I have played, I know them and it becomes a tipping point for the audience making them popular.

■ You have directed some of the best movies in Bollywood. Did you think they would become so big that people still love to see them?

I belong to the 80s era. At that time, multiplexes were not there nor was 24X7 TV. The fairytale subjects would work even though we didn't have very much space to deviate from the love story or revenge dramas that were so popular back then. Today, people can see all the movies that have been made across the globe. The horizon has widened, the subjects of the 80s-90s won't work. Back then, several movies on the same subjects were made and did so well. I worked with David Dhawan in 16 films. These films were loved due to music, dialogues and family content.

Talktime

SATISH KAUSHIK

He wrote the dialogues for *Jaane Bhi Do Yaaron*, became popular as *Calendar* and has directed movies like *Roop Ki Rani Choron Ka Raja*, *Tere Naam* and *Prem*. The actor-director-producer speaks with Shalini Saksena about why there were no surprises that *Chhalaang* did so well and upcoming projects

It is very rare that one gets to hear about an international children's film festival and that too an online one. Even if we had, the exposure that these events get is only knee-high, if we exclude the big players in the market. However, the pandemic has definitely changed our lives by and large. But that doesn't mean, one has to succumb to the adversities or compromise.

Meet Praveen Nagda, Festival Director of KidzCinema, an online international kids film festival, who decided to take a step ahead and introduce the festival, that too on an international scale.

"It's a no-brainer that the pandemic and the lockdown that followed has impacted us in every manner. It left all of us cooped in our homes, let alone the children. While the adults were able to somewhat handle the situation, things were worse for toddlers and young children. It was like living in a jail for them. Hence, they ended up being glued to their mobile phones day-long. That's when I thought why not come up with something that will involve children across the world. So that they can explore and learn something new," Nagda says and tells you that it was only by the end of the September that the idea hit him.

Though time-constraint was there, but Nagda feels that this is one of the pros of online event that things can be managed even at a short notice. "There was no pressure of finalising the location or managing the logistics. We just had to reach out to the jury members and that was easy. I got a positive response from them and none of them was apprehensive about this festival. Having said that, we had to do things at a faster pace to meet the deadline, but rest assured it was fun," he tells you. The three-day long festival flagged off on Universal Children's Day, November 20.

The festival was opened by Subhash Ghai and was concluded with an announcement of Golden Gya Awards, which had some of the eminent jury members including Satish Kaushik, Dr Madhu Chopra, Meghna Ghai Puri, Vinod Ganatra, Bobby Sarma Baruah, and international child cinema authorities like Marion Creely, Sean Cisterna, Pierre Assouline and Josep Arbiol.

Besides, children also enjoyed a master class by Amole Gupte, masterclass on smartphone filmmaking by Ritesh Taksande, theatre workshop by Gulshan Walia, storytelling workshop by Deepa Kiran, animation workshop by Munjal Shroff, acting workshop by Suvahhdan Angre, scriptwriting workshop by Varun Gautam, becoming a character by Nivedita Bhargava, filmmaking workshop by Ashok Kaul among other activities.

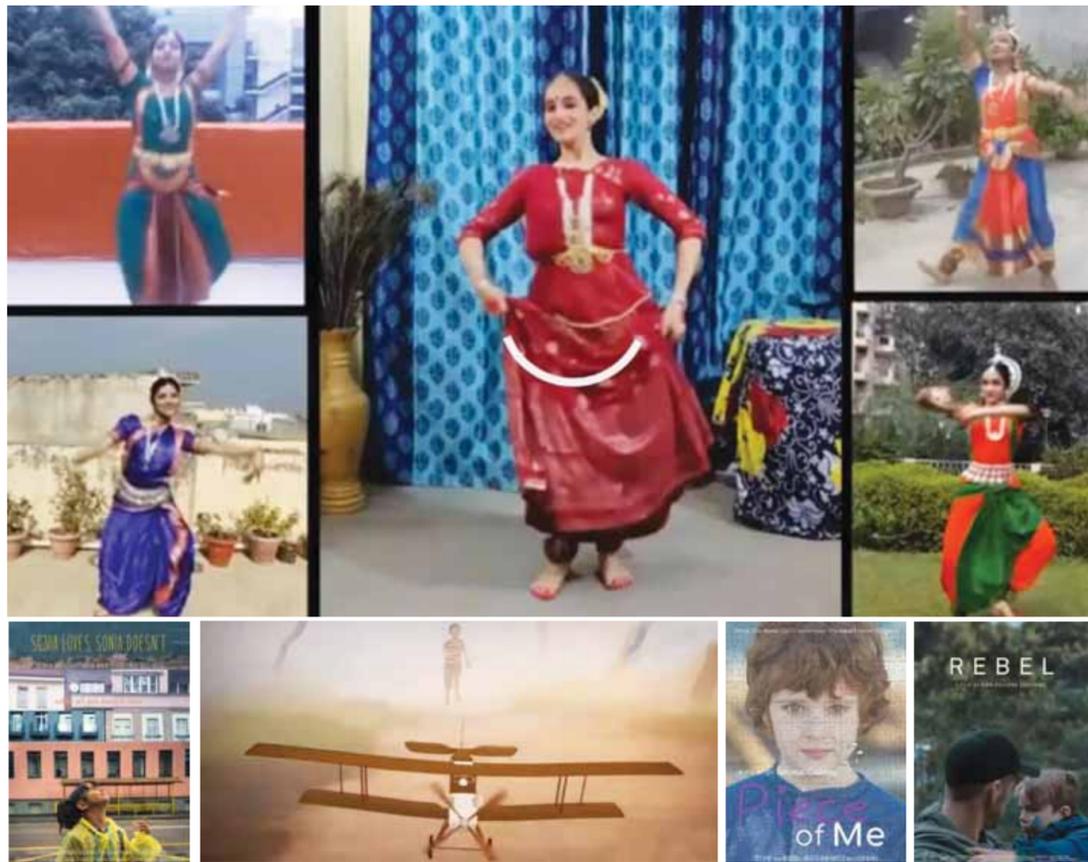
Nagda says that he is overwhelmed with the response that the first edition of the festival has received. "The festival was live streamed on our Facebook page and also on our YouTube channel. To my surprise, the viewership increased every day. I am glad people all over the world liked it," he tells you.

He tells you that the festival received 1101 film entries from 87 countries, there were 88 films, which made into official selection, out of which 44 films were screened at the festival. "We had 262 entries from India, 191 from Iran, 63 each from Brazil and Spain, 47 from the UK. We had entries from the smaller countries also, there were three entries from Luxembourg and Singapore too," he tells you.

Nagda insists that the need is to focus on children's cinema and tap this market even

NO KIDDING

KidzCinema, an online international film festival, was held recently. Festival Director PRAVEEN NAGDA tells MUSBA HASHMI how the idea hit him, how hard was it to convince people for the festival and why more children's films are needed



more. "If you see the Scandanavian countries, children cinema is much more evolved there than normal cinema. And it makes more money than commercial cinema. But yes, cultural and regional differences are there and it might not be the right comparison to make, but we need to focus on it. There are some people who have done some great work, take for example Amole Gupte who have made memorable films like *Taare Zameen Par* and *Stanley Ka Dabba*. But more filmmakers should come ahead

and dedicate a part of their time and resources to make something for kids," Nagda says.

Ashish SK, Founder — Punaryug Artvision Pvt Ltd and Screenyug Creations Pvt Ltd, Chairman, AVGC, FICCI says that the very idea of KidzCinema provides kids an exposure to over 1100 films from 87 countries. "This will allow them to understand the cultures, ambiance, and storytelling from all over the globe. Also, that the films are in live-action & animation makes for an interesting mix. A large number of films which are made by the kids for the kids are shown as well. This is a great beginning for India, and I am sure that the concept will continue for generations to come," Kulkarni tells you.

With the amount of love and appreciation that the first edition of the festival has

received, it goes without saying that Nagda will bring the festival back next year round. "The festival is like a mission for me now. We will keep organising it year after year, until our grandchildren grows up to watch them. We will keep improving the curatorial quality, we will involve more people and instead of keeping it as a yearly affair, we will try to add smaller editions of it year-round, mostly in the rural areas. Also we will try and add discussion sessions for children with noted filmmakers. Since this is an online event, there is a scope for hundreds of thousands of things," he explains.

As to if Nagda plans to keep it online forever, he tells you that only time will decide it. "One thing is for sure that we will keep it online until things get back to normal. We don't want to put anyone at risk. May be when there is a vaccine or social distancing norms are eliminated, we will plan to take it offline," he asserts.

'I'm enjoying the process of writing new songs now'

Singer-songwriter ROHAN SOLOMON speaks with SHALINI SAKSENA about western music scene in Delhi, how he wrote his first song at 13 and what kind of music inspires him

■ How did you get interested in music?

