

OPINION 8  
FREE PRESS  
MOMENTWORLD 11  
MESSAGE OF ELECTION 2020: TRUMP  
LOST, BUT TRUMPISM DID NOTSPORT 14  
PAK BEAT ZIMBABWE  
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TO DIRECT  
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12 VIVACITY

## CAPSULE

## 'PAK DOESN'T DESERVE TO BE IN UNHRC'

**New Delhi/Islamabad:** In an unprecedented move, the UN Watch took a scathing dig at Prime Minister Imran Khan for his intolerant views and Pakistans inclusion in the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC). Pakistan was recently re-elected to the UNHRC even as the country's human rights record is one among the worst in the world. Two weeks ago, a French teacher was beheaded by an Islamist in Paris for exhibiting Charlie Hebdo cartoons in a class on the idea of freedom of expression.

## DARBHANGA AIRPORT BOOST FOR MITHILA

**Darbhanga:** The Darbhanga airport in north Bihar began operations on Sunday, meeting the long-standing demand of the people of the Mithila region who had to travel for hours to Patna to catch a flight.

## SHIPPING MINISTRY TO BE RENAMED: MODI

**Ahmedabad:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the Ministry of Shipping is being expanded and renamed as the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.

## 4 soldiers lay down lives to prevent infiltration

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

In one of the major anti-infiltration operations in the last seven months, three heavily-armed terrorists were gunned down during a fierce gunfight while four soldiers, including an officer of the Indian Army, lost their lives in the line of duty in Machil sector of North Kashmir's Kupwara district on Sunday.

The icy heights of Keran sector in North Kashmir's Kupwara district had earlier witnessed a hand-to-hand combat on April 5 when elite para commandos eliminated five terrorists in one of the deadliest operations. All five commandos also laid down their lives while foiling the infiltration bid.

On late Saturday night, the anti-infiltration operation was launched while the terrorists attempted to breach the Anti Infiltration Obstacle system (AIOS) along the Line of



Control (LoC) in a desperate bid to infiltrate inside the Indian territory ahead of the closing down of the mountain passes due to fresh snowfall in the higher reaches of North Kashmir. According to the recent assessment of the various intelligence agencies around 200-250 terrorists were waiting across different launch pads to

infiltrate inside the Indian territory before the peak winters set in the coming weeks.

Around 1 am, a patrol party of the Border Security Force (BSF) first noticed the suspicious movements near the LoC and challenged the intruders, leading to a three-hour gun-battle in which a terrorist was eliminated. One

3 terrorists  
gunned down  
in gunfight  
along LoC in  
Kupwara

BSF constable was also killed in action.

Confirming the sequence of events a Srinagar-based defence spokesperson Col Rajesh Kalia in a written statement said, "At about 1 am, a BSF patrol noticed suspicious movement near the Anti-Infiltration Obstacle System (LoC fence), 3.5 km from the LoC. The BSF personnel challenged the infiltrators and a gunbattle ensued, in which a terrorist was killed," he said.

"A BSF soldier was killed in action (KIA) and the firefight stopped," Col Kalia said in a statement.

He said more troops were rushed to the area and the movement of the terrorists was tracked with the help of surveillance devices.

"Contact was re-established at 10.20 am when heavy fire was drawn by own search parties approximately 1.5 km from the LoC.

Continued on Page 6

## Covid-19 mortality in cancer patient 22.4%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Deadly Covid-19 killed a fifth of all cancer patients who contract the virus, cautioned scientists after analysing data from across the globe.

In fact, they found that cancer patients who contract Covid-19 face a mortality rate of 22.4 per cent, i.e. 273 times higher than the death rate for non-cancer patients infected with virus.

The study, which was published in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute, also showed that those with lung and blood cancer face a higher risk.

In contrast, other known risk factors such as diabetes and heart disease were less sig-

Study: Death rate is 273-time higher than non-cancer patients infected with virus

nificant to those in the cancer group. The international study holds importance for India which, as per recent World Cancer Report, in 2018 there are about 1.16 million new cases, 784,800 deaths, and 2.26 million five-year prevalence cases.

And that one in 10 Indians will develop cancer during their lifetime and one in 15 will die of the disease.

Researchers looked at 15 studies from across the world which in total involved 3,019 patients and also found that treatment such as chemotherapy has no effect on mortality rate.

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## 3RD WAVE WORST SO FAR IN DELHI, SAYS SATYENDAR

**Dungarpur (Rajasthan):** Delhi has hit the peak of the third wave of Covid-19 and the number of cases suggests that it has been the worst since the virus arrived in the city and it will come down soon, Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain said on Sunday.

STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	17,19,850	45,240	15,77,330
Karnataka	8,44,147	11,369	7,99,439
Andhra Pradesh	8,42,967	6,791	8,14,773
Tamil Nadu	7,43,822	11,344	7,13,584
Uttar Pradesh	4,97,563	7,206	4,67,108
Kerala	4,86,110	1,693	4,02,477
Delhi	4,30,784	6,912	3,83,614
West Bengal	4,05,314	7,294	3,63,454
Odisha	3,01,574	1,478	2,88,168
Telangana	2,50,331	1,377	2,29,064
Bihar	2,22,612	1,144	2,14,736
Rajasthan	2,11,310	1,989	1,92,945
Assam	2,08,790	944	2,01,331
Chhattisgarh	1,99,562	2,434	1,73,872
Haryana	1,82,804	1,912	1,64,444
Gujarat	1,80,699	3,763	1,64,696



## Biden pledges to work towards uniting America

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Pledging to be the President of all Americans, Joe Biden has sought an immediate end to the "grim era of demonisation" in the deeply-polarised nation, as he and his running mate Kamala Harris celebrated their historic triumph over Donald Trump in a bitter and closely-fought presidential election.

"I pledge to be a President who seeks not to divide, but to unify; who doesn't see red states and blue states, only sees the United States," Biden, 77, said in his victory speech before a drive-in audience in his hometown, Wilmington, Delaware on Saturday night, nearly ending the uncertainty over the outcome of Tuesday's election.

Biden, who has succeeded in his third bid to the White House, thanked his supporters, saying he had earned votes from the "broadest and most diverse coalition in American



history." "I am humbled by the trust and confidence you've placed in me," who will be the oldest US president when he would be sworn-in on January 20, 2021, said amid applause and cheers from the audience.

"The people of this nation have spoken, they've delivered us a clear victory, a convincing victory, a victory for 'We the People,'" he said, referring to more than 74 million

voters who backed him. Biden ran twice unsuccessfully for president — in 1988 and 2008.

Noting that he ran as a proud Democrat, Biden said he will now be an American President. "I will work as hard for those who didn't vote for me — as those who did.

Trump has so far refused to concede the election that attracted a record number of Americans to cast their votes amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. He has announced filing multiple lawsuits against the election results in key battleground states like Pennsylvania, where Biden was born and that gave him the crucial 20 electoral votes to cross the magic figure of 270 he needed to win.

The Democratic Party leader also reached out to disappointed Trump voters, saying he would act as their president as much as he would for those who voted for him.

Continued on Page 6

## LAC talks inconclusive as spirit is willing but China's flesh is weak

Both sides agreed to maintain dialogue

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and China on Sunday said the latest round of military level talks was "candid, in depth and constructive."

The parleys held on Friday, however, could not achieve any breakthrough on defusing tension at the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

In a statement issued both in Beijing and New Delhi, the two countries said it was agreed to implement the important consensus reached by the leaders of the two nations.

The statement also said the two Armies also agreed that the frontline troops "exercise restraint and avoid miscalcu-

lation."

The Corps Commander-level talks were held at Chushul border meeting point on Friday at the LAC with Lt General P G K Menon heading the Indian delegation while Major General Liu Lin led the Chinese tea.

The Indian team also included Naveen Srivastava, Joint Secretary (East Asia) in the Ministry of External Affairs.

The talks went on for more than ten hours and the two commanders agreed to have another round of meeting soon.

The statement said both sides agreed to maintain dialogue and communication through military and diplomatic channels, and take forward the discussions for the settlement of outstanding issues.

Continued on Page 6

## On 4th Demo anniv, Modi says it hit black money, increased transparency

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

On the fourth anniversary of his controversial announcement of the demonetisation, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday hailed the move, which, he said, had hit the black money and increased transparency in the economy.

The sudden move of Modi on November 8, 2016, had invited widespread criticism from the Opposition and economists. Modi took to Twitter saying, "Demonetisation has

helped reduce black money, increase tax compliance and formalisation and given a boost to transparency."

The Prime Minister said these outcomes have been greatly beneficial towards national progress.

On the occasion, the ruling BJP said that in 2016-17, Unified Payments Interface (UPI) saw transactions worth Rs 6,952 crore while it increased to Rs 21 lakh crore in 2019-20. UPI is an immediate real-time payment system that helps in instantly transferring

the funds between the two bank accounts through a mobile platform.

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## CONG CALLS MOVE ANTI-POOR, RUNNING ONLINE CAMPAIGN

**New Delhi:** The Congress has called demonetisation as an "anti-poor" move. Also, the party is observing November 8 as the "Viswasghaat Diwas", running an online campaign.

## Delhi air to remain unbreathable till stubble fires stop



Vehicles ply on a street, amid hazy weather conditions, in New Delhi, on Sunday PTI

AQI was recorded at 426; Situation unlikely to improve, says SAFAR

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With stubble fires continuing to be reported in Punjab and nearby regions, the national Capital's air quality was recorded in "severe" category on Sunday. According to the Central Pollution Control Board's (CPCB) mobile app SAMEER, Delhi's overall air quality index (AQI) was recorded at 426 which falls in the 'severe' category.

The Ministry of Earth Sciences' air quality monitor System of Air Quality and

Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR) said the situation was unlikely to improve unless a drastic reduction takes place in stubble fire counts.

"Surface winds have become calm, which were moderate so far, and are forecasted to stay low in magnitude for the next two days. This is the major factor due to which no quick recovery is expected unless a drastic reduction in fire counts takes place," SAFAR said.

According to SAFAR, stubble fire counts over Punjab, Haryana, UP, Uttarakhand and neighbouring areas stood high at 3,780 on Saturday and its share in PM 2.5 in Delhi's air was estimated as 29 per cent for Sunday. It was estimated as 32 per cent for Saturday.

Continued on Page 6

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# Yogi to officials: Keep close watch on Covid situation

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Stressing the need to keep a close watch on the possible second wave of novel coronavirus infection, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday said that special attention should be paid to Meerut and other districts reporting 50 to 100 positive cases daily.

Emphasising the use of public address systems to spread awareness about preventive measures against coronavirus infection and infectious diseases, the chief minister said that it was very important in these times to contain COVID-19.

The chief minister, who was presiding over an Unlock review meeting at his official residence here, said that it should be ensured that all Covid protocols were complied with effectively to check the spread of coronavirus infection. "An awareness campaign should be launched to make people aware of the need to wear masks and it should also be ensured that social distancing was also followed strictly," he said.

Directing officials to continue sanitation work continuously, he said that no objection certificate (NOC) of fire safety should be made mandatory for all hospitals and medical institutions.



Yogi Adityanath said that in accordance with the instructions of the UP Labour (Employment Exchange and Job) Commission, the district magistrates should regularly review the developments works for providing jobs to labourers and workers.

The chief minister said that farmers should not face any inconvenience at the paddy purchase centres and asked officials to ensure that the benefits of maximum support price (MSP) were extended to the farmers. The chief minister also directed officials to make farmers aware of the need to bring paddy to the purchase centres after properly threshing, sieving and drying it. He said that if required, the district magistrates should increase the number of purchase centres in their districts.

Directives were also issued

to operate sugarcane purchase centres actively.

The chief minister said that all the government schemes should be reviewed regularly by the divisional commissioners and it should also be ensured that all the revenue related disputes were resolved timely at the tehsil level.

Yogi Adityanath said that all the block development officers (BDOs) should continuously monitor the developmental works at block level and ensure that people received all the benefits of the schemes and developmental works of the state government.

Directing officials to ensure transparency at police stations in providing solution to the problems of the people, the chief minister said that all works at the police stations, tehsils and development blocks should be completed on time.

He said that when small units performed their responsibilities well, it brought a positive change on a large scale and such radical changes should also be seen at tehsils, police stations and development block levels.

Regarding stubble burning, the chief minister said that the farmers should be made aware of the environmental pollution caused by burning of stubble and that it also reduced the fertility of the soil.

The chief minister instructed officials to be more vigilant in view of the upcoming festivals and said that it should be ensured that firecracker units were not established in populated areas.

"In view of the winters, 'rain baseras' (night shelters) should be established and they should be equipped with all the facilities," he added.

## CM stresses on speedy disposal of grievances

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed the chief secretary and the director general of police to ensure speedy disposal of common man's grievances at block, tehsil and police station levels.

Addressing a meeting here on Sunday, the chief minister said that the public faced most of the problems at these three levels hence quick disposal of their complaints and proper monitoring of the disposal should be ensured.

He said that police stations, blocks and tehsils should change their working for betterment with punctuality of the local officials.

"Other logistics like attending to people's grievances should also be taken care of," he added.

The chief minister also directed officials to evolve a system for online submission of grievances by the people as this would speed up the redressal system.

Reaffirming his government's commitment to prompt disposal of the people's grievances, the chief minister said that laxity would not be tolerated in this regard and the erring officials would face action.

# Virtual lighting of lamp at Ram Lalla's darbar

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

To ensure that no one is deprived of the joy of lighting a lamp of faith in the darbar of Ram Lalla, the state government has made a plan to guarantee virtual attendance of millions of devotees in the darbar this year at Ayodhya during the Deepotsava.

"On the special instructions of Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the government will launch a portal where virtual lamps can be lit by the devotees," an official said here on Sunday.

He said that the 'virtual' Deepotsava would be no less real than the actual one and thus this platform would enable a never before real experience.

The portal will have a portrait of Shri Ram Lalla Virajman before which the virtual lamps will be lit. The portal will offer the facility to pick up the lamp stand of one's choice — steel, brass or of any other material. An option of using ghee or oil will also be available for the devotees.

"Not only this, the hands of the person lighting up the lamp will be based on whether the devotee is a man or a woman. After the lamps are lit, based on the details of the devotees, a thank you digital letter carrying the picture of Shri Ram Lalla from the UP CM will also be issued," the official said.



**"On the special instructions of Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the government will launch a portal where virtual lamps can be lit by the devotees"**

The web portal will be available for the common people before the main event on November 13.

It may be mentioned here that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will participate in the Deepotsava in 'virtual mode'.

However, Yogi Adityanath has issued instructions to make the Ayodhya Deepotsava grander this time without any breach of Covid protocol. Directives have also been issued to hold different events daily and to ensure that all

Covid protocols are adhered to.

The chief minister has also said that on Deepotsava, along with Ram Ki Pauri, all Mutts, temples and homes will also light lamps so that the whole temple town of Ayodhya is lit up in bright light. The government is aiming to light up some 5.51 lakh lamps this time.

The chief minister will view tableaux depicting various episodes of Ramayan. He will also perform the aarti of Ram Lalla at the Ram Janmabhoomi premises.

## Panchayat polls expected in February next year

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The elections to the three tier Panchayat Raj institutions in Uttar Pradesh are likely to be held in February next year.

The election process is expected to be completed ahead of the commencement of the UP Board's high school and intermediate examinations.

The State Election Commission has started the process of delimitation of panchayat and urban local body constituencies. The process of delimitation of panchayats

bodies in Gautam Buddha Nagar, Gonda, Sambhal and Moradabad districts will begin from Monday.

Additional Chief Secretary (Panchayati Raj) Manoj Kumar Singh has issued orders for the same.

The reorganisation of panchayats will be notified in the gazette by December 18.

The additional chief secretary has set the timetable for delimitation in these four districts and proposals will be taken from Monday onwards to November 20 in relation to the

reorganisation of the three-tier gram panchayats. For the reorganisation and delimitation of gram panchayats from November 21 to 25, the final publication of the proposal prepared at the district level will be done.