I've loved music ever since I was a child. I think the first song I was ever obsessed with is *Lakdi ki kaathi* from the movie *Masoom*. My parents and brother had a collection of cassette tapes and LP records in the house that ranged from *Michael Jackson*, *Jackson 5* and *The Beatles*. I used to listen to them all the time. I learnt how to play the piano and guitar. After discovering songwriting, I found an outlet where I could express my thoughts and feelings. One day in school, my house was on duty and the kid who was supposed to perform the talent segment fell ill. I got up on stage and performed and got a standing ovation. I knew from that day onwards that music is more than just a hobby to me. It's my passion, it's my life.

■ How old were you when you wrote your first song?

It was actually just a few days after my 13th birthday. I wrote it for a girl in my class that I had a crush on at the time. It's actually a good song and can hold its own even if I played it today. Lyrically it's definitely very teen pop, but musically, it can be appreciated by adults even today. It's the song that started my songwriting journey and I'm definitely very proud of it. I don't think I'll ever perform it live on stage, but I play it every now and then when I'm alone even now. In fact, I played it on a live stream on social media one time.

■ A lot of artists are singers, song-writers and composers. Is there a reason for donning so many hats?

It's usually developed along the way for many musicians. It's also a smart business model to be able to have multiple skills in this industry. I can't really speak for anyone else, but in my journey, I never saw singing and songwriting as two different things. Perhaps because I started doing both around the same time. At the end of the day, having multiple skills is never a bad thing. If you enjoy the process, then it honestly doesn't even feel like work.

■ How did you get associated with The Big Beat?

Well, I've known Malvika Nanda (founder of The Big Beat) for many years. When I moved back to India, Malvika gave me a lot of guidance and just helped me out so much as a friend. We got such an amazing response from the three singles that we did, that I just told her that I'm writing some new songs as a solo artist as well, let's keep the ball moving.

■ This is your third single this year. Has it been tough to work under the restrictions imposed due to the pandemic?

At first, it seemed tough because it limited my access to better studios with better equipment and acoustics. But I realised that my home studio actually sounds pretty great and I already had the tools I needed to make a great sounding record. Thanks to technology and amazing audio plugins that are being made today, producing music from home has become a breeze.

The only situation where it became a problem is when I'm producing for other artists. Obviously, they can't come over to the studio any more. So, we've been doing everything online through video chat and screen sharing. It's been an adjustment but we've found our rhythm.

■ How is the western music scene in Delhi?

Before we got hit with the pandemic, I was regularly judging college music competitions and was introduced to so many amazing young artists that are writing their own songs and very western influenced. There are probably only one or two places that I can think of where you could go watch a live western music band perform. Everything else was basically all DJs and electronic music. That's something that I wasn't too happy about to be honest. I hope that more venues open their minds and their hearts and start promoting live bands a bit more. There is enough room for multiple genres of artists to co-exist.

■ What kind of music inspires you?

My musical taste has changed over the years. I've been in a rock and metal zone, funk zone and Broadway musicals. These days I'm more into singer-songwriter pop kind of stuff. Some of the artists that I'm vibing on these days are Sara Bareilles, Charlie Puth and Keith Urban. I also love the new Taylor Swift folk album. I'm also loving stuff that has a symphony orchestra in it. That's my vibe these days. It's inspiring me to write new music.

■ What next?

You can definitely expect more music from me soon. I am in a state of writing constantly. I'd say even more so at the moment, since I'm in the hills and fresh mountain air and sunshine make the perfect combination to get your creative juices flowing. I'm enjoying the process of writing new songs. I'm also loving pulling songs out of the vault.

— By Chef Nancy Silverton

A SCRUMPTIOUS PISTACHIO TART

PISTACHIO MACAROON TART

Yield: 1 tart / 35cm x 11cm

Dough:

2 cups / 240 g all-purpose flour
¼ cup / 50 g granulated sugar
¼ cup / 50 g light brown sugar
¼ cup / 32 g cornstarch
½ tsp / 1.5 g kosher salt
½ cup / 60 g whole pistachios
8 oz / 226 g unsalted butter

Method:

■ Adjust the oven rack to the middle position and preheat oven to 347 °F (175 °C).

■ In the bowl of a food processor, add flour, sugar, cornstarch, salt and pistachios. Run the processor until the pistachios are ground up. Add the butter and pulse on and off until the dough comes together.

■ On a lightly floured surface, roll the dough out into a 13 ¾ inch x 4 ½ inch (35 cm x 11 cm) rectangle, ¼ inch (6.5

mm) thick. In a 13 ¾ inch x 4 ½ inch (35cm x 11 cm) tart pan, place the dough and press along the edges to form the dough to the pan.

■ Bake until lightly browned, about 20-25 minutes. Allow to cool.

Pistachio Topping:

½ cup / 125 g pistachios, shelled
¼ cup / 50 g granulated sugar
1 tbsp / 21 g honey
1 tsp / 5 g orange blossom water
½ extra-large each / 15 g egg white
1 tsp / 5 g vanilla extract
¼ tsp / 1.5 g baking powder
¼ tsp / 1.5 g kosher salt

Method:

■ Put the sugar, honey, orange blossom water, egg white, vanilla, baking powder, and salt in a medium bowl. Stir with a rubber spatula to thoroughly combine. Add the pistachios and stir to coat the nuts in the syrup.

Macaroon Filling:

3 ¼ oz / 92 g pistachios, shelled
1 ½ cups / 173 g powdered sugar



½ cup / 62.5 g all-purpose flour
3 extra-large minus 1 tbsp / 176 g egg whites
4 ½ oz / 128 g unsalted butter
½ vanilla bean
¼ cup / 25 g powdered sugar (for

dusting)

Method:

■ In the bowl of a food processor, grind the nuts with half of the sugar, until it is a fine meal consistency. Add the flour, remaining sugar, and pulse to combine. Pour in two-thirds of the egg whites and process until it is a smooth paste. Add the remaining egg whites and pulse on and off until completely combined.

■ In a small saucepan, over medium high heat, begin to melt the butter. Using a small paring knife, split the vanilla bean in half lengthwise and scrape out the seeds with the back of the knife. Add the scrapped seeds and the bean to the butter. After a few minutes the butter will begin to foam and darken. Swirl the pan to promote even browning taking care it does not burn. Continue to cook about 5-7 more minutes until the bubbles subside and the liquid is dark brown with a nutty and toasty aroma. Remove the vanilla bean.

■ Slowly pour the brown butter into the

nut mixture, whisking continuously. Pour the mixture into the tart pan over the dough. Bake for 8 minutes.

■ Remove the tart pan from the oven and quickly distribute the nut topping on top. Return the tart back to the oven and finish baking for about 15-20 minutes until the nut topping is golden brown, rotating the tart halfway to ensure even browning. Remove the tart from the oven and set it aside to cool to room temperature.

■ To serve, pour the remaining powdered sugar for dusting into a fine mesh sieve and tap the sieve over the tart to dust it lightly.

the pioneer agenda



You go through spells where you feel that maybe you're too sensitive for this world. I certainly felt that — Winona Ryder

FROM THE INSIDE

Pebbles of a dead sea

Few know that Goa has a past that dates back to the saga of Parshuram in Hindu mythology and India's pre-Islamic era



Mind balance is the key

It is important to work upon our mind-state before pursuing spiritual process, otherwise it will not offer desired results



As the world got busy battling the effects and impact of the virus, hackers saw this as an opportunity to exploit new vulnerabilities that emerged from a large numbers working from home, writes AJAY SINGH, as he explains various cyber risks faced by individuals and groups and suggests ways to tackle them

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to lockdowns across the world and made working from home an inevitable necessity. While this allows businesses to remain operational, it has exposed organisations to several new risks, particularly for those who fail to take the proper precautions. Even as the world got busy battling the effects and impact of the virus, hackers saw this as an opportunity to exploit new vulnerabilities that emerged from a large work force working from home.

Various reports around the world indicate a sharp increase in cybercrime even as Covid-19 has caused major disruptions and forced changes in the way we work. During this crisis, there has been a sudden surge in cybercrime in many countries with cybercriminals preying on new factors and vulnerabilities related to information systems that have come into play.

Scams, phishing websites, maps loaded with malware, and spam messages linked to the Coronavirus have been reported the world over. Dominic Raab, the British Foreign Secretary observed in early May that "There will always be some who seek to exploit a crisis for their own criminal and hostile ends. We know that cyber criminals, and other malicious groups are targeting individuals, businesses, and other organisations by deploying Covid-19 related scams and phishing emails." Since then cyber threats and attacks have only increased.

The lockdowns have not only made us work from home, but also shop-from-home, study-from-home, bank-from-home, attend meetings from home and so on. Studies have also shown a dramatic increase in the amount of time people are spending on-line. Fortunately, technologies like video conferencing, BYOD (Bring Your Own Device), VPN (Virtual Private Network), and collaborative platforms exist today that enable working from home. However, the exposure to cyber risk has grown exponentially and rather suddenly and existing security standards have been compromised. Cybercriminals have been quick to discover that employees working from home have weaker cybersecurity than when they operate from their offices. They have exploited new weaknesses in the various technologies used and have incessantly launched attacks.

Given that we are spending (and will continue to spend) a major part of our lives on-line, a comprehensive assessment of the cyber risks that we are exposed to as individuals, families, and businesses, is key to survive and thrive.

A large number of organisations have already announced that some office-based employees will be working from home in some form for the foreseeable future and perhaps even permanently. This shift to a work from home environment which initially was

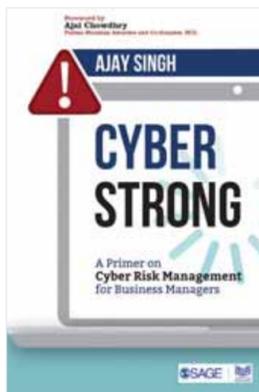
considered as a temporary solution may become a regular practice. This necessitates a complete rethink on cyber risks and involves moving away from traditional cybersecurity approaches. Any policies and protocols related to cybersecurity which were introduced when companies switched to work-from-home may have served them in the short-term, but when it comes to long-term measures, a thorough re-evaluation needs to be conducted. With the easing of lockdown restrictions, when employees will no longer be confined to working from home, the larger questions of dealing with cyber risks of working-from-anywhere will become more relevant. The top of the cybersecurity agenda for individuals, businesses, and governments in the aftermath of coronavirus should therefore be to mitigate cyber risks and build a safer and more resilient cyber environment.

INDIVIDUALS AND CYBER RISKS

We have all been a target of cyber-attacks in some form or the other, for instance phishing attacks, phone calls or SMSs from cybercriminals, among others. They are after your personal data, passwords, social ids, bank information and social contacts... basically anything that can either fetch them a price for your data or can help them launch bigger attacks. Escaping a cyber-attack means that you have been vigilant, prepared or simply lucky enough to avoid one.

There are fortunately many things we can do as individuals to make our online existence safer while working from home or for that matter working from anywhere. Before looking at what we can do, consider the findings of the latest Norton Cyber Security Insights Report which suggests that:

- 30% of people cannot detect a phishing attack and another 13 percent cannot tell the difference between a real message and a phishing email. This implies that four in 10 are vulnerable.
- Eighty-six percent of people said they may have been a target of a phishing incident.
- 70% of consumers wish that their home Wi-Fi network could be made more secure. However, a mere 27% consider it likely that their home Wi-Fi network could be susceptible to attack.
- This goes to show that cyber threats are greatly enhanced by the fact people are largely unaware of the cyber risks that they have to contend with and the counter measures they must adopt to mitigate the risks. Some of the basic things that contribute to maintain better cyber hygiene while working from home are:
 - Instead of using personal devices, company-provided computers and laptops should be used
 - A VPN software can be utilised to connect the organisation network
 - Using different devices for work and leisure



THE LOCKDOWNS HAVE NOT ONLY MADE US WORK FROM HOME, BUT ALSO SHOP-FROM-HOME, STUDY-FROM-HOME, BANK-FROM-HOME, ATTEND MEETINGS FROM HOME AND SO ON. STUDIES HAVE ALSO SHOWN A DRAMATIC INCREASE IN THE AMOUNT OF TIME PEOPLE ARE SPENDING ON-LINE. FORTUNATELY, TECHNOLOGIES LIKE VIDEO CONFERENCING, BYOD (BRING YOUR OWN DEVICE), VPN (VIRTUAL PRIVATE NETWORK), AND COLLABORATIVE PLATFORMS EXIST TODAY THAT ENABLE WORKING FROM HOME. HOWEVER, THE EXPOSURE TO CYBER RISK HAS GROWN EXPONENTIALLY

- Stopping remote access unless it is a necessity
- Default passwords should be changed
- Devices and online accounts should have strong passwords. For both personal and business accounts multi-factor authentication wherever available, should be utilised
- Meeting links should strictly not be shared publicly or through social media platforms
- Trusted apps or those recommended by one's employer should be used for work involving collaboration
- Regularly updating operating systems, antiviruses and other applications on computers and other devices
- Home Wi-Fi and admin passwords should be changed regularly, while avoiding open/free Wi-Fi networks
- Cyber-hygiene guidelines as laid out by one's employer should be strictly followed

ORGANISATIONS AND CYBER RISKS

Today, almost all businesses regardless of the industry they are in and their size are vulnerable to cyber-attacks which can happen at any time, without warning. This is true across sectors and geographies. The pandemic has only accelerated the need to implement comprehensive cybersecurity programs after a thorough assessment of existing, new, and emerging cyber risks. The concept of a cyber 'perimeter' which was once confined to the walls of an organisation or a data centre has completely eroded. Security professionals have been forced to abandon the traditional castle-and-moat strategy used so effectively in the past due to the arrival of cloud computing and the use of portable devices by organisations coupled with the integration of personal devices into organisational systems. The cyber perimeter has interminably moved from the walls of the enterprise to what is today a flexible and extended virtual perimeter. This calls for a reassessment of cyber risks and requirements across the following four dimensions:

- **Technology dimension:** securing IT systems, applications, networks, data, and devices
- **People:** employees and others who are users and have access an organisation's system
- **Policies, Procedures and Processes** that are used to run business operations
- **Laws, regulations, and compliance**

In the near future as the pandemic continues, there are a few types of cyber-threats companies must specifically be prepared for and safeguard against:

Ransomware: Ransomware is a type of malware that is used to deny access to a computer system or data by encrypting the information and keeping it hostage until the ransom is paid. There has been an alarming rise

in Ransomware attacks in recent months. The deployment methods include socially engineered emails packed with malware, or a weblink that triggers a drive-by download. Some of the ways to protect your systems from Ransomware attacks include changing default passwords at all access points, training employees in identifying suspicious email links, keeping air-gapped up-to-date data back-ups, prohibiting the use of USB drives, and updating all operating systems and software in time.

Phishing: This is a type of social engineering attack where hackers attempt to steal login credentials such as passwords or deceive people in multiple ways into installing malware. Employee training to recognise phishing emails and the use of multi-factor authentication can help to prevent or mitigate damage from a cyber-attack which may result from a phishing exploit.

Business email compromise: During this pandemic, a large number of cases of business email compromise instances have been reported. Here, cybercriminals spoof emails (usually making them look like they are from legitimate sources) to redirect a payment intended for one of the company's suppliers to their own bank accounts. In a work from home scenario, where employees are not in front of each other to seek clarifications, these kinds of cyber-attacks are on the rise. Preventing such attacks calls for a high degree of vigilance and situational awareness among employees (especially those processing payments). Employees must be advised to be careful and alert to such attempts and double check before they initiate action. Organisations must also implement additional controls to prevent any mistakes in this regard.