Objections will be received up to December 2 on final publication. After this, the final recommendations on all application forms will be sent to the Panchayati Raj department by December 6 and a notification for the completion of delimitation will be issued from

December 7 to 13. The gazette notification of the same will be issued from December 14 to 18.

According to information, by the end of the year, the revision of the voter list of panchayats will also be completed. Significantly, the term of the panchayats in the state will end on December 25.

The preparations for the panchayat elections were scheduled to commence from March this year, but had to be postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown.

## 25 local craftsmen get stalls at Mati Kala Fair

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In the ongoing Mati Kala Fair, the state government has allowed roadside potters to rub shoulders with the best in the trade so that they may get business. For this the government has decided to give stalls to 25 local craftsmen.

"Artisans who are selling their products on roadside have also been invited to participate in the fair and the Mati Kala Board will arrange lodging facilities for them," Additional Chief Secretary (MSME) Navneet Sehgal said.

It may be mentioned here that the UP Khadi and Village Industries Board (UPKVIB) has organised this fair in an effort to provide a platform to artisans and

craftsmen to showcase their skills to the people.

"With a footfall of 1,500 to 2,000 daily in view of the upcoming Deepawali festival, they are also getting good business," the additional chief secretary said.

This initiative of the Yogi Adityanath government is not only as per Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal of Vocal for Local but is also directly helping craftsmen and artisans on the ground level as the fair is receiving a good response from the public.

During the recent coronavirus induced lockdown, the work of these clay artisans came to a standstill as they were left with no market. The fair has come as a breather

to them as it not only offered a platform but also brought smiles on their faces during Deepawali.

As many as 35 craftsmen and artisans from 15 districts, including Gorakhpur, Prayagraj, Varanasi, Azamgarh, Agra, Pratapgarh, Kushinagar, have put up their stalls at the fair and so far, sale of over Rs 8.60 lakh has been registered in the first four days.

Besides clay products like diyas (lamps), utensils, idols of Laxmi and Ganesh, people are also showing interest in the live demonstration of the making of these products.

The fair is going on at the premises of UPKVIB in Dalibagh, Lucknow and will continue till November 13.

## Cong leader hits out at Modi for demonetisation

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh Congress, on the fourth anniversary of demonetisation, reiterated that the sudden withdrawal of the high value currency notes by the Union government in 2016 was an "organised loot and legalised plunder".

The Congress observes the day as 'Betrayal Day' (Vishwasghaat Diwas).

Senior Congress leader Pramod Tewari said here on Sunday that the demonetisation of the high value currency notes was betrayal of the poor, farmers, women and youth and the decision was against the interest and aspirations of the 138 crore people of India and also a huge blow to the nation's economy.



Tewari said that the "organised loot and legalised plunder" in the cover of demonetisation broke the financial backbone of millions of Indians who were employed in unorganised sector.

He said the sudden demonetisation of the high value currency notes immensely benefited the coteries of industrialists and capitalists close to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

He said former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had also termed demonetisation as "organised loot and legalised plunder".

Demanding an apology from the prime minister, the Congress leader claimed all the claims made by Narendra Modi on the virtues of demonetisation had proved false and the people of the country were still reeling under its adverse impact.

## Mining mafia crush constable to death

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A policeman was crushed to death by criminals involved in illegal mining in Khairagarh area in Agra on Sunday morning.

Superintendent of police (City) Rohan Pramod confirmed that the criminals crushed police constable Sonu Kumar Choudhury under the wheels of their tractor-trolley laden with sand near Bara Nagla village.

After the incident, the criminals opened fire to scare the people who tried to chase them.

There were around 5-6 tractor-trolleys bringing illegal

sand from Rajasthan.

There were around 7 policemen of Saiya police station led by Sub Inspector Amit Kumar and when Sonu tried to stop one of the tractor-trolleys, its driver crushed him, killing the cop on the spot.

The SP (City) said efforts were on to nab the culprits.

### NABBED

Meanwhile, the Special Task Force nabbed the son of a former MLA of Naseerabad in Ajmer for his alleged involvement in the Animal Husbandry and Civil Supplies departments scams on Saturday.

The arrested person was

identified as Sunil Gurjar aka Monti Gurjar of Rajasthan. He is a close aide of Ashish Rai, who is presently in jail for the crime.

Sunil was nabbed from Jaipur airport when he boarded a plane to flee the country. Police had issued a lookout notice against him and a case was registered against him at Hazratganj Kotwali in Lucknow.

Sunil owned his crime and disclosed that he along with Ashish had duped innocent businessmen in the name of facilitating tenders to them of the Animal Husbandry and Civil Supplies departments.

## 22-yr-old student raped by relative: Police

PTI ■ BANDA

A 22-year-old undergraduate student was allegedly raped by one of her relatives at her home in Girwa police station area of the district, police said on Sunday.

Circle Officer Siyaram of Naraini Circle, under which Girwa police station falls, said the student was raped by her 25-year-old relative on Friday.

He said the accused used to visit the girl's house.

He visited her house on Friday and finding her sleeping, raped her, he added.

CO Siyaram said the accused also made a video of his act and threatened the girl to make it viral on social media if she dared tell anybody about the incident.

The girl has been sent for medical examination, he said, adding efforts are on to nab the accused. PTI CORR NAV

**OUT ON BAIL, UP MAN RAPES, KILLS 7-YR-OLD GIRL; ARRESTED SANT KABIR NAGAR:** A man was arrested here on Sunday in connection with the alleged abduction, rape and killing of a 7-year-old girl, police said.

Superintendent of Police Brijesh Singh said the girl had gone missing on November 4 and her body was recov-

ered on Saturday. During post mortem, rape was confirmed, he said.

The arrested accused has confessed to his crime. He told police that on November 4 when he saw the girl all alone, he abducted her. The man then took her to a jungle, raped and then killed her, the police officer said.

Singh said the accused was recently released from jail on bail in a case of having unnatural sex with a boy.

### MAN HELD FOR ABDUCTING, RAPING MINOR GIRL IN UP

**BALLIA:** A 24-year-old man was arrested for allegedly abducting and raping a minor girl on the pretext of marriage, police said on Sunday.

"On August 28, a 16-year-old girl was abducted by her 24-year-old neighbor and taken to Kerala. The girl was raped on the pretext of marriage," Station House Officer of Bairia police station Sanjay Tripathi said.

"On the complaint of the girl's father, a case has been registered against the accused under the India Penal Code and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act," he added.

Police said the girl was rescued and sent for medical examination.

The accused has been sent to jail, they added.

### WOMAN KILLS SELF, INFANT AFTER TIFF WITH HUSBAND

**MAU:** A 30-year-old woman allegedly consumed poison after administering it to her children's food, killing herself and her six-month old son on Sunday, said police.

The woman's three-year-old daughter was admitted to a hospital here in an unconscious state and is undergoing treatment, they said.

Anamika, the wife of Mau resident Santosh Gautam, allegedly took the drastic step after an argument with her husband, said city Circle Officer Naresh Kumar.

He said the incident occurred in Bhupat Nagar locality under Dakshin Tola police station of the city. Police is probing into the incident

### TWO DEAD AS CAR TYRE BURSTS ON AGRA-LUCKNOW EWAY

**UNNAO:** Two people were killed and three others critically injured after the car they were travelling in burst a tyre and fell into a pit on a highway in Unnao district of Uttar Pradesh on Sunday, police said.

Circle Officer of Bangarmau Anjani Kumar Rai said the deceased were identified as Meera Devi (53) and Jaiprakash (40), both residents of Samastipur district in Bihar.

The incident happened in the morning on the Agra-Lucknow Expressway under Behta Mujawar police station area, police said.

The ill-fated car was going from Delhi to Samastipur, when one of the front tyres of the vehicle burst, collided with the divider, overturned and fell into a deep pit.

The injured persons were admitted to the district hospital, while the bodies of those who died were sent for a post-mortem, police added.

### WOMAN, 2 CHILDREN DIE AS CAR HITS TREE IN UP

**PILIBHIT:** A 35-year-old woman and her two children died here when the car in which they were travelling rammed into a tree, police said on Sunday.

The incident took place Saturday night when Vaibhav Agarwal and his family were returning to their home in Pilibhit from Bareilly in the car, Atar Singh, SHO, Sungarhi Police Station said.

The speeding car hit a tree near Gauhania crossing here. The impact of the collision was so huge that Agarwal's daughters Kanishka (7) and Ishani (5), and his wife Priya (35) died on the spot, he said.

Four people were injured in the incident, Singh said.



Deputy chief minister Keshav Prasad Maurya inaugurating the new office of UP Film Development Council chairman Raju Srivastava in Lucknow on Sunday



# Covid positivity rate comes down to 3.2%

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Covid positivity rate of Lucknow has further come down to 3.2 per cent in the first week of November while the cumulative positivity rate of the district has also declined from 7.9 per cent to 7.4 per cent from October to November.

"Its means that only three out of 100 people have tested positive for coronavirus this month so far," a senior official at the CMO office said. The cumulative positivity rate from March till October-end was 7.9 per cent and it also come down to 7.4 per cent this month, he added. The official pointed out that ivermectin tablets, which were distributed widely by the surveillance teams, played a part in checking the spread of disease.

"The medicine has had a role to play and researches have shown the same. We have also extended the regime of ivermectin from three days to five days for any positive case and to prevent any complications," he said. He added that people using prophylactics were also taking ivermectin and not hydroxychloroquine any longer.

"On Saturday, there was just one death in the district and it is a good sign. Coronavirus cases have also been less than 250. However, one concern which remains is that people are hiding symptoms and they only go to hospitals when their condition deteriorates," he pointed out.

Aliganj, Gomtinagar and Indiranagar are the areas with maximum cases of Covid-19 and dengue. "These are mainly slum areas and the peri-urban areas," the official said.

He said there are two teams for these areas to manage Covid-19 and dengue. There are different surveillance teams working to contain the spread of both the diseases.

Meanwhile, People's Health



## 231 more test +ve

**Lucknow (PNS):** As many as 231 persons tested positive for coronavirus in the city on Sunday while 271 patients recovered, taking the recovery figures to 61,264. The death toll in the city stands at 916. The new patients included 26 from Gomtinagar, 18 from Ashiyana, 16 from Indiranagar, 15 from Rae Bareilly road, 14 from Alambagh, and 10 each from Chowk, Mahanagar, Aliganj & Thakurganj.

There were 10 deaths in the city and four of the deceased belonged to Lucknow while six to Azamgarh, Jaunpur, Shahjahanpur, Sultanpur and Unnao. Four Covid-19 patients died at KGMU.

Organisation secretary Dr Ishwar Gilada said it is disconcerting to see that the second wave of corona has hit Kerala and Delhi. "Kerala has the maximum number of educated people as has Delhi, but the second wave is a cause of concern and it shows that even educated people are not adhering Covid protocols," he said.

He said they have written to the Central government to conduct more antibodies tests instead of RT-PCR and antigen tests which have a window of only ten days. "We are not

Across the state, 2,247 persons tested positive, including 139 in Gautam Buddh nagar, 223 in Ghaziabad and 204 in Meerut, taking the UP tally to 4,97,563. There were 26 deaths across the state, including five in Meerut, two in Gorakhpur, and one each in Kanpur, Prayagraj, Gautam Buddh nagar, Varanasi, Moradabad, Saharanpur, Agra, Jaunpur, Hardoi, Etawah, Bulandshahr, Pratapgarh, Sitapur, Farrukhabad, Siddharthnagar, Bijnore, Banda & Fatehpur, taking the toll to 7,206. Besides, 1,858 patients recovered, taking the number of recoveries to 4,67,108. The number of active cases in the state is 23,249.

undermining the importance of RT-PCR tests but one should not go by the herd immunity and try to look for other options while going or testing. The antibody test is easy as only a drop of blood is taken and results come in ten minutes. If people have antibodies, they may not get infected because they already had infection and would pose a minimum risk, but if they do not have antibodies, they may get infected or may be carrying the infection which makes them fall in the high-risk category," he said.

# Woman staying with live-in partner found hanging

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A 26-year-old woman staying with her live-in partner was found hanging at her house in Gomtinagar on Sunday. She was identified as Puja of Bahraich district. She was in a live-in relationship with Deepak Kumar Maurya of Bahraich and was staying in Vikas Khand for the last few months. Around 2 pm, she was found hanging in a room and was rushed to RMLIMS where she was declared

brought dead.

Gomtinagar SHO said the police were trying to ascertain why she ended her life. "We talked to Deepak but he did not have satisfactorily explanation. We have sent the body for autopsy and further investigation is underway," the SHO said. Puja was found hanging from the ceiling with a rope tied around her neck. The police said the family of the girl has been informed about the incident.

Meanwhile, two brothers

fought over a petty issue and one of them attacked the other with a wooden pole in Talkatora on Saturday afternoon. The victim suffered grievous injuries and was admitted to a hospital. He was identified as Firoz of Harijan Basti in Alamnagar. Firoz's wife Reshma was doing some household work when his younger brother Siraj picked up a fight with her. As Firoz intervened, the brother duo entered into a scuffle. Siraj attacked Firoz with a heavy

wooden pole and the latter fell unconscious. While Siraj fled the scene, Firoz was rushed to a hospital where he was given first aid. Following his wife's complaint, police registered a case and started efforts to nab Siraj.

### SUB-INSPECTOR KILLED IN ROAD MISHAP

A sub-inspector posted at PGI police station was killed in a road mishap on Saturday evening. Reports said sub-inspector Ravindranath was

returning from somewhere on a bike. Around 5 pm on Saturday, some unidentified speeding vehicle knocked him at Mama crossing in Vrindavan Colony. A police spokesman said Ravindranath suffered grievous injuries in the mishap and was rushed to a private hospital where he succumbed during treatment on Sunday morning. He said the SI was staying with his family at his official residence inside the PGI police station premises

# Thieves make off with ornaments, cash from 2 houses

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Thieves made off with cash and ornaments from the house of a teacher in Chinhat. Reports said Narendra Kumar Pandey of Anant Lok Colony in the area is a teacher posted in Barabanki. On November 6, he left for Faizabad to attend 'terahvi' of a relative. On November 8, he got a call from his neighbour who informed him of theft at his house. "The thieves made off with ornaments and Rs 15,000 in cash," he said.

In another incident, house was burgled in Chinhat. Jabir Ali of Shahpur Colony said he and his family left for Barabanki to attend the mar-



riage ceremony of his brother-in-law on November 3. When they returned on November 8, they found the house burgled. The thieves made off with Rs 12,000 in cash and ornaments.



Women performing puja at Mankameshwar temple on the occasion of Ahoi Ashtami on Sunday

Pioneer

# BBAU admission process begins

**Lucknow (PNS):** The admission process for the new session (2020-21) of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University has started with adherence to Covid-19 protocols. Spokesperson Rachna Gangwar said that counselling for courses such as BA (Public Administration), BSc (Geology, Integrated BSc, MSc, BTech,

BVoc, BBA, LLB, MPhil, MA, PhD has been completed.

Counselling is being done by all the departments following all the Covid-19 safety protocols. Counselling of the remaining subjects will be completed by November 17. Counselling of graduate students of Library and Information Science depart-

ment will be held on November 9, that of PhD on November 10, MPhil (Management), PhD (Management) and MPhil (Hindi) will be held on November 9 while counselling of PhD (Horticulture) will take place on November 10.

Meanwhile, online orientation of all new students of BBA, LLB, BA and BA (Hons)

on the third day was conducted by Lucknow University in three separate sessions on Sunday. New undergraduate students of the Faculty of Law and Faculty of Arts were welcomed to LU by Vice-Chancellor AK Rai and several other administrative heads and heads of the departments.

**NOTICE**  
A proposal for the mortgage residential Plot, part of Kharsa No.404/lin, admeasuring 142sq.mt, situated at Village-Imliya, Pargana & Tehsil District-Mau, is pending before L.I.C. Housing Finance Ltd. The original sale-deed is registered at the office of Sub-Registrar-Sadar, Mau, vide Book No.1, Zild No.3316, on pages-299/326, at Serial No.3170, on dated 11-06-2014, executed by Birbal S/o Chillar R/o Village-Amari, District-Mau, in favour of Sukkhan S/o Late Khedu R/o Vill.-Bhusuwa, District-Mau, It is informed to us that the above noted original sale-deed has been lost. If this original sale-deed is mortgage with any person(s), Financial Institution(s), Bank(s) or any other one, may inform immediately to LIC Housing Finance Ltd. Area Office-Mau, Contact No.3695640872 or Sanjay Kumar Singh Advocate, LIC HFL, Mobile No.9919972269, 8765360669 otherwise the above noted proposal shall be finalize immediately after the expiry of 15 days of this publication.

# CISH to monitor Panama wilt with help of drones

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

ICAR institutes are helping in managing the deadly banana disease with the help of drones. Director of Central Institute for Subtropical Horticulture (CISH) Shailendra Rajan said they would be using this technique. He said the technique using drones is useful both in the identification of the disease and also in planning about the management strategy for the village.

"The analysis of the images captured by the drone is carried out for understanding of the presence of the disease. The area under banana cultivation in Uttar Pradesh is increasing at a higher pace and in near future, it will become a leading state in banana production. Unfortunately, a disease known as Panama wilt has entered eastern UP and Bihar where farmers depend on banana cultivation for livelihood because of very high profit," he said. The disease is also prevalent in many areas which are neither known to scientists nor farmers. "The detection of Panama wilt is difficult sometimes because of overlapping symptoms with many problems faced during banana cultivation. Therefore, identification of the areas where the

disease has made its presence is important so that the spread of the disease is managed properly. ICAR scientists are regularly receiving messages about the prevalence of this disease from different parts of the state. The disease is highly infectious and can travel from one field to another through contaminated tools, shoes, tires of cycles, tractors or other vehicles, but the most important factor has been found to be irrigation water containing the pathogen. Not only the irrigation water, the flood water stagnation in the field has also helped in the spread of the disease in many of the areas," he said. Rajan said such monitoring provides an opportunity for scientists for understanding the effectiveness of the management strategy plan recommended for the area.

"Drone technology helps in the identification of disease for initiating an examination of the plants. However, diagnosis is also time-consuming and requires a lot of efforts to complete the process. ICAR's inter-institutional scientific team is developing a technique that can identify the disease plots and its severity in a very short time which is very pertinent as the the disease is spreading at a fast pace," the CISH director said.

# KGMU doctors give new lease of life to child vomiting blood

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

It was a life-saving endoscopy of a Covid-19 positive child at KGMU. An 11-year-old boy with massive haematemesis (vomiting of blood) admitted to KGMU's Paediatric ICU on Monday night. "The patient was admitted under the supervision of Dr Sanjeev Kumar Verma. The condition of the child deteriorated due to excessive blood loss. In such a situation, the child was shifted to Covid PICU. Immediate treatment was started and the child was transfused with two units of blood. When all efforts to control internal bleeding failed, Vice-Chancellor Dr Bipin Puri gave instructions for emergency endoscopy. Within a few hours, head of the department of Medical Gastroenterology Dr Sumit Rungta performed the endoscopy procedure to check the source of internal bleeding," KGMU spokesperson Dr Sudhir Singh said.

Since the patient was Covid positive, keeping the entire team safe was important, as was having a clear vision after wearing protective masks and shields during endoscopy.

"After the procedure, the child's bleeding stopped and his health gradually improved. Now, he child is safe and out of danger with final diagnosis being Budd-Chiari syndrome," he said. During the endoscopic procedure, Dr Kamlender Verma, Dr Gulam Akhtar, endoscopic technician Jeetendra and Aniket helped Dr Rungta.

# Women feel Kamala Harris feat may be a watershed moment

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Excitement prevailed amongst city women of all age groups as Kamala Harris, who has her roots to India, became the first woman vice-president elect of the United States of America. They said it was a watershed moment with the world's largest democracy finally acknowledging a woman for the post.

Nishi Pandey from Lucknow University's English department said it is a big thing for America that a woman has been elected the vice-president. She said it has brought excitement, pride and a sense of shared achievement amongst all women across the globe that women can make it big and have dented the colonial and patriarchal mindset to a large extent.

"I think this is fabulous

because she is a representative of the mixed culture which America is all about. Her mother is Indian and father from a different origin and her husband is Jew. America is a beautiful tapestry of different cultures coming together. It's a day for all women to celebrate and inspire for bigger things," she said. She added that it was difficult for women in America to make it big in a patriarchal set-up. "But it was one step at a time. While Hillary Clinton broke the glass ceiling, Kamala Harris made it as the vice-president and we may next have a woman as the POTUS," she said. "There have been women leaders in Europe as well but other countries do not impact India the way America does," she added.

Head of LU's English department Rani Uniyal said she would be happier to see

Kamala Harris as the president of the US. "However, it's a major feat that she is the first woman vice-president in the history of the US. Young women would be inspired and look up to her to carve a niche for themselves in a completely patriarchal set-up. Every woman is happy and my own students are excited," she said.

She said it also shows the power of democracy that every vote counts.

"It must have been an exciting moment for those who voted for the first time. When people vote for the first time, they know that it makes a difference, so people should go out and vote and not sit at home and hope for things to change," she added.

Madhavi Kukreja, a women activist, said a lot of excitement is prevailing among women she has worked with.

"A woman becoming the vice-president of America is huge. It was strange that the US never had a woman on this position before," she said.

She added that what also is also inspiring is that she had no one to back her and she was an immigrant. "Young girls are feeling so empowered, as are women of all age groups for different reasons," she added.

Radhika Srivastava, who has cleared a competitive examination recently, said it really shows that things are changing. "It's such a complex scene in the world with women being abused, raped and facing all kinds of social problems. But then at the same time, it also shows that the world is changing and with the US electing a woman as the vice-president, it is reassuring for all the women," she said.

**हर गर्भवती माँ को हो एहसास कि वह है सबसे खास**

**प्रधानमंत्री सुरक्षित मातृत्व अभियान**

**09 नवम्बर, 2020**

**प्रधानमंत्री सुरक्षित मातृत्व अभियान**

**हर माह, 9 तारीख**

**खतरे के लक्षण**

**सतर्कता से जिम्मेदारी निभायें, पूरी जांचें करायें**

**हर माह की 9 तारीख को सरकारी अस्पतालों में**

- गर्भवती महिलाओं की निःशुल्क विशेष सेहत जांच
- परिवार नियोजन, पोषण तथा प्रसव स्थान हेतु काउन्सलिंग

1. **ब्लड टेस्ट**

2. **यूरीन टेस्ट**

3. **ब्लड प्रेशर**

4. **हीमोग्लोबिन**

5. **अल्ट्रासाउंड**

**स्वास्थ्य संबंधित जानकारी एवं शिकायत निवारण हेतु सम्पर्क करें 104**

**पहली बार माँ बनने पर प्रधानमंत्री मातृ वंदना योजना के अन्तर्गत तीन किशतों में ₹.5000/- की धनराशि लाभार्थी को देय है। अधिक जानकारी हेतु सम्पर्क करें 7998 7998 04**



# 63 COVID-19 patients found

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

As many as 63 new COVID-19 patients have been detected in the district on Sunday, increasing the total number of cases to 17,444. The day also saw one death, increasing the toll to 280. During the day, the follow-up negative reports included two and both of them have been recovered from home isolation, increasing the number to 13,594. As no patient has been discharged from any hospital, the number remained at 2,831. The total number of patients who have been recovered so far is 16,425, leaving 739 active cases. Alarminglly, the reverse trend in the fight against COVID-19 is shocking because there is a continuous decline in

the recovery rate as well as rise in the number of active cases for the last many days as it has slipped further to 94.15 per cent but the mortality rate has remained at 1.60 per cent.

Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr VB Singh has informed that in the first report of the day, 51 positive patients were found out of 3,196 reports received. Till then, the total test reports received were 3,51,137 and the results of 3,666 are awaited. Out of them, 3,33,705 were negative while 17,432 positive. The total number of samples collected was 3,69,223. Earlier, a male aged 79 from Anand Nagar (Chitaiapur) succumbed to COVID-19 at Sir Sunderlal Hospital, Banaras Hindu University (SSH BHU). With

the addition of five new red zones, the total number of hotspots has increased to 2,342 including 192 red zones. There are 2,150 green zones with 17 new ones.

Earlier, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Amit Pathak inspected several areas including Nadesar, Lahurabir, Ramapura, Godowlia, Maidagin and Benia Bagh riding on two-wheeler to take stock of situation of security in wake of forthcoming festivals. During his inspection he also gave several instructions to concerned police personnel at several places. He has informed that under the ‘Mission Shakti’ campaign, a total of 5,702 women / girls were mobilised at 166 places and 1,254 leaflets

were distributed. A total of 560 women / girls were sensitised by the Anti-Romeo Squads at 136 places. Action was taken against five under 34 Police Act, two under MB Act, two under 290 Police Act and two under 107/116 CrPC apart from warning 26 eve teasers. Besides, the police arrested 39 persons under Section 151 of CrPC while challaned under Section 188 and took action under Section 51 of Disaster Management Act against five persons. During checking at various points, 1,892 vehicles were challaned and nine seized. Apart from this, ₹1,45,100 were realised from 175 vehicles while ₹ 36,300 from 947 persons for moving on the roads without wearing masks.

# Narendra Giri meets CM Yogi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

In the midst of the dreaded condition of corona infection, the tent city in the Sangam will be flourished in January - 2021. In view of this, Akhil Bharatiya Akhara Parishad president Mahant Narendra Giri met the Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. Yogi Adityanath said that the crisis in corona is still in progress but tradition of Magh Mela will be maintained in the midst of it.

Mahant Narendra Giri said that Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has said that devotees will be allowed to enter the Mela area after the corona test. For this, a testing camp will be set up at every entrance of the mela area. There will be a 24-hour corona check. Also, a corona check will be arranged in every sector of the fair.

The president of the Akhara Parishad said that the pilgrims who had already been



corona examined will not be stopped. While those who do not have a report, they will have to be tested in Prayagraj. Saints and devotees whose corona tests report will come positive will not get entry in the Mela area. There will be

regular corona tests of saints and Kalpavis in the Mela area.

Those tests positive will be removed from the Mela area and they will be quarantined. It was informed that Chief Minister Yogi said that for the bathing in Magh month, suf-

ficient pure water will be available in the Ganga. Mahant Narendra Giri presented Hanuman Chalisa in a silver letter to the Chief Minister on the occasion.

To stop the crowds, the pandal of religious institutions in the Mela area will be reduced this time. Only major religious institutions will be allowed to hold camps.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has appealed to the people to bathe at every ghat to ensure that there is not much crowd at one place for bathing in Magh Mela. Every ghat will be arranged for this. There, arrangements will be made for electricity, toilets and to change clothes.

Mahant Narendra Giri has appealed to the saints and Kalpavis to bring less crowds. He appealed to the saints not to have a pandal of discourse. He said that saints should only worship and perform yagya.

# PM to unveil, lay foundation-stones of 30 projects worth ₹614 crore

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

As a gift to the dwellers of his parliamentary constituency on the auspicious occasion of Deepawali, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi will virtually unveil and lay down foundation stones of 30 projects of ₹ 614 crore on Monday at 10.30 am. The people could watch the unveiling and foundation laying down programme of the PM live at six places in the city.

Meanwhile, UP Minister and district incharge Ashutosh Tandon inspected several places including Trade Facilitation Centre (TFC), Baba Lalpur in connection with the proposed Prime Minister’s address through video conferencing.

During the last six years from 2014 to 2020, Varanasi has witnessed a remarkable change with a lot of development and welfare works on ground after Modi became its MP in 2014, the regional president of the BJP Mahesh Chandra Srivastava informed the presspersons at Circuit



Regional BJP chief MC Srivastava telling about proposed Modi’s programme in Varanasi on Sunday

House here on Sunday adding, the PM wants to bring the city in the world spectrum in view of the development and in this order, he will unveil and lay down foundation stones of 30 projects of ₹614 crore.

The important projects to be unveiled by the PM virtually are Light & Sound System in Sarnath (₹7.88 crore), Konia PS, Bhagvanpur & Dinaur STP, renovation & rehabilitation of five ghats SPS under JICA (₹ 19.08 crore), two boarding

bridge at LBS International Airport, Babatpur (₹ 9 crore), IDPS work under phase-II (₹ 118.20 crore), various works in Sriga Sports Stadium in Sriga (₹ 8.76 crore) and up-gradation work in Ramnagar Government Hospital. Similarly, the important projects for which the PM is to lay foundation stones include the upgradation of multipurpose hall of cultural complex in Chowkaghat (₹30.30 crore), renovation of Benia Bagh (₹ 90.42

crore) and advanced monitoring system (₹ 128.04 crore).

The virtual programme of the PM will be telecast live and the people could watch it on big screens at six places including Trade Facility Centre in Bada Lalpur, Circuit House, auditorium in the office of divisional commissioner, Dashaswamedh Ghat, boarding bridge at airport and Shoolkanteshwar, Srivastava informed adding, more than 1830 people would watch the programme at these places between 10.30 and 11.30 am.

The PM will also hold a dialogue with three beneficiaries of various projects including an industrialist, an international level player and a housewife, he informed but denied disclosing their names and identification to avoid gathering in view of COVID-19. District president of the BJP Hansrraj Vishwakarma, City Chief Vidyashankar Rai and regional media incharge of party Navratan Rathii were also present on the occasion.

# Administrative Block inaugurated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Administrative Block of Department of Physical Education was inaugurated by the chief guest Dr.Neeraj Tripathi, Registrar, Banaras Hindu University (BHU) and guest of honour Prof MK Singh, Dean of Students Welfare on Saturday. Afterwards, bid farewell was given to three of the staff from University Sports Board (USB) who have superannuated from their posts. They were felicitated by Prof DC Rai, Vice-president, USB, along with all the respected guests on the dais. Besides, alumni selected in various government organisations were felicitated by Dr Neeraj Tripathi, Prof MK Singh and Prof Abhimanyu Singh, Head, Department of Physical



Registrar Dr Neeraj Tripathi inaugurating Administrative Block of Physical Education department, BHU in Varanasi on Saturday

Education. Around 30 alumni from different states of the country

witnessed the event who were welcomed by Prof Abhimanyu Singh. In his address, Prof MK

Singh congratulated the department for going to be Faculty of Physical Education soon. Dr Neeraj Tripathi said that the department has unique beauty and attraction that fascinated each and every individual to visit. He also congratulated the department for continuous effort towards growth and development. The vote of thanks was given by Dr Akhil Mehrotra, Secretary, Alumni Cell. The others present were Prof DK Dureha, Prof Sushma Ghildyal, Prof BC Kapri, Prof Rajiv Vyas, Prof Vikram Singh, Prof T Onima Reddy, Dr Akhil Mehrotra, Dr Binayak Dubey, Dr Krishnakant, Dr Deepak Dogra, Dr AbhishekVerma, Dr Pradeep Singh Chahar, Dr Shailesh Kumar and Dr Linet Khakha.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The office-bearers of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad the largest organisation of saints termed the controversial statement of Hindu political activist, social worker Sadhvi Prachi as incorrect.

Akhara Parishad president Mahant Narendra Giri said that Sadhvi Prachi should not make such inflammatory statements. However, the president of the Akhara Parishad said that if there is action, there will be a backlash against it. He said that if someone goes to the temple and recites the namaz, then the Hindus will also perform havan and worship in the mosque.

Mahant Narendra Giri said that the law does its job in such cases and in the case of Mathura, the accused have been arrested and sent to jail by the police for offering prayers in the temple. Therefore saints should not

make such disputed rhetoric which creates religious frenzy. Mahant Narendra Giri said that such a statement will spread hatred in the society.

He said that it should be opposed to offer namaz in the temple, but it is wrong if any saint said that he will go to the mosque and worship.

He said that Sadhvi Prachi has given a statement to go to mosques and read Hanuman Chalisa in protest against the incident of offering namaz at the Nanda Baba temple in Mathura. He has also supported Sadhvi Prachi’s statement on the growing cases of ‘Love Jihad’ in the country.