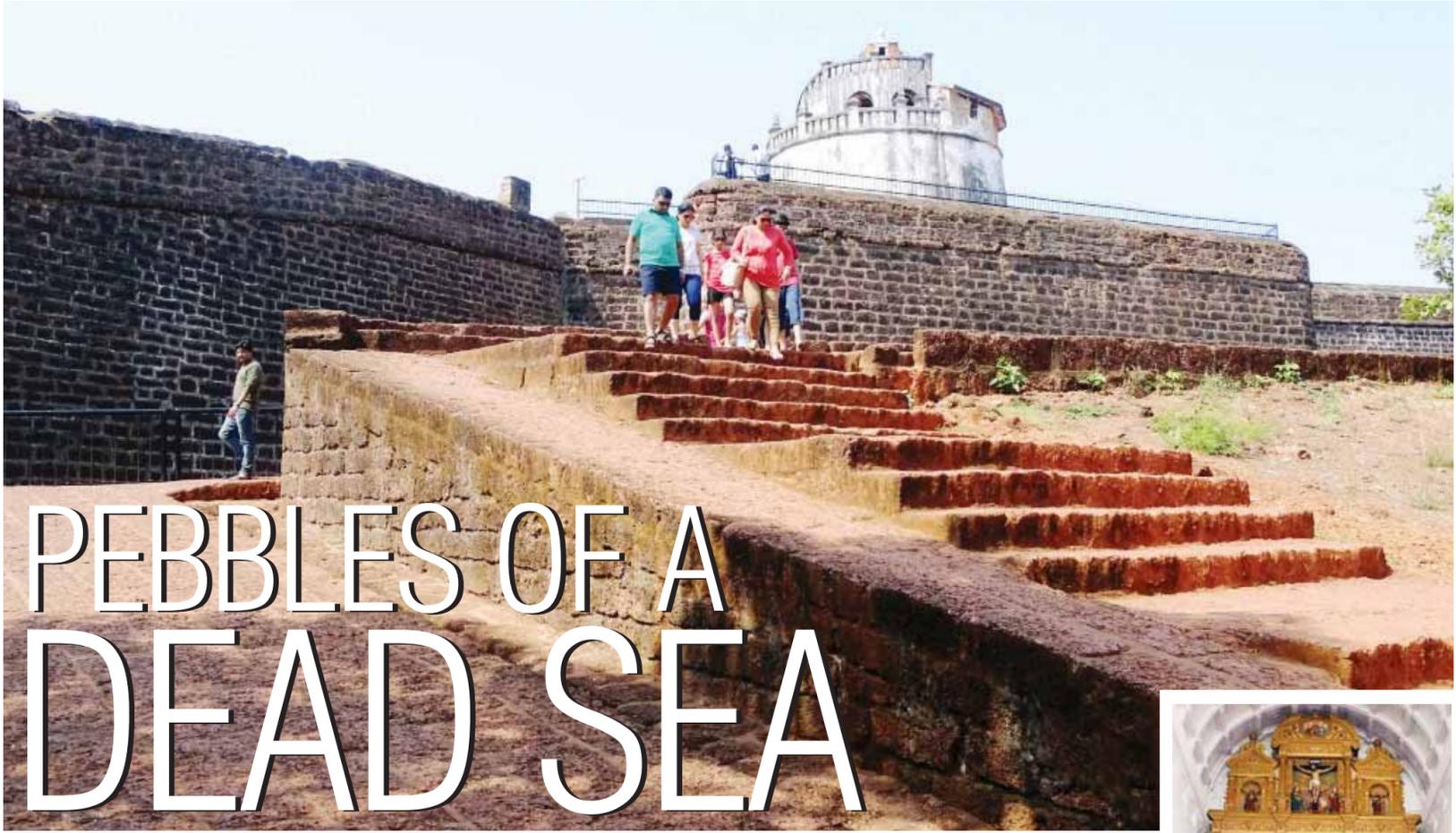
Bring Your Own Device (BYOD): The use of personal devices like phones, laptops and tablets for office work has become common nowadays. As employees switched to working from home, there are many who also started to use their home devices for day to day work. While companies may have policies for onboarding these devices into the corporate network, there is often laxity and carelessness in observing the protocols. More so, during the pandemic. The absence of specific organisational cybersecurity protocols makes them a cyber risk. If any of these devices are compromised, they can provide hackers with an opening into a corporate's network and data which can be accessed and exploited. If employees continue to work from home and rely on personal devices for the foreseeable future, then a more robust protocol must be established which mandates the installation and updating of security software on personal devices that are used for office work.



YOU DON'T STUMBLE UPON
YOUR HERITAGE. IT'S
THERE, JUST WAITING TO
BE EXPLORED AND SHARED
— ROBBIE ROBERTSON

Photos: Worrel Kumar Bain and Reynold Machado

Goa and Portuguese colonisation of India are almost synonymous. Few know that Goa has a past that dates back to the saga of Parshuram in Hindu mythology and India's pre-Islamic era, writes **SOMEN SENGUPTA**. UNESCO World Heritage Week was recently celebrated in India from November 19 to November 25



PEBBLES OF A DEAD SEA

Nestled between the Western Ghats and Sahayadri Hills, and watered by two beautiful rivers named Mandovi and Zuari, this land was long isolated from the Indians. It was isolated not because of any physical feature or inaccessibility, but for its distinctive history and heritage that was seemingly "foreign" for British-ruled Indians. Goa, the coastal territory of Konkan heartland, was always a hidden pearl and a prized colonial nest for Portugal, a country that traded and ruled at many parts of the globe for several centuries.

Goa and Portuguese colonisation of India are almost synonymous. Few know Goa has a past that dates back to the saga of Parshuram in Hindu mythology and India's pre-Islamic era.

Hindu mythology says that this land was created from sea by Parashuram the 6th incarnation of Vishnu. Parashuram, according to mythology, excavated this surface from sea with his arrow and gifted it to the Brahmans. In the ancient times, it was known as Govapuri and later Gomantak.

In 3rd century BC, it was a part of Maurya Empire and after that till the end of 750 AD almost all Hindu dynasties of Western India like Satavahanas, Chalukya and Rashtrakuta ruled this land. It fell into the hands of Muslims in 1312 and again in 1370, Hindu king of Vijaynagar conquered it. Hindu rule ended in 1470 when Adil Shah of Bijapur gained Goa.

This was the time when the fragrance of Goa's exotic spices began to attract the Portuguese, who had already arrived in Kerala in 1498, like a magnet. In 1510, 12 years after Vasco Da Gama arrived in Kerala as a trader, another Portuguese named Alfonso De Albuquerque showed his military might and became the ruler of Goa.

Soon after, they took over Diu in 1534 and Daman in 1559. A large part of Bengal was already under the Portuguese and with the new territory, they cemented a foundation of India's Portuguese colonisation. This prevailed till 1961, following which India reclaimed it after a soft military operation.

The conquest of Goa was perhaps the beginning of Portuguese dream to imprint their colonial stamp upon India. As a tyrannical race they soon got into conflict with local Indians, resulting in demolition of temples and forceful religious conversions. This was also the time when they tried to stop the practice of *sati* cult but failed. Soon the need was felt to protect Goa from other European powers, like British and Dutch East India Company, and even from the Maratha warrior, Shivaji, who attacked the Portuguese of Goa.

The need for military competence pushed the Portuguese to go for massive fortification. They got direct

support from Lisbon to expand their activities in India, such as expansion of Christianity, through the missionaries landing from Europe. Soon there was a visible change in the entire demography of Goa and tangible changes in architecture, language, food, dress, music and sports Goa came about. Goa gradually became a unique place within India.

This little Portugal of India gradually boomed in its own style and pace. Majestic churches, forts, printing press and above all a legend named "St Francis Xavier" turned Goa into an unparalleled place to which no other Portuguese colonies of India (be it those in Bengal or Gujarat) came a close match.

Towering among the past relic of that fascinating time is Fort Aguada that was built from 1609 to 1612 and still stands a living testimony at north Goa. This is one of the few forts of India, that was never conquered by enemies.

Built in sturdy brown laterite stone for the sake of combating the British, Dutch and Marathas, this is perhaps the best sample of Portuguese military architecture in India. *Aguada* means water, and this fort once had several sweet water streams flowing inside it, offering a great provision of drinking water both for its inhabitants and sailing ships that used to anchor near it. The fort strategically faces Candolim beach near river Mandovi. The upper part of the fort was used as water station and fort where as the lower part was used to berth Portuguese war ships. The huge water reservoir is assumed to store not less than 23,76,000 gallons of water.

The 1.3 metre thick fortification wall skirts the seashore and ascends the edge of bare rocky island. The massive grand stand of Fort Aguada once had 79 canons in place. A 13 mt high light house built in 1864 is the most iconic landmark of the fort. It often

THIS LITTLE PORTUGAL OF INDIA GRADUALLY BOOMED IN ITS OWN STYLE AND PACE. MAJESTIC CHURCHES, FORTS, PRINTING PRESS AND ABOVE ALL, A LEGEND NAMED "ST FRANCIS XAVIER" TURNED GOA INTO AN UNPARALLELED PLACE TO WHICH NO OTHER PORTUGUESE COLONIES OF INDIA (BE IT THOSE IN BENGAL OR GUJARAT) CAME A CLOSE MATCH



appears in many movies. St Lawrence church built in 1630 is situated inside the fort.

Though a large part of the fort is now dilapidated and submerged in water, its remains give enough idea of typical Portuguese style of fortification. Its well planned moats, gunpowder room, bastions, light house and escape passage all are still visible and very clearly mirror mystic timeline of the history.

Goa witnessed a silent revolution when India's first printing press was set up there, though accidentally. It is interesting to note that the first book printed in India was not in Bombay or Bengal Presidency, where historically almost all modern wonders landed from Europe.

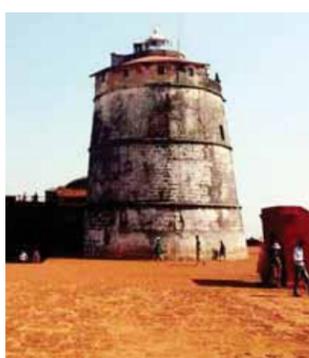
It was in September 1556 when a printing press machine, which was originally meant to be delivered at Abyssinia or Ethiopia, arrived in Goa and placed in St Paul's college. From that machine, for the first time, a Spanish theologian named Juan De Bustamante printed a book of Theology named *Conclusiones Philosophic*.