Mahant Narendra Giri said that strict action must be taken against the love jihadis and for this, the government also needs to enact stringent laws to protect Hindu sister daughters from being caught in the clutches of love jihadis. He said that the love jihadis should be hanged at the crossroads.

Mahant Narendra Giri also termed the complicity of Maulvi and Maulana not making any appeals to stop the love jihad

**WOMAN KILLED BY HUSBAND:** A 35-year-old woman living in Nyaya Nagar of Dhoomanganj was brutally murdered allegedly by her husband. It is alleged that the husband battered her to death with a wooden slab for not giving him money for liquor. Police have arrested the accused. On the other hand, after the post-mortem, the family cremated the body.

Sunita (the deceased) was originally from Kaushambi. She was married to Nihal Kumar, a resident of Nyaya Nagar, Sulemsarai 15 years ago. They also had four children, including three daughters and a 12-year-old son. Nihal used to work in a bike shop in Kharbanda Market, but stopped working after the lockdown. He was also addicted to

drinking liquor and there was bickering in the house over the same issue.

Once Sunita reached the police with a complaint, after which the husband was also challaned in breach of peace case. According to the police, Nihal demanded money from Sunita for drinking alcohol around 10 pm on Saturday. Both of them quarreled over the refusal and in the meanwhile, he got angry and battered her to death with a wooden plank kept in the house.

On People gathered around after hearing the the noise and reported it to the police. On which he was taken into custody. After investigation, the body was taken into police custody and sent for post-mortem. Inspector informed that the accused has been arrested by registering a case on the written complaint made by Ganga, the brother-in-law of the deceased.

# Confectionary stores, bakeries start stocking delicacies

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

With less than a week left for Diwali and preparations for the festival are underway, city-based confectionary stores and bakeries have started stocking delicacies like dry fruits, chocolates, cookies and sweets. The sellers claimed that the sale of dry fruits, chocolates and cookies registered a better growth in the past three years compared to traditional sweets.

The sweet shops and bakeries have planned to stock on exotic delicacies this year to attract customers, boost sales and fight slowdown in business due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Sugar-free sweets are in particular focus this year, production of which is being ramped up keeping in mind health-conscious customers and the demand for such sweets.

Vijay Arora, president of Prayag Vyapar Mandal, said that on this Diwali, the markets will be inundated with a variety of dry fruits, cookies, sweets including sugar-free and low-

fat sweets. He added that citizens of Sangam city had been fast switching over to low-fat, low-sugar and sugar-free sweets, dry fruits, and chocolates instead of traditional sweets for the past two or three years. Prominent confectioners have moved to offer a wide range of sugar-free or low-fat cookies and sweets drifting from the tradition of offering and exchanging sweets to friends and guests.

The owner of a prominent confectionery in the city said, ‘We have customers who seek both traditional sweets and sugar-free or low-sugar sweetmeat products. Demand for dry fruits and chocolates have gone up despite their soaring prices,’ he said. He added that a wide variety of dry fruits, chocolates etc. have been introduced in the markets ahead of Diwali and this would be available in prices ranging from ₹500 to ₹ 3,500 per kg. Another dealer Nitin Mehrotra said, ‘We hope that sales would go up by 20-30 per cent compared to previous years and dry fruits, chocolates and sugar-free

sweets have a huge role to play in the increased demand expected this year.”

**PLAY STAGED:** A renowned theatre group of the city Vinod Rastogi Smriti Sansthan broke the lockdown silence by staging in Hindi JB Priestly’s play An Inspector Calls under the direction of Ajay Mukherjee at North Central Zone Cultural Centre auditorium on Sunday evening with the support of Sangeet Natak Academy, New Delhi as a tribute to the noted theatre personality Kalyan Kumar Ghosh. Shailtanaya Srivastava was the chief guest on the occasion.

The play revolves around a suicide mystery and the inspector calls on a capitalist family for investigation. It indicates that every member of the society is responsible if such incidents take place. The play also underlines the gulf between the rich and the poor as exploiters and the exploited ones. Audience enjoyed the play as a treat after a long gap.

Those participated in the play included Amit Gupta,

Akshat Agrawal, Apoorva Gupta, Saurabh Shukla, Kavita, Gaurav Tripathi, Rohit Yadav, Prajita Mishra, Ajay Mukherjee, and Ashish Yadav as actors, Shubham Verma as music operator, and Sujoy Ghoshal as light designer.

**BAIL GRANTED:** The Allahabad High Court has granted bail to a person from Deoria accused of making objectionable remarks against Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and other public representatives.

However, while granting bail to Akhilanand Rao, Justice Siddhartha barred him from using social media for the next two years. Secondly, he was also ordered to cooperate in the trial sincerely without seeking any adjournment till the conclusion of the trial before the trial court. A first information report (FIR) was registered against Rao by the police under sections 420 (cheating), 120B (conspiracy) of Indian Penal Code and section 66D of IT Act at Kotwalia police station of Deoria and he is in jail since May 12, 2020.

# Stories of great scientists inspire young ones: BHU V-C

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Vice-Chancellor of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) Prof Rakesh Bhatnagar has said that the stories of great scientists and their works help ignite the minds of young scientists come up with new discoveries. He was addressing the inaugural function of the Lectures on Nobel Prize 2020 Winning Works in Physics, Chemistry and Physiology/ Medicine at Shatabdi Krishi Prekshagrih of Institute of Agricultural Sciences, BHU here on Saturday. The programme was organised by the Institute of Science, BHU in association with Indian National Science Academy (INSA), New Delhi and National Academy of Sciences India, Allahabad on the birth anniversary of Nobel laureate and great physicist Bharat Ratna CV Raman.

The V-C said that programmes like this will be greatly beneficial to the young scientists, faculty members and



researchers as it will inspire and excite them to work on new ideas in whichever fields, they are interested in. He exuded confidence that the initiative by Prof AK Tripathi, Director, Institute of Science, will go a long way in motivating and guiding the large number of young scientists working across institutes and departments in BHU.

Prof Kulinder Pal Singh, Visiting Professor, Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Mohali delivered a lecture online on ‘a super massive black hole in the centre of the milky way’ while Dr Debojyoti Chakraborty, Senior

Scientist, Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology, New Delhi on ‘re-writing the code of life’ and Prof Saumitra Das, Director, National Institute of Biomedical Genomics, Kalyani on ‘Hepatitis C Virus: Life in the liver’.

Prof AK Tripathi, Prof Mallikarjun Joshi, Dean, Faculty of Science, Prof Ramesh Chand, Director, Institute of Agricultural Sciences, Prof AP Singh, Dean, Faculty of Agriculture, Prof AS Raghuvanshi, Director, Institute of Environmental and Sustainable Development, heads of departments and faculty members attended the

programme. Many students and teachers also joined the programme online.

**CONSENT LETTER SIGNED:** Aiming at preserving the heritage of this cultural capital of country through technology and making the farmers and women self-reliant under the local to vocal programme of the Central Government, the Sai Institute of Rural Development (SIRD), Varanasi has signed a consent letter with Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C Deck, Kolkata) of Electronic & IT Ministry, Government of India as technology partner.

The Director of SIRD Ajay Singh informed that the consent letters were exchanged between the senior director of C Deck and centre head Dr NN Bhattacharyya and him. The C Deck showed its interest to establish a joint network centre in SIRD, Varanasi, he informed adding, the necessary arrangements will be made by SIRD for the purpose.



# Kumar asks RMC officials to be prepared for Covid second wave

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Chief Development Officer Cand Officiating District Magistrate Mahendra Kumar carried out a surprise inspection of Rama Medical College (RMC) on Saturday.

During the inspection, he directed the college management to continue all earlier activities in the wake of the second wave of coronavirus infection.

He directed the officials and other staff members to discharge their duties diligently as they did earlier.

Kumar said all the arrangements should remain foolproof and regular feed of the CCTV cameras should be sent to the Kanpur Nagar Nigam Control Room for its onward monitoring.

He directed the medical college officials to maintain the case history of all the patients and provide them



CDO and Officiating DM Dr Mahendra Kumar visits Rama Medical College.

Pioneer

quality treatment.

“There should be no laxity in treatment of the patients. The medical college authorities should ensure presence of doctors specialised in different fields in the hospital. Report of all the

vacant beds in the hospital should be sent to the district administration daily along with details of patients as in the past,” he said.

Kumar also asked the medical college authorities to make better arrangements

than earlier as there was every likelihood that the coronavirus infection may increase in due course.

During the inspection, he was accompanied by Chief Medical Officer Dr Anil Kumar Mishra.

# UI-Assist thermal energy storage system inaugurated at IIT-K

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Director of the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, Prof Abhay Karandikar, inaugurated the thermal energy storage system of 775 turn/hour capacity leading the UI-Assist project of the United State and India a few days back.

The UI-Assist is a joint venture of US-India which aims at developing smart grid and storage technology. This new storage unit has been established at the Centre for Environmental Science and Engineering (CESE) building on IIT-K campus.

Funded by the Department

of Science and Technology (DST) through Indo-US Science and Technology Forum, New Delhi, this joint venture aims at developing smart grid and storage technology.

The new thermal power warehouse has been developed as a part of UI-Assist’s urban demonstration plots. This programme has four more such exhibit units under the categories of rural, semi-urban and urban/institutional settings.

Prof Karandikar said the new storage of 775 turn/hour capacity was very effective in bringing a balance to the system by reducing the rising

load of air conditioning and peak power demand.

Employing the latest adaptive concept of phase change material with a brine solution coolant which can achieve a temperature of -4 degrees by using low cost energy during off peak hours, the new system will be able to support the AC load during peak period for 77.5 TR for 10 hours.

The IIT-K director also highlighted how this technology could be used in a smart city and data application centres to effectively cut down on the energy expenditure, thus promoting sustainable growth and development.

The project has kick-start-

ed under the able guidance of Prof SC Srivastava, Prof Santanu Mishra and Prof Ankush S of the IIT-K department of electrical engineering. The execution is supervised by Vinay Kumar Tiwari of the executive engineering in IIT-K’s works department. Shiv Kumar Singh from the electrical engineering department is the research establishment officer and Prof Sameer Khandekar from the mechanical engineering department has provided assistance and periodic guidance in the selection of technology. Kehems Technologies, Indore, is the official service provider for the project.

# Diwali Show attracts people to Kashi Jewellers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kashi Jewellers is organising the ‘Diwali Show’ at its Birhana road showroom here and it will continue till November 14.

Kashi Jewellers vice-president Shreyansh Kapoor said during the Diwali Show, a special range of gold ornaments, polki, diamond, platinum, gold temple meenakari and kundan jewellery in different attractive designs were available at the showroom.

During this special jewellery show, which is attracting a large number of customers, special discounts are also being offered to the customers.

Keeping in view the comfort of customers, the showroom remained open on Sunday also.

Kapoor said Kashi Jewellers had recently been felicitated with the Retailer of the World Award -2020 and it was the best retailer showroom in the country.

Honesty, innovation and faith are the key to Kashi



Customers throng at Kashi Jewellers showroom on Sunday.

Pioneer

Jewellers’ popularity among the customers.

During the Diwali Show, which started on November 7, customers can buy jewellery of their choice.

It may be mentioned here that Kashi Jewellers have created a special identity in the minds of its customers during past 70 years.

It has also made tremen-

dous feats and attainments at national and international levels which are proud achievements for Kanpur city, state and the country as well.

# Expert gives mantra to face challenges in life

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Dr Sidhanshu Rai, faculty of management at Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj University, Kanpur, while addressing a webinar on ‘Strategies to face challenges in life’ at Christ Church College, said it was essential for students to surge ahead with a positive attitude in life blended with adequate body language in ones personality. He said life was full of challenges but only some seem to meet every challenge with confidence. He said one derived satisfaction by picking up the gauntlet which brought in a great sense of accomplishment. He said each individual wanted to grow and the mantra for growth was experience. He said often one might find oneself faced with similar challenges repeatedly and that was when one started

to lose motivation to face the issues and lose sight of the potential lessons. He added that at a point, challenges could become problems that could drag one into despair and frustration. He said one had to overcome these and a sense of responsibility and awareness was essential to begin ones journey into a higher state of consciousness where challenges were no longer challenges, but opportunities to get a glimpse of ones highest self.

He said one must face challenges and this was the most important step but often missed by many people.

Dr Rai said one need not underestimate the power of being present and if one could make a practice of facing challenges even in times of failure, with full presence and awareness, one would find most challenges as messages from

the universe. He said meditation could help one cultivate awareness and it was a good tool to help bring that focus to oneself during difficult times. He suggested that one need to talk to oneself for a solution rather than leaning on someone else. He said others could help one to arrive at ones own understanding but no one could solve problem.

He said the longer one spent searching for guidance outside oneself, the longer time one spent in ignoring the problem. He mooted that one need to assess the situation, resources, abilities and then act.

He added that challenges were opportunities to grow and this growth took place out of ones own potentiality which was infinite and highly active in every moment of life.

He said there was a reason why certain challenges seemed

hard while others breezed right through the same situations. He said it was not because they were better but it was all about consciousness and those who faced challenging tasks had found a way to avoid seeing those activities as challenges.

Dr Rai advised students to detach themselves from the outcome as stressing about the potential outcome was often what turned a molehill into a mountain and once one shifted ones focus to the thing one was actually doing, instead of the result, the most intimidating parts of the trial started to disappear. The second speaker was Dr Shiva Mishra. The theme of the webinar was explained the by Dr Meet Kamal associate professor in the department of chemistry. Over 200 participants, including teachers and students, took part in the virtual session.

## 66 more test positive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Nagar reported 66 more coronavirus positive cases on Sunday evening.

Chief Medical Officer Dr Anil K Mishra said that 66 more people had tested positive for coronavirus infection between Saturday evening and Sunday evening taking the tally of confirmed cases to 28,432 cases. He said that 12 cases were discharged from hospital and cured figure stood at 7679.

He said no COVID-19 death in the city was reported till Sunday evening keeping the death toll to 739.

The CMO said at present 759 active cases were undergoing treatment. Dr Mishra said 3527 samples were sent for testing in the city.

## Missing youth’s body found

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A youth missing for the past two days was found hanging from a tree on the outskirts of a village in Mangalpur police station area of Kanpur Dehat on Sunday morning.

Police have quizzed the villagers while forensic experts collected evidence.

Mahendra alias Ravi (24) of Raipur village had left the house on Friday evening to arrange gunny bags for the harvested paddy. When he did not return till late night, the family members searched him at all possible places without any success.

On Sunday morning, some villagers spotted the youth’s body hanging from a mango tree on the outskirts of the village.

Mahendra’s father Sukhwasi and brother Mahipal alleged that he was killed and the body was hanged from the tree.

Sandalpur police outpost incharge Mahendra Singh said the youth was killed under mysterious circumstances. He said the exact cause of his death would be ascertained in the autopsy.

Mahendra was married to Nirmala in 2018 and has a two-month-old son.

## Criminal held

KANPUR (PNS): The Panki police have arrested a wanted criminal involved in Sausaul (Maharajpur) explosion and carrying a cash reward of Rs.25,000, on Sunday morning.

The police have so far arrested nine accused involved in Sarsaul explosion.

It may be recalled that on October 4, 2017, in an explosion in an illicit firecrackers unit, the son of the landlord and a factory worker were killed.

Due to the powerful explosion, the entire house of Babu Singh where the firecrackers factory was running had collapsed while some adjacent houses had developed cracks.

Police had registered FIR against a dozen persons, including Chanda alias Yasmin, Babu Singh, Meraz, Shakeel Hero, Asif and Aquib, and had sent half-a-dozen accused, including Meraz, Shakeel, Babu Singh to jail.

After the incident, Yasmin, Riyaz, Kalloo, Asif and Aquib absconded.

The Maharajpur police had arrested Yasmin on Wednesday and Asif on Friday and sent them to jail.

On Sunday morning, the Panki police arrested the third wanted accused, Aquib alias Mamu, near Bhaunti Highway along with a country-made pistol.