This machine was actually shipped from Portugal to Abyssinia of Africa. When the ship anchored at Goa on its way to Abyssinia, the relations between the two countries had declined as the king of Abyssinia detested the fact that Christian missionary had come to his country. So the machine was abandoned at Goa and it was sheer luck that India, as the first country of Asia, got to see the magic of printing machine. Unfortunately, after 1660, the machine went traceless. Today, a printing museum in Goa tells the story without showing any tangible relics.

Portuguese touch is palpable in every corner of old Goa, especially in its massive churches and cathedrals. Two most significant of those are Se Cathedral de Santa Catarina and Basilica de Bom Jesus. Both are UNESCO world heritage monuments and both are filled with stories of exciting history of Portuguese conquest of Goa and its religious history.

Se Cathedral is perhaps the most celebrated religious building of Goa. This is the largest church of India and even bigger than any in Portugal.

A classical example of Gothic Portuguese Manueline style of architec-



ture, this massive church of 250 ft in length and 187 ft wide was built between 1562 to 1619 during the golden era of Portuguese.

Dedicated to the feast of St Catherine of Alexandria, it was built to commemorate the victory of Portuguese over Muslims in 1510. The church exterior bears a Tuscan touch while the interiors are much of Corinthian. Its extraordinary Iberian facade, colourful mosaic floors, typical European ceiling and exotic wood carvings, all put together, create an outstanding piece of European architecture which is matchless on many counts. The laterite plinth and lime plaster of the church have survived the test of time.

Earlier, the church had two towers. One of which was grounded in 1776. The church has a bell called the Golden bell and a chapel known as Cross of Miracles. It is believed that in 1619, the vision of Christ had fallen there. This legend attracts a huge crowd all across the globe. It is the Cathedral of Arch Bishop of Goa. A convent adjacent to it houses a small yet good archaeological museum.

If Se Cathedral is famous for Cross of Miracle then Basilica de Bom Jesus (a smaller monument) is a bigger crowd puller as it holds the legend of St Francis Xavier, the man who is considered the "greatest figure in Asia after St Thomas the Apostle".

Goa's emergence as one of the holiest place in the Christian world is largely because of its association with a holy relic



of a man who died in 1552 in China.

Born in Spain and sent to India in 1542 by both the King of Portugal and Pope the third, Francis Xavier, spent 10 years in Goa serving leprosy cursed people and spreading the message of Christ. From 1510 to 1540, when Portuguese brutality over Indian masses was at its apex, he landed there as an apostle of peace and first gained confidence of local people by serving them. It was he who attracted a huge mass to Christianity that finally changed Goa to a very different demographic marquee in India.

After his death in China, his body which was still intact after many months of his demise, was brought back to Goa on March 14, 1554 and kept in a casket gifted by Queen of Portugal Maria Sophia in 1560 at Basilica de Bom Jesus. The relic is placed on the right wall of the church and can be seen from a distance.

This attracts thousands of pilgrims across the world. Every 10 years the casket is taken down and people are allowed to get a closer look of the relic.

Over a period of time, however, several distortions have taken place. One finger of its feet was vandalised by a lady in 1554 and the right hand of the body was sent to Vatican in 1914, as demanded by Pope himself. This was a year after Xavier was crowned as Saint.

Basilica De Bom Jesus is a gem of architecture and perhaps, the most famous Portuguese footprint in Goa. Its bare exterior, made of brown laterite, offers an irresistible charm to mingle with history. Built between 1594 and 1605 in late Rene structure, it blends Doric, Ionic, Roman and Corinthian style of architecture. The facade contains Jesuit motif emblem "HIS" an abbreviation of Latin *Iesus Hominum Salvator* meaning "Jesus, Saviour of Men". The monument enshrines statue of St Ignatius Loyala and infant Jesus.

Cathedral, fort, lighthouse and old colonial buildings are now open to public and Government alike. The general panorama of old Goa runs like a motion picture visualising a saga much different from India's general history. Even though Portuguese are long gone the profound footprints are alive in every edifice of Parashuram's land.

FROM PAGE 1

Working From Home? Beware of that cyber attack

Focusing on the softer aspects of cybersecurity:

Thus far, discussions around cyber security have largely focused on IT infrastructure, and the risks that software and hardware can pose to businesses. However, the pervasiveness of cyber threats like Ransomware, stealing of passwords, social engineering attacks like phishing

and Business Email, Compromise among others are forcing businesses to consider the softer and less tangible aspects of cyber security such as awareness, training and a security first culture. A heightened level of situational awareness in the context of responsible online behaviour, maintaining basic cybersecurity standards and

training is also necessary to ensure both new and existing employees are well versed in cyber risks.

GOVERNMENT AND CYBER RISKS

Governments around the world have taken note of the alarming rise in cybercrime in recent months which coincide with the spread of the pandemic.

Indian citizens, commercial and legal entities faced nearly seven lakh cyber-attacks till August in the current year according to Government data. Recognising the rapidly increasing cyber risks, the Government of India issued guidelines for Chief Information Security Officers (CISOs) relating to their key roles and responsibilities for securing

applications/infrastructure and compliance. All Ministries/ Departments of the Central Government, State Governments (and their organisations) and all critical sectors are implementing a 'Cyber Crisis Management Plan for countering cyber-attacks and cyber terrorism'. Mumbai suffered a major power outage on October 12 which lasted several hours.

Today, authorities are investigating whether this was a cyber-attack.

Cyber risk is real, and it is potent. For all digital citizens and entities, it is a reality that will outlast the pandemic. The specific cybersecurity security challenges across industry sectors, governmental systems, public utilities are wide ranging. As cybersecurity experts say, you are never done as far as cybersecurity is concerned.

Cyber risks and threats keep evolving and so should cybersecurity measures and systems. This is one game you have to keep winning to survive and thrive in the digital world.

The writer is a Corporate Advisor and mentor. He has recently authored a book titled CyberStrong: A Primer on Cyber Risk Management for Business Managers, published by SAGE Publications India

OTHERVOICE

Development at
the cost of forest:
An ethical concern

Decision to give away 243 acres of Shivalik Elephant Reserve forest land for the expansion of Jolly Grant Airport in Dehradun is a matter of grave concern, triggering a debate on development and environment



NIBEDITA
PRIYADARSHINI JENA

The Uttarakhand Government's decision to give away 243 acres of Shivalik Elephant Reserve forest land for the expansion of Jolly Grant Airport in Dehradun is a matter of serious concern which once again opens the debate on development and environment.

The State Government, considering the development motives in terms of economic and technological growth, has taken the decision of using the forest land. The encroachment is predicted to harm a cluster of things, yet certain immediate observable damage can be cited like the loss of 10,000 trees which can't be compensated, limiting the free movement of wild animals due to shrinkage of forest area. Moreover, the proposed, expanded airport will be under the 10 kilometres eco-sensitive zone of the Rajaji National Park.

Protesting against this decision, different polemics have been made, such as: Forest and wildlife are sources of revenue generation in the form of tourism and thus employment generation and this infringement will dismay the fragile ecosystem of Doon.

Nonetheless, all these arguments seem to be repetitively ordinary and thus anthropocentric, on the account of human benefit. There is a need for deeper analysis, based on ethical concerns.

Concerning the issue, the fundamental question needs to be raised at two different levels: How essential is to expand the airport and should environmentalists fight against this proposal for the well-being of humans or the well-being of the wilds or trees or for the entire environment itself?

On the first question, the necessity of the expansion of the airport in the name of development seems to be obscure. The Government's developmental plans should encompass the views of native indigenous of the area where the plan is supposed to be executed. However, here this has been flouted.

This leads to a further question on development for whom and at what cost? From a purely human-centric calculation cutting down of 10,000 trees doesn't necessarily enhance the economic status of the local people. Moreover, one can imagine the level of pollution that would harm them in future because of the deforestation and so-called modernity. Often major invisible harm is disguised in minor visible benefit. A developmental plan of the rule of power is imposed following solely technocratic conditions that in turn lead to the agony of humans as well as animals. Thus, morality is brought to fight against the unjust planning. Humans, animals and plants become the victims of the development project and it is essential to ethically examine the means (plans) and ends (consequences) before processing to execute it. In doing so, the Government can get a path to develop a new way of governing through which universal welfare can be achieved.

The second-level question is underpinned on the protection of the environment. Defending the protest of local people let's begin with invoking a stance of social ecologist in terms of "regional turn in environmental thinking" because as social ecologist L Mumford says a strong regional centre of culture can be "the basis of active and securely grounded local life".

The local life is a broader concept that includes humans, animals and plants, all of them create a niche to accommodate each other for their wellbeing. Thus, protesting at an individualistic level grounding on the ethical concern directing towards individuals only would not be beneficial because it precludes either one of them — humans or animals or trees. Further, if we fight against the Government's decision to protect the forest for the wellbeing of humans, then the instrumental value is credited to the forest and thus the day is not far it to be used for a different purpose.

Rejection of anthropocentric option paves a path to ascribe intrinsic value to the forest through which absolute protection of forest can be demanded. However, the ascription of intrinsic value is in question to whom it should be ascribed — to individual animals or species/particular animal species or the entire ecosystem.

Supposed attribution of inherent value to individual animals precluding environment or to forest, excluding animals, leads to unpleasant consequences since both complement each other for their sustainability. Thus, there is a requirement for a holistic approach towards Doon's valley to protect native indigenous and the forest.

Implementation of an unexamined developmental project in the process of deforestation fails to satisfy all types of moral standards. Chopping thousands of trees and leaving innumerable animals homeless shows a lack of sense of "goodwill" and thus serves no adequate duties of humans towards the environment.

It also fails to bring an overall balance of good over evil — human suffering due to pollution and the scary behaviour of wild animals, as well as animals suffering due to the lack of food and dwelling place. Thus, this encroachment leads, in turn, to dire consequences. Furthermore, it prevents to show the virtuous character trait of the human.

The conditions of flourishing human life are not necessarily limited within the intra-human species, it needs the ethical capability as well to consider the entire ecosystem as an end in itself.

Arguing in favour of destroying natural "wild", which is not humanised, based on creating new forests through planting trees ignores the intrinsic value of natural wild which is unacceptable.

Instead of being driven by the instrumental reason to achieve instant non-sacrosanct ends, we humans, including the Government, ought to do actions involving rules, rights, compassion, etc, to protect the environment, including ourselves.

(The writer is an Assistant Professor, Philosophy, Bengaluru Central University)

India must meet US on equal footing

What does the Joe Biden Administration's occupation of the Oval Office mean for India? This is pertinent especially after Trump's tight embrace of India. Though Trump-Modi friendship might not have translated into a trade pact — in all areas, particularly on the foreign policy and geo-strategic fronts in dealing with China or Pakistan, it supported India in becoming the alternative supply chain supplanting China, strengthening military relations, while refraining to interfere in India's internal matters.

Any change in the US policy towards India is unlikely, save some prodding on the Western understanding of human rights issues in the region, something which New Delhi should be prepared to deal with.

A little uncertainty exists on Biden's approach towards Pakistan, while he is strong on anti-terrorism front, the need of Islamabad for peace negotiations with Taliban will bring in a working relationship between the two nations, though a re-appearance of bonhomie is unlikely.

On the trade front, Arun K Singh, former Indian Ambassador to the US, has summed up the position, "era of post 1990s globalisation effectively ended with Trump's election in 2016". On climate change, New Delhi will be asked to do more from the Biden Administration, an approach he has indicated towards other nations.

Besides, there is strong probability of Republicans holding the Senate should also not be lost on us.

India's significance
for the US

It is insignificant to think if the Democrats or the Republicans will be more supportive to the Indian cause. It's the US national interest which

made Presidents from Clinton to Trump to deepen ties with India. With 17.7 per cent of the world's population, fifth largest economy, India is important for the US economy.

As the world's largest liberal democracy — among the few in the non-Western world even rare so in Asia — a responsible player in global politics, largest troop contributor to the UN peacekeeping missions, a nation which is looked at with trust and respect in comity of nations, all the more so by the developing world, India today stands at a formidable position with which every global player wishes to partner.

So, in the Asian century when the focus of the world has shifted to the Indo-Pacific economically, politically as well as on the geo-strategic front, while the US power wanes and is increasingly challenged by the rising China in all possible domains: trade and economy, technology, intelligence, military modernisation and in international institutions, who does the US look to?

If a decade or two back India could not be ignored, today, the US can simply not do without India; and Washington DC is well aware of that. Nobody knows this better than the 46th President of the US, a seasoned diplomat. In 2006, he argued India-US relationship is the single most important relationship that the US has to get right for its own safety's sake, declaring his dream of having India and the US as two closest nations in the world in 2020.

In 2008, he led the charge in the US Congress on approval of India-US Nuclear Agreement. As the Vice President in the Obama Administration, he further deepened ties with India.

In a policy paper during campaigning, Biden called India and the US as natural partners, while declaring the

strengthening of India-US relationship as high priority for his administration; mentioning that no common global challenge can be resolved without India and the US.

It pledged support to India in fight against terrorism, cross-border or otherwise, confronting "new threats" India faces in its own region and along its own borders, not allowing China to threaten India with impunity, while supporting a larger role for India in international institutions, including pushing India to become a permanent member of the UNSC.

Chinese threat to the US

In the 2020 US report on China's military, which outlines the fast-paced military modernisation and capacity enhancement of PLA as it moves towards its goal to become a "world class military" by 2049 — understood to mean equal or superior to the US military — it's pointed out that the PLA is not intended to be "merely a showpiece of China's modernity. The report pointed out that China is not only going to keep the PLA focused solely on regional threats" but to have "an active role in advancing" China's foreign policy, particularly with respect to its "increasingly global interests and its aims to revise aspects of the international order".

In the World Economic Output report 2020, the IMF declared China has overtaken the US to become the world's largest economy in PPP terms. In China's recently concluded fifth plenary session, it seemed assured about reaching "high income level" in the next five years and doubling economic output by 2035, which is also the deadline for China to emerge as a global leader in innovation, becoming technological independent of the West by mobilising all of the nation's resources to make

breakthrough in key technologies from AI to quantum computing and semiconductor manufacturing.

To contain China is the top-most priority for the US, and the Biden Administration is going to achieve this by making a multilateral coalition of its allies and partners in Europe and Asia. And of them India is the most important peg in it. Indeed, the US ought to be thankful for the present situation brewing at the Indian border with the dragon, because a scenario where Indian interests with China converge can still be imagined, the same for the US is now impossible.

India might be China's immediate irritant, its real adversary is the US. So, to worry about the US support on China is in vain.

Human rights, Kashmir
and CAA

In his campaign, Biden had mentioned his disappointment with the Assam's NRC, CAA and need for full liberties to be returned in Kashmir. The progressive faction has been all the more critical on the front, Vice President Kamala Harris herself being vocal, so, questions will be raised.

In 1993, US political scientist late Samuel Huntington wrote that there is a widespread anti-western sentiment rising all over the world because of West's universal enforcement of its values.

The East Asian nations had created a united front against this, with the Japanese Prime Minister of the time Hosokawa saying western human rights concepts can't be "blindly applied to Asia".

The West's hypocrisy on the human rights front has also been time and again raised by the developing world. Why the US is not questioned over arrests of Muslims without charge after 9/11, Guantanamo Bay prisoners that are still rot-

ting in prisons of the US allies in West Asia, most horrible abuses of human rights in Abu Ghraib prison, Iraq, or over the police brutalities on the blacks, or how the UK suppressed the Irish and Scottish national movements?

While India embraced the Western liberal democracy and human right regime, it continues to suffer the destabilising and violent after-effects and grave unresolved issues of the externally created borders and gory partition, unlike the peaceful territories of the West.

It is difficult, therefore, to enforce the same level of liberties to the region bearing the scourge of externally funded and supported terrorism for decades, which threatens the security of the whole nation, with even the temple of Indian democracy not been spared. A discouragement towards democratic process is still being made in Kashmir by terrorists targeting political members. Similarly, a resolution of the post-partition refugee situation had to be undertaken.

India is a free and fair democracy with an independent judiciary, and it must confidently, firmly and calmly draw its red lines over non-interference in internal matters, something that rest of the Asia has been doing for long.

Our External Affairs Minister demonstrated it by not meeting a panel, including Congresswomen Pramila Jayapal. Were it done by even a middle level power, nobody would bat an eyelash. It's time India takes its rightful position in the world, with respect, it deserves, and as Huntington puts it: the US well knows when to concede to maintain "good relations" with friendly countries.

(The author is a public policy analyst and lawyer)

Any change in the US policy towards India is unlikely, save some prodding on the Western understanding of human rights issues in the region, something which New Delhi should be prepared to deal with. It's in the US national interest to have good relations with India. It's time India takes its rightful position in the world it deserves, and as Huntington puts it: the US well knows when to concede to maintain 'good relations' with friendly countries



SONAL SHUKLA

PERSPECTIVE

A new civil war in Ethiopia

Ethiopia, located in the Horn of Africa, is popularly known as the "Mecca of Coffee". Today it has seen one of the bloodiest conflicts in its northern region of Tigray wherein the federal forces are fighting with the local Tigray regional forces. The fierce fight that broke out in early November is simply a war between Addis Ababa, the central capital city, and the regional capital town of Mekele. It's a show of strength of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali against combative Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) based in the restive region.