Panki Station House Officer Atul Kumar said Aquib would be produced in the court.

Aquib told the police that he had fled to Auraiya after the blast but when police raided the place he shifted to Bhaunti and was hiding there.

### ATM HACKER NABBED

The Special Task Force arrested the kingpin of an ATM hackers’ gang who was wanted by the Crime Branch of Pune (Maharashtra).

He was arrested near Sarsaul (Maharajpur) flyover on Saturday and identified as Mukesh Yadav of Karbigwa, Narval, Kanpur.

Police recovered two mobile phones, one ATM card and a motorcycle from him.

## Conduct regular patrolling: SP

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR



SP Ajay Singh inspected Gaipura police outpost under Vindhyachal police station on Saturday. During the inspection the SP directed the cops to be updated with departmental guidelines, ongoing drives and conduct regular patrolling in the area. He directed them to keep an eye on the outlaws. The SP made it clear that sanitation should be kept on priority and Covid-19 prevention guidelines should be followed by cops. Giving tips to control crime the SP directed the outpost harge to control illegal mining. He warned the cops that if anyone was found

harbouring the criminals will not be spared. **RETRO REFLECTIVE TAPES:** ARTO Ravikant Shukla has directed the commercial vehicle owners, including those of tractors, to fix retro reflective tapes on them as per the provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act to avoid fine of ₹10,000. He further said that the provision was effective since 1989 but was ignored by most of the vehicle owners. Due to mist and fog during winter season retro reflective tapes were a must for smooth traffic, he added. He said that four officials of the department had been nominated for different areas of the district.

## Amenities for passengers inspected

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

General Manager of North Eastern Railway (NER) Vinay Kumar Tripathi along with senior railway officials of the headquarters and Lucknow division conducted an intensive inspection of Gorakhpur Junction railway station on Saturday. During the inspection Principal Chief Engineer Satish Kumar Pandey, Principal Chief Commercial Manager SC Prasad, Additional Divisional Railway Manager/Lucknow, Shishir Somvanshi, secretary to GM DK Khare, CPRO Pankaj Kumar Singh and others were present. On the occasion the GM said that all construction work should be completed with quality within the stipulated time-frame and maintenance work should also be of excellent quality. Inspecting the passenger amenities, he saw the AC lounge, AC women and men waiting room located on platform No 2 and instructed to make the facilities better and improve the level of cleanliness. After seeing the baggage scanner and electronic entry gate etc at the main entrance he also inspected the portico and station premises and instructed the officials concerned for necessary improvement in the equipment installed for facade lighting. The GM directed to open the waiting room for passengers. He saw the ongoing works at the station on the displayed layout and after discussing with the officials concerned gave instructions for improvement in them. Inspecting the passenger waiting hall, the GM gave necessary instructions regarding the IRCTC counters and removal of shortcomings in the electrical system. While inspecting the emergency inverter plant on platform No 2, he obtained

information from the officials concerned about its maintenance and gave suggestions for its improvement. While inspecting the passenger facilities on platform No 1, he asked the officials concerned to prominently display important mobile numbers related to passenger services. After the inspection of the cabway located on platform number 1, he checked the CMS hall of the integrated crew lobby and mess of the integrated crew running



room and obtained information about the quality of food. The GM obtained information about all the railway lines located in the yard and instructed to remove the shortcomings and improve them. After inspecting the yard, Tripathi saw the platform No 9 and gave necessary instructions regarding lifting of parcels being unloaded there. After seeing the passenger amenities in platform No 9-situated waiting room for women and men, he inspected the escalators installed there and gave necessary instructions to the officers concerned in this connection. During the inspection Tripathi gave many valuable and practical suggestions for the overall development of Gorakhpur Junction.

### IMPROVEMENT IN PUNCTUALITY

The NER administration along with improving the basic

## Tricycles given

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

The NTPC’s Raising Day function was on Saturday organised at the Rihand Project in a simplistic atmosphere. Executive Director (Rihand) Balaji Iyengar,

who was present as the chief guest inaugurated the ceremony by hoisting the NTPC flag. The NTPC song was sung. Iyengar said that with a production of 3,000 megawatt (MW) the Rihand project is in a special place. On the occasion with the courtesy of NTPC Rihand’s Dhanwantari Chikitsalaya and CSR tricycles were provided to the Divyangjans (persons with disabilities). During the programme the visitors were welcomed by senior manager (Human Resources ) Neeraj Kumar who also conducted it and proposed the vote of thanks. Prominent among those present during the programme were Chief General Manager (O&M) Anant Charan Sahu, General Manager (Maintenance) S Krishna, General Manager (FM) M Ramesh, GM (Operations) AK Chattopadhyay, Additional General Manager (HR) KS Murthy, heads of departments, representatives of various unions and associations etc. Keeping in mind the Covid-19 pandemic during the programme was social distancing was maintained and other guidelines were followed.



## Motorcycle thief held

CORRESPONDENT ■ CHANDAULI

The Kotwali police on being tipped off by an informer arrested a motorcycle thief on Saturday. On clues provided by him the police recovered five stolen motorcycles. On frisking him a pistol and a live cartridge were recovered from his possession. Police registered a case against him under relevant sections of law and took further action. Following the instructions of Superintendent of Police to curb theft of vehicles, arrest the thieves and recover the stolen motorcycles the Kotwali police has become active. On Saturday the police received information from the informer that a stolen motorbike had been parked in an area behind the GT Road-situated IP Mall and one person was present there. When the police reached the spot they caught the culprit, Hafizarrahman alias Rahul, who sold motorcycles after stealing them. On clues provided by him recovered the five stolen motorcycles. The accused, during interrogation, told the police that all the vehicles had been stolen from Varanasi and Chandauli and a scrap dealer was to come from Varanasi for buying them. He earned his livelihood through it. The police team which made the arrest comprised inspector incharge NN Singh, S-I Sanjay Singh and Satyendra Vikram, head-constables Suresh Yadav, Suresh Kumar.



## Vindhyachal ED presents awards

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

At NTPC Vindhyachal project on Saturday a programme was organised to mark NTPC Limited’s Raising Day. On the occasion according to the guidelines of the Government of India, all the precautions related to Covid-19 pandemic were taken and social distancing was maintained. In the programme which was organised in the administrative building premises the NTPC flag was hoisted by Executive Director (Vindhyachal) Munish Johri and everyone sang NTPC song. ED Munish Johri, Chief General Manager (Operations and Maintenance) Rabindra Kumar Rout and GM (SSC) Vipin Kumar cut a cake. On the occasion NTPC Vindhyachal’s GM, AGM, heads of department/section, president, Suhasini Sangh, Mridula Johari and Suhasini Union office-bearers, Deputy Commandant, CISE, union/association officials and employees were present. The live webcast of this event was done for the convenience of other employees. In his address Johri said that the public sector company NTPC Limited was set up on November 7, 1975, by the



Award, two employees the Employee of the Year Award, 45 officers and employees the ED Meritorious Award and commendation letters 10 officers and employees In addition four Rajbhasha Awards were given to the departments and employees for excellent working in official language. Thereafter Chairman and Managing Director, NTPC Limited, Gurdeep Singh addressed the employees of all NTPC projects through video conferencing. He congratulated everyone on the NTPC’s Raising Day. He appreciated all NTPC officials and employees for providing uninterrupted power supply during the Covid-19 lockdown.



# IT raids Believers Church, seizes ₹15 cr

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Income Tax Department officials raiding the religious and business premises of Believers Eastern Church, one of the biggest evangelistic organisations in Asia, at Thiruvalla in Kerala on Saturday were taken aback when they saw the contents inside a luxury car parked in a high security underground garage. The car contained unaccounted currencies worth Rs5.7 million.

The car belonged to a youth in Thiruvalla and had been loaned to Daniel Varghese, head of the Church's finance department of Believers Eastern Church the spiritual head of which is K P Yohannan. Confronted by the Income Tax

officials, Varghese is reported to have told them that he didn't get time to get rid of the currency notes. He also told the owner of the vehicle not to get upset as the "currency issue" would be taken care of by the former.

Sources in the IT Department said that till late Saturday, the raids yielded unaccounted money to the tune of Rs 15 crore. Chances are that the Enforcement Directorate would enter the scene now. There are many questions that remain unanswered and ED would be able to find the answers," said an IT official.

The IT Department launched massive raids on all establishments of the BEC fol-

lowing specific inputs that the Church, engaged in proselytization and other charity works have infringed the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act and Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) many times. The funds and donations received in connection with charity programmes are meant only for that work and the receivers of the funds are bound to furnish the details to the revenue department.

The BEC with business interests in educational institutions, hospitals, plantations, hospitals and satellite Television channels receives crores of rupees as donations from foreign countries under the garb of charity. But the raids which commenced on November 5

have found illegal transactions involving more than Rs 6,000 crore received from abroad. A major portion of these donations have been invested in real estate and other business enterprises owned and operated by K P Yohannan, who had installed himself as the bishop of the sect. Yohannan has thousands of followers and the prayer meetings convened by him as "Miracle Crusades" draw thousands of people from all religions. Thousands from other religions across India have been converted by Yohannan and his team to the way of Jesus, according to an intelligence official based in Kerala.

The Pioneer was told that besides Kerala, the establish-

ment of BEC and Gospal Asia (a subsidiary concern) spread across the States of Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Karnataka, Chandigarh, Punjab, and Telangana are under the scanner of the IT Department.

Yohannan, who is known now as Moran Mar Athanasius Yohan Metropolitan I is travelling in USA as part of mobilizing resources for the various missions and projects being implemented in India under the BEC.

The BEC was in the news recently over the sprawling Cheruvalli Estate in Pathanamthitta district which is being acquired by the Government of Kerala for constructing a new international airport.



Zebras play at Alipore Zoo in Kolkata on Sunday

PTI

## Kerala CPI(M) dilemma after notice to ED

KOCHI: The CPI(M)'s Kerala unit finds itself in an unenviable position because of the over enthusiasm of some zealots in convincing the leadership of their loyalty and servility, according to party insiders.

The move by Speaker of the Legislative Assembly to summon officials of the Enforcement Directorate in connection with the latter's probe into the LIFE Mission project has come under criticism from Leader of Opposition Ramesh Chennithala as well as BJP state unit president K Surendran.

The recent "raid" by the ED in the residence and business premises of Bineesh Kodiyeri, son of CPI(M)'s Kerala secretary Kodiyeri Balakrishnan had cre-

ated a furore among party circles. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan condemned the action of the central agencies and alleged that the Centre was on a mission to derail the development activities of his government.

The ED raid in the house and business establishments of Bineesh, who has been arrested by the former on charges of money laundering and financing narcotics dealer Anoop Mohammed was a foregone conclusion as the arrival of the sleuths were published in newspapers and news channels well in advance.

The controversy erupted when the ED team 'seized' a credit card in the name of Anoop Mohammed from the

residence of Bineesh. His wife Rennitta alleged that the card was placed by the ED officials themselves and they forced her to sign on papers stating that it was seized from the house which she refused to oblige.

The "raid" saw a stand off between Kerala Police and ED team with the former questioning the competence of the latter to enter the house of Kodiyeri. Kerala State Child Welfare Commission chairman and members too rushed to the residence of Kodiyeri on hearing the news that the two-year old child of Bineesh was "harassed" by the ED team. The ED has been slapped with a show cause notice by the commission. **PNS**

## Ethiopian Airlines cargo flight makes emergency landing at Mumbai Airport

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

A Bengaluru-bound Ethiopian Airlines cargo flight made an emergency landing at Mumbai airport, after it was diverted en route from Riyadh owing to a technical glitch.

Informed sources said that the Bengaluru-bound cargo flight, ET-690, was diverted to Mumbai after it suffered a hydraulic leakage.

The flight with eight-member crew landed safely at the Mumbai airport, after the authorities declared a full emergency after keeping the Mumbai Fire Brigade, ambulances with medical teams standby.

Informed sources said that the Bengaluru-bound cargo flight, ET-690, was diverted to Mumbai after it suffered a hydraulic leakage

"Full Emergency was declared for freighter flight ET690 Ethiopian airlines from Riyadh to Bangalore diverted to Mumbai due to hydraulic leakage. The aircraft landed safely. No one suffered injuries," an airport official said.

After the emergency was withdrawn, normal operations resumed at the city airport in the afternoon. Meanwhile, the aircraft is currently parked at the airport where technical and engineering teams are attending to the technical problems faced by it.

## NCB raids house of film producer Nadiadwala, seizes drugs, cash

### Arrests his wife and four others

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Continuing its drive against drug peddlers and those possessing the contraband in Bollywood, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) raided the residence of noted film producer Firoz A Nadiadwala, seized drugs and cash of Rs.3.59 lakh and arrested his wife and four others.

In a raid conducted at Nadiadwala's residence along Gulmohar Cross Road at Juhu Vile Parle Development (JVPD) Scheme in north-west Mumbai, the NCB sleuths

seized a total of 717.1 gm of Ganja, 74.1 gm charas and 95.1 gm MD (Commercial Quantity) along with Rs 3,58,610. The NCB seized 10 gm of Ganja from another accused Wahid Abdul kadir Sheikh @ Sultan.

In all, the NCB sleuths arrested five persons, including Firoz A. Nadiadwala's wife Shabana Saeed.

"Shabana Saeed was issued notice u/s 67 of NDPS Act After recording her statement, she was placed under arrest today," an NCB statement said. It is quite likely that Firoz

Nadiadwala will be summoned by the NCB for questioning in connection with the operation conducted by it earlier in the day.

Sources said that Sunday's operation was part of the NCB's drive aimed at unravelling the nexus between drugs mafia and Bollywood.

Firoz Nadiadwala is credited with making several Bollywood blockbusters, including "Welcome", "Welcome Back", "Phir Hera Phera", "Awara Paagal Deewana" and "Rama Shashtra".

## Maha sees 5,092 new cases, 125 die

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In somewhat marginal fluctuations in the Covid-19 fatalities and infected cases, the daily deaths dropped to 125, while the infections rose to 5092 in Maharashtra on Sunday. A day after the infections plummeted to 3,959 and the number of deaths rose to 150, the daily infections went up to 5092, while the deaths came down to 125.

Out of the 125 deaths reported on Sunday, 60 are from the last 48 hours and 14 were from last week. As part of reconciliation, another 15 deaths were added to Sunday's death tally which went up in the process to 125.

With 5092 new infected

cases, the total infections in the state jumped from 17,14,273 to 17,19,858. Similarly, the Covid-19 toll in the state went up from 45,115 to 45,240.

As 8,232 more people were discharged from various hospitals the number of people discharged from the hospitals after full recovery since the second week of March this year went up to 15,77,322. The recovery rate in the state rose from 91.53 per cent to 91.71 per cent. Of the 125 deaths (including 15 additional reconciled deaths) reported, Thane accounted for a maximum of 25 deaths, followed by 23 deaths in Mumbai and 15 in Pune.

In the lower range, nine deaths each in Solapur and

Satara, 5 each in Sangli and Nanded, 4 each in Raigad and Beed, 3 each in Nashik, Ahmednagar, Ratnagiri, Latur and Buldhana, 2 each in Palghar, Kolhapur and Bhandara and one death each in Jalgaon, Akola, Nagpur, Chandrapur, besides one from another state.

With 23 fresh deaths, the Covid-19 toll in Mumbai climbed from 10,422 to 10,445, while the infected cases rose by 1,003 to trigger a jump in the total infections from 263,049 to 264,545. Meanwhile, the number of "active cases" in the state came down one lakh mark as the total cases dropped from 99,151 to 96,372. The fatality rate in the state stood at 2.63 per cent.

## Darbhanga airport begins op in connectivity boost for Mithila

PTI ■ DARBHANGA

The Darbhanga airport in north Bihar began operations on Sunday, meeting the long-standing demand of the people of the Mithila region who had to travel for hours to Patna to catch a flight.

As the first flight, operated by Spicejet, landed at the airport from Bengaluru, it was given the customary water salute, while the passengers were greeted with "Mithila Paags" (a traditional cap) and garlands.

The plane then took off for Delhi with 180 passengers, including Darbhanga's BJP MP Gopaljee Thakur, Darbhanga Town legislator Sanjay Saraogi and MLC Dilip

Chaudhary.

Darbhanga will be connected by flights to Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru, officials said.

People of the region will save at least four-five hours travelling to and from Patna with the airport beginning operations, they said.

"It is really a good beginning. Hope that infrastructure and other facilities at the airport will improve and flight service to other cities will also start," said a passenger who arrived from Bengaluru.

A person, who had come to see off a relative at the airport, said that with the airport starting operations, people will not have to miss flights due to traffic jams while travelling to

Patna.

"There were times when we used to get stuck at the Gandhi Setu due to traffic jams. Also, now we won't have to travel to Patna to receive someone or to see them off," he said. With a lump in his throat, a man who was at the airport to receive his daughter said, "Today, I will be receiving her in my hometown."

The Airports Authority of India has developed the airport as a civil enclave, which is part of an Indian Air Force base allocated for civil aviation operations, at Kevti, around six km from the Darbhanga town.

The foundation stone for the Darbhanga airport, the third in the state after Patna

and Gaya, was laid in December 2018.

The flights will be operated by Spicejet under regional connectivity scheme "Udan".

Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri had announced in September that the airport will begin operations in the first week of November ahead of Chhath.

The terminal building of the airport has a capacity to handle 150 passengers, he had said.

Thakur, the local MP, said, "People of the Mithila region are thankful to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for starting flight service from Darbhanga. I also thank the civil aviation minister who began the operations before Chhath Puja."

## J&K records 555 Covid cases on Sun

Srinagar: Another 555 persons tested positive in Jammu & Kashmir on Sunday while 456 were discharged from hospitals after they recovered from the Covid-19 infection.

An official statement said 555 persons had tested positive of which 213 were from Jammu and 342 from Kashmir while 456 patients were discharged from different hospitals after they recovered from Covid-19.

As many as 98,892 people in J&K have been infected by the coronavirus, of which 91,681 have recovered. **IANS**

## FROM PAGE 1

### 4 JAWANS LAY OUT LIVES TO PREVENT INFILTRATION

"In the ensuing firefight, two more terrorists were killed. Own troops suffered three KIA and two injured," Col Kalia said.

He added that the injured soldiers have been evacuated. The operation is in progress and further details are awaited, the spokesperson said.

This year, till date, more than 210 terrorists have been neutralised by the joint teams of security forces in the hinterland and along the LoC. Pakistani forces have also carried out more than 3,800 unprovoked ceasefire violations to disturb the peace in the region.

To keep the terror pot boiling, the terrorist handlers sitting in Pakistan have also started using drones and quadcopters for smuggling of arms and narcotic substances across the International Border (IB) and the LoC.

### BIDEN PLEDGES TO WORK TOWARDS UNITING AMERICA

"I understand your disappointment tonight. I've lost a couple times myself. But now, let's give each other a chance," Biden said, adding that, "This is the time to heal in America."

"I sought this office to restore the soul of America, to rebuild the backbone of this nation, the middle class and to make America respected around the world again, and to unite us here at home," the President-elect said.

In her address, Harris, who scripted history as she broke the glass ceiling in the world's oldest democracy to be elected America's first Black and Indian-origin woman Vice President, said, "You chose hope, and unity, decency, science and yes truth."

"You chose Joe Biden as the next president of the United States," said said, drawing applause and honks from the supporters.

"Joe's a healer," she said. "A person whose own experience of loss gives him a sense of purpose that will help us as

a nation reclaim our own sense of purpose."

"You ushered in a new day for America," the 56-year-old Senator from California, said before introducing Biden.

The 2020 US election has been billed as one of the most divisive in recent American history.

"We are not enemies. We are Americans," Biden said.

The mandate of this election, he said, is that Americans have called on them to marshal the forces of decency and the forces of fairness. To marshal the forces of science and the forces of hope in the great battles of this time.

"The battle to control the virus. The battle to build prosperity. The battle to secure your family's health care.

"The battle to achieve racial justice and root out systemic racism in this country. The battle to save the climate. The battle to restore decency, defend democracy, and give everybody in this country a fair shot," he said.

Observing that he has long talked about the battle for the soul of America, Biden sought to restore it.

"Our nation is shaped by the constant battle between our better angels and our darkest impulses. It is time for our better angels to prevail," he said.

Asserting that the whole world is watching America, Biden said he believes at best America is a beacon for the globe.

Biden assured Americans that his first task as President-elect is to get the raging coronavirus pandemic under control with a definite plan that will be "built on bedrock science."

The COVID-19 pandemic has killed more than 237,000 Americans and infected over 9 million others. The pandemic was a major topic of debate during the presidential campaign. Biden has repeatedly attacked Trump's response to the pandemic.

"On Monday, I will name a group of leading scientists and experts as transition advisers to help take the Biden-Harris Covid plan and convert it into an action blueprint that will start on January 20, 2021," Biden said. "That plan will be built on bedrock science," he added.

"I will spare no effort" to turn the COVID-19 pandemic around, he added.

Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris were joined on stage following their speeches by their families.

Biden kissed his grandchildren and hugged his family as fireworks exploded overhead. A series of drones also flew overhead and made the shape of the US and "BIDEN."

Earlier, major news networks declared Biden as the winner of the November 3 presidential election after he crossed the threshold of 270 electoral college votes needed to secure victory.

The news of Biden's win led to celebrations in major cities across the US, including outside the White House in Washington DC.

### DELHI AIR TO REMAIN UNBREATHABLE TILL STUBBLE FIRES STOP

SAFAR stated the air quality was likely to marginally deteriorate and stay at the 'severe' to the higher end of 'very poor' category for the next two days. An AQI between zero and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', and 401 and 500 'severe'. Out of 35 monitoring stations in Delhi, 31 recorded 'severe' AQI. The only stations with AQI in the 'very poor' category were Lodhi Road at 333, NSIT Dwarka at 377 and Pusa at 374.

The data for North Campus was not available.

NCR area also recorded 'severe' AQI with Gurgaon at 434, Ghaziabad at 456, Noida 428 and Greater Noida at 440. Farm fire count stood at 4,528 on Friday, the highest of this season, with central government's Air Quality Early Warning System for Delhi stating that the city's air quality is likely to remain 'severe' on Diwali as well.

The AQI was recorded at 427 on Saturday evening. SAFAR said the share of stubble burning in Delhi's PM2.5 pollution was estimated at 21 per cent on Friday. It was 42 per cent on Thursday, the maximum so far this season.

Last year, the contribution of stubble burning to Delhi's pollution had peaked to 44 per cent on November 1, according to SAFAR data.

### COVID-19 MORTALITY IN CANCER PATIENT 22.4%

Professor Justin Stebbing, study lead and professor of medicine and oncology at Imperial College London, said that the finding should not be ignored. "The NHS is open, and will carry on with cancer treatment, but the lesson from these findings is that we have to prioritise these very vulnerable people."

A lockdown doesn't apply to hospitals but it does tend to cause that as an aside. Prioritising virus testing for patients and their care workers, and including these patients in the early roll-out phase of vaccines, is what we must now do.

The authors of the study said patients should be encouraged to attend routine cancer screenings and follow ups as long as 'proper precautionary measures' are taken prior to a clinical visit. As well as increased risk for those with lung and blood cancer, the research also found that being aged over 65 and being male also increased the risk of mortality.

### ON 4TH DEMO ANNIV, MODI SAYS IT HIT BLACK MONEY, INCREASED TRANSPARENCY

The BJP claimed that the corporate taxpayers' returns in 2018-19 were 35% higher than the number of returns in 2013-14. "During 2016-17, 8.03 lakh returns were filed by corporate taxpayers; this increased to 9.42 lakh in 2017-18", the party said.

Operation clean money was launched after demonetisation. Self-assessment tax of more than Rs 13,000 crore was paid by targeted non-filers,"

said the BJP.

Stating that demonetisation was good for the country, BJP national spokesperson Rajeev Chandrasekhar said it resulted in cleaning up of the economy, formalisation of the informal sector and revenue aggregation.

"Demonitisation had dealt a body blow to the systemic financial corruption and black money economy. Since then, it has simultaneously invigorated formal economy and brought unprecedented financial benefits to all sections of society," he said here at a press conference.

On November 8 in 2016, Prime Minister Modi had announced to ban all currency notes of higher denomination of Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 from midnight.

Consequent to this restrictions were placed on the withdrawal of money from banks or ATMs.

The BJP and the Government also claimed that the move had checkmated terror funding in India by way of stopping the supply of the black money.

### LAC TALKS INCONCLUSIVE AS SPIRIT IS WILLING BUT CHINA'S FLESH IS WEAK

The statement said the two sides had a candid, in-depth and constructive exchange of views on disengagement along the LAC in the Western Sector of India-China border areas.

Standing firm on its stand, the Indian delegation insisted that the Chinese withdraw from all the stand-off points in eastern Ladakh. China, however, wanted the Indian troops to pull back from the vantage positions in south and north banks of Pangong Tso(lake)in Ladakh, sources said. The Indian Army in August occupied all the high points in these areas giving them distinct advantage over the Chinese.

At present, more than one lakh troops from both the armies are deployed in the 1,700 km long LAC in Ladakh. Moreover, both the armies have brought forward their heavy weapons to provide muscle their defenses.

Even as India has all along favoured

dialogue to resolve the current situation, the Indian army is preparing for a long haul. It has already bolstered its logistical support in terms of winter clothes and insulated prefabricated huts. These critical items will hold the soldiers to withstand the harsh winters when the temperature dips minus 20 and below.

Chief of Defence Staff Gen Bipin Rawat on Friday asserted India will not accept any shifting of the LAC, and noted that the possibility of transgressions and confrontations on the border spiralling into a "larger conflict" cannot be ruled out.

At the seventh round of talks too on October 13, both sides had agreed to maintain dialogue and communication through military and diplomatic channels to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution for disengagement "as early as possible". India has maintained the onus is on China to carry forward the process of disengagement and de-escalation at the friction points in the mountainous region.

Following the sixth round of military talks on September 21, the two sides announced a slew of decisions in a joint statement including not to send more troops to the frontline, refrain from unilaterally changing the situation on the ground and avoid taking any actions that may further complicate matters.

The sixth round was held with a specific agenda of exploring ways to implement a five-point agreement reached between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi at a meeting in Moscow on September 10 on the sidelines of a Shanghai Cooperation Organisation(SCO) conclave.

The pact included measures like quick disengagement of troops, avoiding action that could escalate tensions, adherence to all agreements and protocols on border management and steps to restore peace along the LAC.

When asked about the six-month-long military standoff, External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said at a media briefing on Friday both sides continue to maintain close communication at the military and diplomatic levels to achieve complete disengagement along the LAC.



# Liquor sale falls in AP, J&K, 3 other States

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jammu and Kashmir, West Bengal and Rajasthan are among the top five States which reported a maximum decline in the sale of liquor while Punjab, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh have witnessed record sales between July and September, during the unlock period this year. The liquor industry has reported a decline of 8.98 per cent at 78 million cases in this period in the IMFL segment. Though the pan-India liquor sale has improved in the second quarter, it was the first quarter (April-June) which did the maximum damage. Last year, the liquor industry had sold 85.7 million cases (9 litres each) during the same period last year.

As per data compiled by liquor industry, As per data compiled by liquor industry, the sale of liquor dropped by 51 percent in Andhra Pradesh, 40 percent in Chhattisgarh, 39 percent in Jammu and Kashmir, 22 percent in West Bengal and 20 percent in Rajasthan. On the other hand, Punjab recorded over 20 percent growth, Haryana 17 percent, Uttarakhand 15 percent,



Telangana seven percent and UP six percent in the liquor sale. These states stayed away from imposing high Corona taxes.

To improve the sale, the Andhra Pradesh government has recently cut down the price of Indian Made Foreign Liquor in the medium and premium categories by at least 25 to 30 per cent, citing instances of 'smuggling' from outside the state.

"Complete ban on liquor sale during lockdown followed by imposition of steep corona tax in some states have led to a drop of 29 percent in sale of liquor across India in the first half of the current fiscal. Situation has been worse in states like Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal and Rajasthan where sales have seen a steep decline as these

states have imposed a corona tax on liquor. Sales were nearly 30% below the same month last year in September. Also, the quantum of decline in sales was in clear relation to the quantum of tax imposed," said Vinod Giri, director general of the Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC).

For the first half of the fiscal (April-September), all India sales volume growth for the IMFL segment was down 29.06 per cent to 122 million cases, in comparison to 172 million cases in during the same period last year. Leaving out April, when the entire liquor trade was shut down under lockdown, the sales growth for the period May to September in 2020 was (minus) 16 per cent over the same period last year," said CIABC.

# Demonetisation ruined Indian economy: Cong

Party observes 4th demonetisation anniversary as 'Vishwasghaat Diwas'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday slammed the Modi Government alleging that the NDA Government has continuously changed the explanatory reasons for carrying out the demonetisation measure four years ago and that it has "destroyed" the Indian economy.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on November 8, 2016 had announced the decision to ban all currency notes of higher denomination of ₹500 and ₹1,000 from midnight.

The Congress observed the fourth anniversary of demonetisation as "Vishwasghaat Diwas" (betrayal day) and ran a social media campaign "SpeakUpAgainstDeMoDisaster".

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi slammed the government over demonetisation, alleging that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's move four years ago was aimed at helping a few of his "crony capitalist friends" and had "destroyed" the Indian economy.

Rahul said the Congress have been alleging that the 2016 demonetisation was not in the interest of the people and

had adverse effects on the economy, a charge the government has dismissed repeatedly.

In a video released as part of the party's online "SpeakUpAgainstDeMoDisaster" campaign, Rahul Gandhi said the question is how the economy of Bangladesh "surpassed" the Indian economy as there was a time when India used to be one of the most high performing economies of the world.

"The Government says that the reason is COVID but if that is the reason, there is COVID in Bangladesh and elsewhere in the world also. The reason is not COVID, the reason is "Notebandi" and GST," Rahul said in a tweet message in Hindi.

As part of the campaign, former finance minister P Chidambaram said, "The first lesson every ruler and every government must learn is that - even if you do not do good to the people, do not do harm. The BJP-led NDA government did great harm to India's economy on November 8th, 2016."

Several senior Congress leaders such as Mallikarjun Kharge, Shashi Tharoor and Salman Khurshid also slammed the government over demonetisation as part of the



party's online campaign.

Former Union Minister Ajay Maken at a media briefing quoted former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's remarks on November 24, 2016, to hit out at the government.

"The way this scheme has been implemented— is a monumental management failure, and in fact, it is a case of organised loot, legalised plunder of the common people," Maken quoted Singh as saying.

"Modi ji's Government continuously changed the explanatory reasons for carrying out demonetization," Maken said.

The Congress leader said that at different points, these were -- to counter black money and corruption, to stem out fake currency or

"counterfeit", for a "digital or cashless" economy, to tackle Maoism, terrorism and separatism, to bring idle savings into banks, to expand and deepen the tax base, to arrive at a bigger, cleaner and real GDP and for faster economic growth, to bring down real estate prices and to partner with the GST.

Maken also made a point by point rebuttal of the various objectives cited for demonetisation.

On the assertion that demonetisation has helped in reducing black money and corruption, the party's General Secretary said 99.3 per cent of the demonetised currency came back to the system.

"As far as corruption is concerned, we have seen a surge in the use of immense

money power in poaching MLAs and destabilising non-BJP led state governments," Maken alleged.

On counterfeit currency, he asked why have incidents of fake and counterfeit currency notes increased after demonetisation.

Hitting out at the government, Maken asked why cash transactions had increased after demonetisation and whether a cashless economy was even desirable.

"How has Maoism, terrorism and separatism been impacted by demonetisation," he asked.

Maken also argued that demonetisation did not have any positive impact on savings and had adversely impacted real estate and also resulted in job losses.