Further, it is straight fight between the majority Oromo community (around 34.6 per cent) represented by the PM Abiy and the minority Tigrays, barely 6 per cent of the total population of the country. Initially, the war in the Northern Province was planned for a limited scale, directly to target the TPLF, militia cum political party, but now more than two weeks of military campaign has hinted a severe fight, showing no signs of talk, withdrawal and negotiation between the two warring groups.

The current crisis in Ethiopia has its roots in the recent past of the country. The TPLF was established in February 1975, more than 45 years ago in the Tigray Province. A year before i.e. 1974 witnessed a tumultuous political situation in the country as Emperor Haile Selassie was overthrown by the military.

Afterwards, a new military junta, popularly known as "The Derg", came into power in the country. The subsequent years brought home a devastating conflict, leading to the killing of thousands of young man and woman across the country. However, the Tigrayan region had to largely bear the brunt of the so-called "Red Terror", unleashed by the Leftist Derg junta. Sadly, Derg continued in power in Ethiopia till 1991, when it was finally ousted by the armed rebels. And incidentally, the TPLF was an integral part of a coalition of resistance forces that finally moved out the junta from the power corridors of Ethiopia.

Then TPLF leader Meles Zenawi became the interim President later and

also holds the historic record of being the first elected Prime Minister of the country in 1995. What it demonstrates is the consolidation of power by the minority Tigrays over the majority of the public institutions of Ethiopia.

And the rest is a new history for this emerging African nation. The Tigrays ruled the country for almost three decades from 1991 to 2018 by becoming an alliance partner of the ruling coalition known as the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF).

This coalition was the brainchild of the veteran Meles to bring together like-minded groups to capture power in Addis Ababa. The EPRDF earned both reputation and severe criticism from the Ethiopians in its entire period in power and even after. Many say that during its time, child mortality rate fell, and the famine was prevented. But others argue that the Tigrayan-led EPRDF was no other than an absolute authoritarian regime that ruled the country with an iron hand.

Unfortunately, the other coalition partners had hardly any voice in regard to making critical policy decisions and deciding future course of actions.

A new era has begun with the coming of Abiy to power in 2018 who is the first Oromo leader to come to occupy the seat of the head of the Ethiopian Government. He was a former military intelligence officer of the Government. In fact, years of protest that started after the departure of Tigray's powerful leader and former PM Meles in 2012, forced his successor Hailemariam Desalegn to finally resign after six years of misrule and anarchy across the country. He was the chairman of the Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement. From the very beginning of his tenure, his role was ambivalent as he could hardly keep the powerful alliance partners under his control.

And most importantly, since he did not belong to the powerful Tigray community, it was absolutely difficult for him to exercise administrative control over them. Over the years, the Tigray ethnic group has massively expanded its way

over the army, secret services and the bureaucracy. These circumstances offered an opportune moment for Abiy to get elected as the leader of the EPRDF. For years, the Ormos have been marginalised by the EPRDF, led by the Tigray community and its powerful leaders in Addis Ababa.

From the very beginning, he spoke the language of unity and promised his countrymen peace, development and progress. And this earned him praise even from his arch rivals in the Opposition political parties.

After assuming power, he released thousands of prisoners, unblocked a large number of media channels and privatised many Government owned enterprises. He reached out to Eritrea, Ethiopia's old rival on the northern border, and made peace with that country. And as a result, he was awarded the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize which had brought home a chance of reclaiming Ethiopia's position in the African continent once again.

However, gradually his reform package has altered the long-drawn power relations of the country. And in the last two years, the Tigrays have registered their displeasure with Addis Ababa. They say that they are being targeted for the wrongs committed in the past and the current Government is fast trying to marginalise the community and its leadership. Last year, Abiy dissolved the EPRDF, and formed the Prosperity Party, but the TPLF refused to join the new coalition. Thus, formally, the dominance of the TPLF has come to an end and it was made possible by the shrewd leadership of Prime Minister Abiy.

What has finally triggered the current crisis in Tigray is no other than the regional election that took place in the province in September. Actually, because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Abiy Government postponed the much anticipated general election on August 21 across the country. But the TPLF leadership accused Abiy of unconstitutionally extending the term of his Government. In defiance of the federal Government's order, the TPLF conducted the election in its province. This

incident has raised tension between the Central Government and the regional Government of Tigray.

And on November 4, the forces loyal to the TPLF suddenly attacked the Northern Command of the Ethiopian National Defence Force based in Mekele. After two days, the Abiy Government launched a massive military strike, saying the TPLF has crossed the "Red Line". And since then the war is on the restive region.

Meanwhile, as a precautionary measure, Sudan has closed down the border with Ethiopia to avoid immediate clash and refugee movement. Around the same time, Addis Ababa has declared the regional Government of Tigray as illegal and proposed to form an interim Government out there as per the country's Constitution.

The UN is urging for a peaceful and swift resolution of the conflict in Ethiopia. It seems impossible for now as TPLF leader Debretson Gebremichael has remained defiant. By now more than 25,000 refugees have crossed over to neighbouring Sudan. On November 14, the TPLF forces launched multiple rocket attacks on Asmara, the capital city of neighbouring Eritrea. And interestingly, Gebremichael has stated that Asmara was a "legitimate target" as its airbases are being used by the Ethiopian forces to carry out attacks on the TPLF fighters. This indicates that there is little chance of the warring parties to come down to the negotiation table unless there is a powerful mediating force.

This landlocked East African country is surely careening for a bloody civil war. And this might escalate to a broader regional conflict involving Eritrea and Sudan. The best course of action for Abiy could be an early dialogue and engagement of the regional leadership of Tigray province. Else, the new war could involve much more people, forces and the old militias of the region and across. It's better to avoid a chaos and settle for immediate peace.

(The writer is an expert on international affairs)

The landlocked East African country is headed for a bloody civil war which might escalate into a broader regional conflict involving Eritrea and Sudan. The best course of action for Prime Minister Abiy could be an early dialogue with the regional leadership of Tigray province



MAKHAN SAIKIA



YOUR WEEK AHEAD
MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19
This week you card foresees healing and rejuvenation. Those suffering from an injury or other physical ailments will find quick recovery. There are times in our lives when we must accept change and allow things to come to a natural end. Every negative note has its positive end too. On the career front, a comeback of your old and trusted employee who was supposed to be the backbone of your profession is indicated. Venues will open for those who wish to expand their business or start a new venture. Time spent on the academic pursuits will pay good results now. On the relationship front, love is difficult and confusing this week. Sticking to old beliefs may spoil your relations. It is advised to avoid the intervention of the third party.
Lucky number 19
Lucky colour Sky Blue
Lucky day Friday



LEO July 23-Aug 22
Those putting on weight must put their health on priority. You will finally understand the value of money and good health, and work out a plan to be in harmony with nature to maintain good health. Focus on walking, breathing and prayers for mental and physical healing. On the career front, unrelated issues would occupy mind space. You either have little time or are feeling lethargic about work. Hard work and efforts put in the last week are not so rewarding. This is a temporary phase. On the personal front, something special is likely to be celebrated this week. You feel emotionally contented and find a healthy relationship. You have full faith in your partner. This is the time when mutual understanding between the two is great and strengthening of relationship is indicated.
Lucky number 13
Lucky colour Blue
Lucky day Thursday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21
You will feel healthy and free and may experience a change of perspective. Negativity replaces optimism. New possibilities are foreseen. You will learn the importance of solving your problems with rational and thorough thinking. This is also a time to utilise your creative energies. Professionally, a promotion is indicated which will make you confident and secure. You are self-disciplined and energetic. Those in business, your ideas and views are being respected and followed. This is the time when your intelligence, wisdom and experience will pay you rich dividends. On the personal front, your relationship will grow. You are romantic and love is in the air. Other relationships too are nurturing, and meaningful in your life.
Lucky number 9
Lucky colour Green
Lucky day Friday