# AG refuses to reconsider decision declining consent to initiate contempt against Jagan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Attorney General KK Venugopal has refused to reconsider his November 2 decision declining consent to BJP leader and lawyer Ashwini Upadhyay to initiate contempt proceedings against the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister and his principal advisor for making allegations against judges.

The topmost law officer, in his reply to Upadhyay's letter seeking reconsideration of the decision, reiterated his stand saying that the issue of contempt was between Chief Justice of India (CJI) S A Bobde and Chief Minister Y S Jaganmohan Reddy and his principal advisor Ajeya Kallam.

Venugopal on Saturday also said in the response that the lawyer was not precluded from raising this issue on his own before apex court judges or during the hearing of a PIL filed by him only seeking the lifetime ban on convicted lawmakers.

Upadhyay, on November 5, had urged Venugopal to have a relook on the decision and said, "I humbly request you to peruse these points (particularly the fact that the question of contempt is not pending anywhere else) and kindly reconsider the granting of consent to my request."

"This is an issue of great importance at a time when our judiciary continues to be besieged by attacks, and a strong stand needs to be taken by those of us who are a part of the institution," he said.

In the November 7 reply, Venugopal referred to his ear-

lier response and said, "The very crux of the alleged contempt lies in the contents of the letter written by Y S Jaganmohan Reddy to the Chief Justice of India, and thus open to the the Supreme Court to take up the matter of contempt suo motu as provided by the Contempt of Courts Act, and the rules made thereunder."

"Given that the CJI is seized of the matter, it would not be appropriate for me to grant consent and preclude the determination of the Chief Justice of India on the matter. As you are no doubt aware, contempt is a matter between court and contemnor, and no person as of right can insist upon the initiation of contempt proceedings," he said.

Venugopal said his decision does not precluded Upadhyay from bringing these facts to the notice of the judges of the Supreme Court with a prayer for initiation of suo motu action.

"You may exercise this right by way of information placed on the administrative side or by bringing it to the attention of the court during the hearing of...where you are already a petitioner in person," Venugopal said in his letter.

Taking the consent of the law officer is a condition precedent for initiating criminal contempt against a person.

In an unprecedented move, the Chief Minister, on October 6, had written to the CJI alleging that the Andhra Pradesh High Court was being used to "destabilise and topple my democratically elected Government".

# Dairy board develops sex-sorted semen tech for birth of female calves



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Dairy Development Board (NDDB)'s dairy service has developed indigenous sex-sorted semen technology to ensure birth of only female calves. The first female calf from the sex-sorted semen dose, produced at Alamadhi Semen Station (Tamil Nadu), was born in a farm near Chennai in October 2020. Currently, sex-sorted semen technologies are proprietary to a few multi-national companies, which makes the technology expensive for dairy farmers.

Sexed sorted semen is specially processed semen of bulls from which 'Y' chromosomes in sperm cells — which lead to the birth of a male calf — are either removed through a 'sort-

ing' process or killed. Semen which has only 'X' chromosomes can ensure that a female calf is born.

"The field trials of the technology were encouraging. The ability to assure the birth of only female calves provides huge financial advantage to dairy farmers. The sex sorted semen dose produced using the indigenous technology is reported to be meeting the industry quality and production benchmarks...This developmental would lead to a large-scale adoption of the technology," NDDB Chairman Dilip Rath said on Sunday.

The project to develop indigenous technology for sex-sorting bovine sperms was taken by NDDB Dairy Services a few years ago with an objective to significantly bring

down the cost of sex-sorted semen doses so that it becomes affordable for dairy farmers in India, he added. Rath also expressed confidence that the new technology would help in achieving Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of "Make in India" programme and the current quest for an "Aatmanirbhar Bharat".

NDDB Dairy Services Managing Director Saugata Mitra said, "The technology will help bring down the cost of artificial insemination using sex sorted semen significantly from the existing 1,000. This will also be a turning point in overcoming the problem of stray cattle in the country."

NDDB Dairy Services manages four large semen stations in the country -- Sabarmati Ashram Gaushala near Ahmedabad,

# Indian scientists develop smart screen from groundnut shells

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian scientists have developed an eco-friendly smart screen from groundnut shells that could help not only in preserving privacy but also in energy conservation by controlling light and heat passing through it and reducing air conditioning load.

Led by Prof S Krishna Prasad, along with Dr Shankar Rao of the Centre for Nano and Soft Matter Sciences (CeNS), Bangalore, an autonomous institute of the Department of Science & Technology, Government of the researchers developed smart screen application, liquid crystal molecules which were confined in a polymer matrix.

"The matrix was built using cellulose nanocrystals (CNC) which were prepared from discarded groundnut shells by Prof Yuvraj Singh Negi's team at IIT Roorkee. The refractive index of the liquid crystal molecules along a particular direction were altered by the application of an electric field.

"In the absence of the electric field, there was a mismatch between refractive indices between those of the polymer and the liquid crystal, leading

to the scattering of light. Upon application of a few volts of an electric field, the liquid crystal molecules underwent a direction change resulting in the matching of refractive indices, and the device became transparent almost instantaneously.

"When the field was turned off, the system quickly recovered the scattering state. This reversible change between the two states available at the flip of a switch occurred over thousands of cycles, with essentially no change in contrast or switching speed," said the scientists about the device which has been described in a recent issue of Applied Physics Letters.

Pragnya and Dr Srividhya, students who worked on the device, emphasised that the protocol for the CNC preparation plays a key role in controlling the device contrast with the IIT Roorkee material outperforming the CNC available from commercial sources.

The scientists said that while, in principal, the device could be developed from any cellulose or agricultural waste, due to certain properties of groundnut waste, the smart screen developed from groundnut waste has been found to be most efficient.

Animal Breeding Centre near Lucknow, Alamadhi Semen Station near Chennai and Rahuri Semen Station near Pune.

These semen stations together produce about 35 per cent of the total semen produced in the country.

# India's recoveries at 78.68L surpass total infections

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Keeping with the trend of single-day COVID-19 recoveries outnumbering daily new cases, 49,082 patients have recuperated from the disease in a day taking the total recoveries to 78.68 lakh which exceed the active infections by 73,56,303, the Union Health Ministry said on Sunday.

Incidentally, seventy six per cent of the new recovered cases, and as many, new infections were reported from 10 states and UTs. Kerala reported 7,201 cases in the last 24 hours followed closely by Delhi with 6,953 cases. Maharashtra has come a distant third with 3,959 new cases yesterday.

The Ministry said that the trend of single-day Covid-19 recoveries exceeding daily new cases has been observed for the 37th day on Sunday.

"This has played a pivotal role in pushing down the active cases which is presently 5,12,665 and comprise 6.03 per cent of the total caseload," the ministry said. India has reported less than 50,000 daily new cases in a span of 24 hours with 45,674 persons having tested positive for coronavirus infection.

"New daily cases have been trending downward since October 15," the ministry said.

"The gap between recovered cases and active cases presently stands at 73,56,303. This gap has been steadily increasing," the ministry underlined.

Seventy six per cent of the new recovered cases are observed to be concentrated in 10 States and UTs.

# Researchers develop nasal spray to prevent Covid infections

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Researchers from Columbia University have developed a long-lasting and affordable nasal spray that can successfully prevent Covid-19 infections. These sprays have currently been tested in ferrets, and 3D model of human lungs. However, the spray cannot be given out for public use just yet. Like any other medical tool, the nasal spray also needs to go through human clinical trials. Currently, various vaccines are being developed by researchers around the world to provide effective prevention from COVID-19 but scientists say that nasal spray can help in prevention of the infection in places where mass vaccination can take longer time in the absence of a vaccine.

Also, people who do not get their hands on a vaccine can spray themselves daily, and

keep the risk of the virus at bay. This will not only reduce the burden on healthcare but will also help limit the spread of the virus in humans, which is the ultimate goal, said the scientists.

The spray attacks the virus directly. It contains a lipopeptide, a cholesterol particle linked to a chain of amino acids, the building blocks of proteins. This particular lipopeptide exactly matches a stretch of amino acids in the spike protein of the virus, which the pathogen uses to attach to a human airway or lung cell.

Before a virus can inject its RNA into a cell, the spike must effectively unzip, exposing two chains of amino acids, in order to fuse to the cell wall. As the spike zips back up to complete the process, the lipopeptide in the spray inserts itself, latching on to one of the spike's amino acid chains and preventing the virus from attaching, explained

the researchers.

"It is like you are zipping a zipper but you put another zipper inside, so the two sides cannot meet," said Matteo Porotto, a microbiologist at Columbia University and one of the paper's authors.

However, the team, said it would require additional funding to pursue clinical trials in humans. Dr. Anne Moscona, a pediatrician and microbiologist at Columbia and co-author of the study, said they had applied for a patent on the product, and she hoped Columbia University would approach the federal government's Operation Warp Speed or large pharmaceutical companies that are seeking new ways to combat the coronavirus.

The work was described in a paper posted to the preprint server bioRxiv and has been submitted to the journal Science for peer review.

# Cong leaders hail Biden, Harris for US polls win

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Several senior Congress leaders have hailed Joe Biden and Kamala Harris' triumph in the US elections, with some attacking the BJP alleging that it appeared to side with Donald Trump not following bipartisanship in foreign policy.

Biden defeated incumbent President Trump in a bitterly fought presidential election that attracted a record number of Americans to cast their votes.

Asked about the slogan "Ab ki baar, Trump sarkar" at the Howdy Modi event in Houston and whether such things could affect ties, Congress general secretary Ajay Maken at a media briefing seemed to take an indirect swipe at the Modi dispensation, saying the Congress has always believed that the country, its leaders and political parties should not directly or indirectly interfere in the politics of other countries.

"We have always believed

in this and whenever we were in government, we never interfered in the politics of other countries directly or indirectly because we don't consider it right," he said.

"Our leaders never tried to give a message that one candidate in (US) elections there is more liked than the other. The congratulatory message by Congress president (Sonia Gandhi) and Rahul Gandhi is not to any party leader but to the president-elect, this is our tradition," Maken said while answering a question on whether his party sees the US election results as a victory of one ideology.

Meanwhile, BJP leaders on Sunday said Indo-US relations are based on the principles of democracy, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Biden will take the ties forward to the next level.

"The US and India stand on a strong bipartisan bilateral relationship based on the principles of democracy, mutual benefits and global peace. I

am sure under the new leadership of Biden-Harris, US-India ties will continue to progress as strong as they have been," BJP leader Ram Madhav told PTI.

Modi and Biden knew each other well from the days of the Obama administration, Madhav said, while pointing out that the latter was instrumental in holding an event of the prime minister at New York's Madison Square on his first trip to the United States since being elected to the top post.

Rajasthan Chief Minister and senior Congress leader Ashok Gehlot attacked the BJP over Biden's win, saying, "Rahul Gandhi ji's advice to EAM S. Jaishankar that PM Modi ji should have avoided getting involved in domestic politics of the US has proved right with the outcome of the US elections."

Rahul Gandhi's advice has been widely appreciated across the spectrum, along with his other sensible pieces of advice, including those related to

COVID-19, Gehlot said.

In a tweet on Saturday, Congress spokesperson Jaiver Shergill said bipartisanship is the cornerstone of foreign policy.

"Nations forge relationship via institutional mechanisms rather than endorsing an individual. Irrespective of results, the slogan of 'Ab ki baar, Trump sarkar' was a strategic blunder and proof of BJP's inept understanding of strategic ties," he said.

Rahul Gandhi last year had hit out at Prime Minister Modi for his "Ab ki baar, Trump sarkar" remark at the "Howdy, Modi!" event.

Jaishankar had said back then that India had adopted a non-partisan stand to domestic American politics and that Modi was merely repeating US President Donald Trump's words, which he had used to pitch his candidature to the Indian American community while campaigning for the 2020 US presidential election.

Earlier in the day, Congress

chief Sonia Gandhi extended hers and the party's felicitations to Biden and Harris in congratulatory letters to both.

In her letter to Biden, Gandhi said the Indian people have followed with great interest the course of the election during the last 12 months.

"We were greatly reassured by your measured speeches, stress on healing divisions among the people, and promotion of gender and racial equality, global cooperation and sustainable development of all countries," she said. Gandhi also hailed vice president-elect Kamala Harris' success as a "triumph for Black Americans and Indian Americans".

The Congress chief said she knew Harris would work to heal and unite a "bitterly divided nation".

Last night, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi had congratulated Biden for winning the US presidential election, hoping that the Democrat would unite the US and provide direction to it.



## All good for India

As Obama's V-P, Biden headed foreign policy committees in the Senate and is well aware of India's strategic value



Regardless of the legal wrangles and the persistence of Donald Trump to prove that the verdict is still his for the taking, Democrat candidate Joe Biden has won the presidency. But what does a possible regime change mean for India? And this is where it becomes necessary to understand the bipartisan nature of US foreign policy. Whoever be the President, s/he is guided by the nation's interest and strategic concerns regardless of what each has professed before. And while a Democratic regime would be under pressure to make sweeping changes in domestic policies, there is continuity in larger geo-political issues. To that

extent, the Biden-Harris team is as wary of China and committed to supporting India as a bulwark State. One just has to go back to the Indo-US civil nuclear deal that was pushed by the George Bush administration. In 2009, when Democrat President and Trump's predecessor Barack Obama took over, there were worries about operationalising it. However, Obama vowed to uphold it, even calling it historic. Besides, let us not forget that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had a fruitful relationship with Obama. And he did work up an equation with Trump as well. Besides, Biden, while serving as Obama's Vice-President, has headed foreign policy committees in the Senate and is considered an expert in that field. So if anybody understands India's worth in the current US schematics, it would be him. Sensing the change in tide, the Indian Ambassador in the US, Taranjit Singh Sandhu, has already started holding meetings with Democrat Congressmen. Biden is likely to bring in Indian American Vivek Murthy to head the COVID-19 management programme. In the short term, Biden's seriousness about the pandemic and his willingness to put his plan into action from his first day as a President could be beneficial for India too. It could translate into a shared perspective on the approach and an enhanced India-US partnership in health, sciences and supply chains. In terms of policy, there are some major differences between the two candidates. Trump's "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran had limited India's investment and oil imports. With Biden promising to revive the Iran nuclear deal, a highlight of the Obama administration, New Delhi can continue with the development of the strategic Chabahar port, a venture crucial to keep both China and Pakistan in check. Also, unlike Trump, Biden could be generous to allies and since Trump's economic nationalism caused billions of dollars of export losses to India and even denied it the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) privileges, we could expect some easing there.

In terms of countering China, Trump has definitely been an asset and his role in strengthening the Quad cannot be questioned following the former's misadventure in Ladakh. But Biden has been far more critical of China's policies in Xinjiang province and the atrocities against the Uyghurs, its treatment of Hong Kong protests and Taiwan, which could prove to be more decisive. He had said that the strengthening of ties between the two democracies would be a matter of "high priority" for his administration, as the two countries were "natural partners." And a document released by his campaign also claimed that he would be working with India in the Indo-Pacific region to ensure no country, including China, "is able to threaten its neighbours with impunity." Biden has appeared more sensitive in dealing with his allies. So, when Trump at the last presidential debate called India's air filthy, Biden had responded by saying that: "You don't speak about friends like that." The cherry on the cake is the Democrat leader's commitment to the Paris Agreement on climate change as India was hoping for investment from the Green Climate Fund in its renewable energy initiatives. Biden's support, first for reforming the temporary visa system for high-skill, speciality jobs and then expanding the number of visas offered, which had kept so many Indians in queue, will be beneficial even though it will be equally favourable for our other neighbours, including China. India could benefit with Biden planning to resume US's position at most global alliances and UN bodies that Trump had walked out of while pursuing his brand of protectionism and nationalism. That would help get India more endorsement when it matters. Of course, many here are fearing that Biden's global push for more democracy and human rights may draw attention to Kashmir but he has the expertise and gravitas to follow a more nuanced approach. And with New Delhi planning local body elections and willing to increase political engagement, it should not be a hurdle as such. Of course, there's Russia, on which Biden might take a hard line. But then, India managed to get its arms deals through with Russia in the Trump years despite apprehension. Besides, Russia, though indebted to China for infrastructure deals, has common cause with India against China's gigantism and still respects the historicity of ties. So Indo-US relations are expected to be on an even keel.