TAURUS April 20-May 20
This week your inner and outer conflicts may bring upon negative effects to your healthy lifestyle and routine. Challenges are foreseen on the career front. This is a perfect time to clear the fog. This is also a good time to set your goals and targets and work towards them in the system. The win will come after a struggle. Your great insight may work in your favour. A break-through success is on the cards. On the relationship front, you will follow tradition instead of your heart. The conventions and traditions are overpowering you and you will try and seek answers from a guru or a senior person with regard to your emotions. This week you may be more inclined spiritually and worldly pleasures, love and emotions would take a back seat.
Lucky number 10
Lucky colour Brown
Lucky day Tuesday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22
There is a balance between mind, body and soul this week. You will be energetic, enthusiastic and full of life. Your farsightedness will pay you rich dividends. This is the time to enjoy good food and live a healthy life, both mentally and physically. On the career front, new job offers and opportunities in business will help you broaden your horizon. If expansion in the business is the plan, this is the right time. Go for it! Good finances, income and gains through the ancestral property are indicated. On the relationship front, those contemplating marriage may start browsing the market for a suitable bride or groom. Guard against temptations and addictions. A step towards spirituality may prove to be the saviour.
Lucky number 3
Lucky colour Peach
Lucky day Wednesday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19
This week you may enjoy the nature's bounty and blessings of the Almighty. Cure of a very old or prolonged illness is on the cards. Those in urgent need of motivation and inspiration to lead a healthy and meaningful life will find a mentor. You feel empowered and embark on a new journey which is progressive and makes you feel comfortable. On the work front, this is the time to keep counting the blessings. You may be busy organising an auspicious ceremony at home/office. The career will boom and so will be your interaction with the outside world. On the personal front, confusion, misunderstanding with the partner is likely. You need to guard yourself against selfish motives, aggression and any haste decisions in this period. Patience is the key.
Lucky number 4
Lucky colour Red
Lucky day Wednesday



GEMINI May 21-June 20
This week you will possess the power and energy to create a fresh lifecycle for yourself. You will have control over your desires and temptations that may harm your health. You realise the importance of the balancing factor in your life and your body is in tune with the five elements of nature. On the career front, you may have experienced setbacks that make you suspicious of the others. The turning point will come when you can leave the past behind you and develop a more open mind about the future. This is the time to think positive and move ahead. On the personal front, confrontation is likely between lovers. Do not let emotion get in the way. Rather, use fact and logic to make your decisions.
Lucky number 6
Lucky colour Pink
Lucky day Friday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22
This week cards indicate excessive fear, phobia, and worry. Mental tension will remain, and this may reflect on your health. Headache, insomnia, and sleeplessness may cause unrest. Be careful of cold, cough and seasonal ailments too. This is the time to meditate, join yoga and take a break from the hectic schedule. On the career front, a little indiscretion may put your reputation in the firing line so be careful. At the work area, you may go unnoticed and feel neglected. This may cause tension and hamper your growth. Do not run away from responsibilities and commitments. Do not disclose your working plans till you accomplish them. On the personal front, your partner will be filled with an abundance of energy and enthusiasm while you feel demoralised, or hold low self-esteem.
Lucky number 12
Lucky colour Golden
Lucky day Sunday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18
This week your satisfaction and contentment will play an important role for you to be in good health. You will enjoy worldly pleasures and relax. 'All is well' feeling gives you cool mind, contentment, positive aura and a glow on the face. On the work front, there is generosity in your temperament and ability to convince others with your communication. You care for the emotional wellbeing of others and respect your colleagues and juniors. They follow you, admire you, and respect your magnanimity. On the relationship front, there is love, fun and entertainment. You spend time together and present an expensive gift to your beloved and partner. Time is right to bring your romantic relationships out in the open, the family will accept your choice.
Lucky number 18
Lucky colour Orange
Lucky day Saturday



CANCER June 21-July 22
This week you will adopt a moderate approach to life and be true to your commitments. You have understood that you need a routine and a careful regime if you want to achieve your goals. It is not necessarily a very interesting or exciting period. You are not hesitant to spend money in a gym, meditation, following nutritive diets etc to be in good health and fitness. These efforts will pay you well. On the work front, you will feel stability in your profession. Use experience and skills to achieve your desired goals. Advice from a senior person in job/business will be very helpful. On the personal front, you may get too emotional or possessive in your relationship, and that may become the cause of irritation and separation. You will be compassionate towards those dear to you.
Lucky number 21
Lucky colour Magenta
Lucky day Wednesday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21
In keeping with the ongoing festive spirit, you will be active and vibrant. Self-knowledge and mastery are the keys to success. You possess the inner light and consciousness, and sheer faith and experience from the past would help you become self-reliant. Through meditation, you are on the path to attain spiritual fulfilment and share this light with others. On the professional front, your wisdom and leadership will help you establish a niche for yourself. Your plans are now well underway and you are beginning to consider more opportunities to expand your current plans. On the personal front, you will find your relationships growing and developing to a satisfactory level. There is faith, understanding with each other.
Lucky number 2
Lucky colour Indigo
Lucky day Tuesday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20
Fatigue may take a toll this week. Issues — domestic or professional — will leave you disturbed. Restlessness or problem related to Blood Pressure may bother. Consult a doctor. You may require proper sleep and support of near and dear ones. A positive approach will help put life into you. On the career front, there is nothing new happening. Things are moving as usual. Fear of stagnating career or profession may bother you. This is a temporary phase. As the week progresses, you will find the positive results. With your wisdom and experience, you keep moving ahead and achieve the desired results. On the relationship front, you will enjoy the quiet powers inherent in you. You will be able to influence your partner by diplomatic conversation.
Lucky number 11
Lucky colour White
Lucky day Monday

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ASTROTURF
BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

Mind balance is the key

Someone concerned about not being able to contain his wavering mind and habit tendencies, despite serious efforts towards that end, connected with me for necessary guidance. "Sir, for almost a decade now, I have been religiously pursuing Yoga-asana and meditation as guided by two acclaimed teachers in the field. So far, I have been able to just identify my fault lines. I have been trying to address them, with no sign of tangible success in immediate future. My monkey like mind keeps randomly flirting with varying thoughts and ideas, and so I fail to do justice to my priority preferences. I don't know how to go about further. Kindly guide."
"Well, the purpose of spirituality is to understand the living realities of life, which when absorbed in the deep realms of mind help in making reasoned choices in life and conduct with ease and comfort. What is the fun in pursuing spiritual process, if it has not helped reform your thought process?" I asked. "Remember, all actions on your part, be it pursuing spiritual process or targeting material desires are conducted by mind. Better, give me an account of how you are pursuing the process so that the

missing link in the process could be figured out," I said. Looking at the account he shared, it appears that he keeps chanting *mantra* with focus on his energy centres. So, he has been mechanically working on energy plane. He, however, has cared the least to work upon his thought process. He has been reading many books written by realised people for necessary guidance, which makes him academically aware. But his mind, intensely engaged in wanton thoughts that don't allow him the mind-space and time necessary to absorb the educative inputs, but for which it will not find reflection in his conduct.
Here I recall the saying of a realised spiritual master: "You may enjoy the grace of the God, the holy men and teachers. But if you lack the grace of mind, you may go to rack and ruins." That makes it incumbent upon us to work upon our mind-state before pursuing spiritual process, otherwise it will not offer desired result. It may not be out of place to mention that there are five states of mind — Darkening, Scattering, Gathering up, One pointed and Concentrated. Ignorant minds are the darkening type. Minds flirting with



random thoughts are the scattering type. Those who realise that only a focused mind can lead to success, try to contain their wavering mind, which comes under gathering up type. As you graduate in the process further, you may become one pointed. They still remain subject to pushes and pulls. But relatively they are able to remain focused to their priority preferences for long. Those who are able to effortlessly remain focused for long is the call of a concentrated mind.
Those who wish to evolve spiritually, and even grow materially, preparatory to that, at least they should try to graduate to the stage of one pointedness, if not concentrated. I then suggested him to follow the three stage meditation process as suggested in my book titled: "God or No God; Awareness enriches life."
The man then asked: "Sir, I will purchase your book and follow the method you have suggested. But tell me, is my present mental predicament reflected in my chart? Do I have the potential to evolve spiritually?"
Look at the astrological pointers. You are born in an airy sign Libra with fiery planet Mars conjunct headless *Ketu* there in the *lagna*. Mars is also adversely

placed with respect to the two luminaries — the Sun and Moon. Moon is ill-disposed to Venus, which makes you too touchy and sensitive. You may get overexerted even on trivial issues and blow it out of proportion as would fiery Mars flaring up the air element mean. Read together with the implications of the ill-disposed luminaries, it speaks of a temperamental, moody, irritable, impulsive, and rash character, having a disoriented mind.
Now coming to spiritual potential, benevolent Jupiter over the head in the birth chart speaks high of your spiritual quotient. Seen at subtle level, *lagna* sub-lord *Rahu*, happens to be the lord of 5th cusp identified with merits accrued from the past. 9th sub-lord identified translation of acquired merits into fruits happens to be Moon, which occupies the sub-lordship of *Rahu*. All put together indicates seed of spiritually deeply ingrained in your mind. Positioning of Moon, however, calls for concerted efforts to organise your mind before expecting the desired results.
The writer is an astrologer, vastu consultant and spiritual counsellor. Connect with him at Tel: 91-11-9818037273/9871037272 Email: bharatbhushanpadmadeo@gmail.com