## Delhi spiral

Till we increase the share of swab testing in mapping the pandemic, we won't get a grip on the city's caseload or address it



Just as was being feared by healthcare experts and those who have been following the trajectory of the pandemic globally, Delhi is seeing a massive surge in Coronavirus infection after a brief lull. Worryingly, Delhi recorded over 7,000 COVID-19 cases for the first time with a 12 per cent positivity. The only silver lining is that the recovery rate was over 89 per cent and that 57 per cent of the 15,789 dedicated COVID beds are vacant in the city, making it easier for people with severe symptoms to get admitted. But not for long. Of course, the triggers are many, namely the festive rush, the pandemic fatigue that has made people drop guard and the early

onset of winter and pollution that anyway aggravate lung diseases.

In part, the recent spike in infections can also be attributed to the fact that the Delhi Government in coordination with the Centre had opted for aggressive contact tracing and monitoring of quarantined patients to suppress and break the chain of transmission. The focus is on critical zones, restaurants, marketplaces, barber shops and salons because random testing hadn't recorded as many cases. This is part of a strategy to contain the spread of COVID-19 in Delhi with the Health Ministry and experts recommending targeted RT-PCR testing in sensitive and critical zones. Hence, with more testing and contact tracing, the numbers were bound to go up. But it seems that the trusted RT-PCR or swab testing, which is currently around 23 per cent, needs to be extended as much as possible because over-reliance on antigen tests is blocking disease-mapping. A large number of positive cases would have slipped through the cracks because about half of the antigen tests register false negatives, which means that the current figures could double if all those tested by the antigen method were subjected to RT-PCR reviews. Perhaps that's the reason why the authorities are now recommending that a suspect with persistent symptoms take the golden test even if s/he has cleared the antigen one. The danger of antigen tests is that an asymptomatic carrier of the infection, if found negative, will get a false sense of security and can turn super-spreader. Besides, somewhere the operational preparedness of the summer peak has led to a sense of complacency. Back then, the tiered approach of ramping up infrastructure, testing and operationalising a home care system with oximeters to COVID-affected families was synchronised to contain the spiral. The fall in figures in between has clearly led to laxity in maintaining a coordinated response system. The Delhi Government is probably considering moving the Supreme Court to vacate the High Court's stay on reserving 80 per cent COVID ICU beds for people of Delhi. But would that stem the tide as families are split across NCR and not seem exclusivist? Testing the right way is the only way out. At the same time, Delhiites need to ride out the winter indoors if they don't want another insurmountable crisis on their hands.



RINKU GHOSH

The US elections have thrown up many examples of "Trumpery," a plastic cult concoction that has torn down every convention in its sweep and will last simply because of its pop-up encroachment of established space, demanding legitimacy through a shredded system, right or wrong. So as Donald Trump cried the Democrats had "stolen" the election from him and both his supporters and critics took to the streets and the waterfront to be heard, one wanting the counting to stop and the other upholding the validity of the last vote polled, the free world's integrity, resting on institutional and systemic pride and justness, seemed to be its greatest casualty. But probably this low was necessary for the fourth pillar of democracy to rescue it in the nick of time. The media, which Trump had made his sworn enemy and a scapegoat for his follies, became his real contestant, standing up to him measure for measure.

In an unprecedented move, major US TV networks chose to cut away from a live speech made by Trump from the White House as he repeated his allegations that an electoral fraud had been committed on the nation because his margins with Biden were dwindling. Mind you this was Trump addressing the nation as President from the hallowed portals of his office and not from the Republican Party headquarters. Still, the CBS, MSNBC, ABC and NBC stopped airing the footage, clarifying that his statements were baseless. They didn't want to fuel his propaganda though they admitted that he could still be the President if he was proven right by law. Not only that, they immediately commissioned on-ground reports to verify voting fraud allegations and after a granular fact-check, insisted that the counting officials were not only following the rulebook but were double-checking and meticulously separating the votes in the event of a recount. And lest the anchors be accused of being partisan, all of them unanimously upheld Trump's right as a candidate to demand a recount or seek legal recourse but insisted that a process could not be hijacked midway without evidence to disenfranchise the voter. As channels fanned out correspondents on the ground to verify each of Trump's complaints, they equally approached Republican spokespersons, some of whom were quite embarrassed by Trump's adventurism. In short, the US media, defying all the co-option and intimidation tactics that it had been subjected to in an authoritarian era, stood up for itself. And firm. It upheld the nation's foundational



principles than subject them to nihilistic degradation. It did its job and unitedly defended its institutional responsibility.

MSNBC's anchor Brian Williams said, "Here we are again in the unusual position of not only interrupting the President of the United States but correcting the President of the United States." USA Today interrupted its live video feed as its editor-in-chief Nicole Carroll said, "Our job is to spread truth — not unfounded conspiracies." Of course, the quote that became viral was that of CNN presenter Anderson Cooper, who described Trump "like an obese turtle on his back, failing in the hot sun realising his time was over." The usually pro-Trump Fox News did not do his bidding with its correspondent saying, "What we saw tonight is a President who believes that at the end of the day, when all the votes are counted, the election is not going to go his way, so he's trying to plan an alternate route to retain the White House." Print media has already been reasoned but American live TV, that has depended on Trump's outrageousness for commercial ratings, showed a rare moral fibre called character.

In fact, more than Trump vs Biden, this election will be remembered for the real contest between Trump and the media. Yet, it was not always this way. Looking back, Trump at one point was feted by the media and as a reality star created by networks, was celebrated for his eccentric excesses and rude dramatics. Where prejudice, and not patience, was a virtue. To the extent that Trump as President could not separate the gravitas of office from the metrics of popular consumption. A reality TV star is acceptable, a reality TV President is not. But Trump assumed that the media would be taken in by his rambunctiousness and see it as an example of his boldness as a leader of people, who pressed all the populist buttons — "America First," "Make America Great Again," "China virus." And given the mandate in 2016, he had made himself

believe that he did not need to admit a mistake but sweep it under the aura of his onscreen personality. That's when the media, which criticised his policies when it needed to, became his enemy. That's when Trump dismissed the media as a purveyor of "fake news" and sanctified his own claims as facts. In the end, he transplanted his opinions and worldview as the only truth and the rest as lies. And in the ways of all autocrats and demagogues, he even colonised the media, disorienting it from standing by the truth without fear and favour and colonising it on his terms. The rebels he dismissed as America's "opposition party" that would not see anything good in all that he did. This blanket otherisation also helped him shield himself from issues that came under the scanner, some of which could have embarrassed him no end. He simply got away by playing victim, saying the media hated him since he represented a heartland America that he pandered to. He even humiliated journalists, attacking them individually by naming and shaming them, threatening libel or even hurting their business interests. Matters came to a head when he belatedly the Coronavirus crisis from what it was, "just a flu", although the US has lost a quarter million of its own to the pandemic. The normally permissive social media giant Twitter had to ban his one-time aide Steve Bannon for asking Trump to behead infectious disease specialist Dr Anthony Fauci and FBI director Christopher Wray. The problem with Trump's "otherisation" policy was that he not only confined it to the media and the liberals, he extended it to anybody and everybody with credible standing and proven worth, who were apolitical. This explains why the media coalesced the way it did this time, articulating as it did a popular disgust. Besides, Trump mistook the fact that the media wanted to be "king" in his palace when it simply wanted to retain its place in civil society.

In the US, the media has

never been bigger than its President, each of whom has used it to disseminate his policies and even attempted to coerce it. Yet there was a Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein in between, whose old school legwork resulted in Watergate and ultimately forced Richard Nixon to resign. It is heartening to note that decades and years later, at least the discussion on facts, corroboration and evidence are back on the table again. And that's good for old-school journalism.

Question is will the Indian media be equally cohesive as it stands deeply polarised and horribly compromised. Will networks dare to cut away from biased coverage, beholden as they are to their political masters and corporate donors? Will we ignore individual bottom lines at a critical juncture and take a united stand as an industry that would be taken more seriously for a job well done rather than undone? Will we be able to create a competitive market of free ideas or continue to rely on dolos of those we please? Not that there isn't hope, considering the local Press and cable networks do take on the establishment fearlessly, most big scams having been reported first by local correspondents. But then that's because the local Press isn't in the high stakes game yet and is still seen as a social enterprise for the greater good. But at the top, both broadcast and print media are under pressure and indeed rewarded for favourable coverage of the powers that be. And this is sadly responsible for the erosion of democracy itself, not just here but elsewhere in the world.

According to Freedom House's *Freedom in the World* data, the Press is equally under attack in free States, where it is being gradually appropriated as a tool of governance than being its watchdog. While it is easier to detect authoritarian crack-downs, what is more insidious, it says, are "more nuanced efforts to throttle their independence. Common methods include Government-backed ownership changes, regulatory and finan-

cial pressure and public denunciations of honest journalists. Governments have also offered proactive support to friendly outlets through measures such as lucrative State contracts, favourable regulatory decisions, and preferential access to State information. The goal is to make the Press serve those in power rather than the public."

Among free countries, the report says, about 19 per cent or 16 countries are struggling with Press freedom over the past five years. In other words, it is as much a victim as civil liberty with populist leaders extending the arc of their political power while keeping to the motions of democracy. Undoubtedly, it mentions the US, China and Israel but lists India too, especially in restricting broadcast media by selective allocation of licences and airwaves to the detriment of organisations "unfriendly" to the ruling regime.

Can the media rebound is the big question? At this point, it may look unlikely but templates exist to prove that ultimate repression is needed to feel the need for and value an independent Press. The media sector is picking up in Ethiopia and Gambia, where it was once persecuted, with more locals keen to take up the profession. Germany has evolved a public television system funded by taxpayers and overseen by independent boards. So it acts as a perfect check and balance for the Government of the day. It has established its credibility for impartial news and analysis, something that people keep in mind while casting their ballot. But these are just templates and each democracy-loving nation needs to do its bit to ensure Press freedom if it wants to be fair to itself. Just remember George Orwell: "Unpopular ideas can be silenced, and inconvenient facts kept dark, without the need for any official ban. Anyone who has lived long in a foreign country will know of instances of sensational items of news — things which on their own merits would get the big headlines — being kept right out of the British press, not because the Government intervened but because of a general tacit agreement that 'it wouldn't do' to mention that particular fact. The British Press is extremely centralised, and most of it is owned by wealthy men who have every motive to be dishonest on certain important topics. But the same kind of veiled censorship also operates in books and periodicals, as well as in plays, films and radio.... Anyone who challenges the prevailing orthodoxy finds himself silenced with surprising effectiveness. A genuinely unfashionable opinion is almost never given a fair hearing." It's time to be unfashionable.

(The writer is Associate Editor, The Pioneer)

## SOUNDBITE

Bengal has to choose between dynastic politics and development. Give one (opportunity) to us (BJP). We promise to build 'Shonar Bangla' (golden Bengal) in five years.

Union Home Minister  
—Amit Shah



The US is using its domestic laws, including anti-terrorism and anti-corruption laws, to extend its hegemony and influence over the world.

Lebanese Foreign Minister  
—Gebran Bassil



We have firmly stated to China that disengagement will happen at all friction points and not at the selected locations as they want. Our stand is clear.

MEA Joint Secy (East Asia)  
—Naveen Srivastava



Batting at number four can vary a lot and becomes surface dependent. A few shots from Jason (Holder) helped. The all-rounder role in the team has been well held by him.

Cricketer  
—Kane Williamson



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Reservation for locals

Sir — The Haryana Government has passed a Bill providing 75 per cent reservation to local candidates applying for private sector jobs in the State that pay less than ₹50,000 per month. It will be the second State to mandate such reservation after Andhra Pradesh, which had passed a similar Bill last July. It is crucial to remember that Gurugram and Faridabad are the industrial hubs of Haryana and need qualified and skilled labourers. About 70 to 80 per cent of the odd 25,000 industries in the State are concentrated in these two cities. There are 250 Fortune 500 companies in Gurugram apart from the nearly 300 automobile companies that generate 70 to 80 per cent of the total State revenue.

The State Government's proposal is politically motivated. Imposing domicile, territorial and numerical conditions and then expecting corporates to train under-qualified, unskilled

### A viable solution for stubble burning

Every winter, the burning of crop residue in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh aggravates the pollution load in the Capital. On an average, 23 million tonnes of rice straw are burnt in north India by farmers to make way for wheat production. It is due to the small gap between the rice harvesting and wheat sowing period that forces the farmers to quickly burn and remove the paddy stubble. This results in a large amount of pollutants like CO<sub>2</sub>, CO, NO<sub>x</sub>, SO<sub>x</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> being released into the air. According to the study by the University of Chicago through its Air Quality Life Index, which took the 2018 pollution levels as the base, the average Delhiite is losing 9.4 years of life.

Farmers resort to burning stubble as manual removal is not cost-effective. Hence, the bio decomposer, developed by scientists at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, Pusa, is a viable solution. It can turn crop residue into manure in 15 to 20 days and, therefore, can prevent stubble burning. Even Delhi Chief



Minister Arvind Kejriwal has called it a cost-effective solution. The happy seeder, which is given to farmers to cut the stubble and sow wheat seeds simultaneously at a subsidised rate by the State Government, costs around ₹3000 per acre. Hence, the Pusa bio-decomposer looks like the most promising alternative.

Ganapathi Bhat  
Akola

### Conflict continues

Sir — India has summoned the Charge d'Affaires (CDA) of the Pakistan High Commission to lodge a strong protest over Islamabad's "unilateral" decision to transfer the management of

the Kartarpur Sahib gurdwara from a Sikh body to a separate trust. Pakistan has exposed the reality of its leadership's tall claims of preserving and protecting the rights and welfare of the religious minority. Amid heightened tension

between the two countries, after India scrapped Jammu and Kashmir's special status on August 5, 2019, and bifurcated it into two Union Territories, this is yet another attempt by our neighbour to provoke us and initiate a fresh proxy war.

Bhagwan Thadani  
Mumbai

### A dark Diwali

Sir — As India continues to battle the Coronavirus pandemic and high levels of air pollution, many States have decided to ban firecrackers this Diwali. However, the step was taken too late and now the families that are employed by the firecracker industry are left in a lurch. Products have already been shipped but now with the ban being implemented, they would not receive payments.

Jubel D'Cruz  
Mumbai

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



FIRST COLUMN

## Towards more robust healthcare

The curriculum of medical education seems to focus essentially on the institution of hospitals. The results are there for all to see



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

The public healthcare system in India is one of those topics on which most people have an opinion. It is often expressed with much energy and claimed insight. There are some favourite viewpoints. Almost all of them talk of primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare. Usually, a discourse on these aspects is accompanied by half a tear on the state of affairs in the country. The truth is that notwithstanding the enthusiasm for allopathic healthcare, this country's primary healthcare system is nourished and sustained by Indian systems of medicine. They are easily available, the diagnosis is simple and in a large number of cases the results are satisfactory. Traditional medicine systems do not burden the common man with endless medical tests like allopathy does, which in turn are often accompanied by protestations about the possible unreliability of the results. This is not only because of the nature of the tests but also due to the flaws in the process of testing. Often, the search for reliability means repeat tests. Interestingly, the pathology labs, as a source of livelihood, have very rarely been subjected to an analysis which tries to understand their exponential growth. Cartels are reported to be rampant in B and C-class cities, not to overlook the groupings in the smaller geographical units of megacities. It is one of those strange situations when a lot of people know what's going on and yet nobody wants to talk about it. When talking itself is taboo, one can well imagine the plight of a possible investigation of a serious order.

Strangely enough, an engineer in the process of becoming one has to undergo certain orientations in social sciences or cognate areas. By and large, the curriculum of medical education seems to have its focus essentially on the institution of hospitals. The results are there for all to see.

The COVID era has lent these traits a grotesque veneer. By and large these days, hospitals tend to avoid giving a discharge certificate which would say whether the patient has been cured (or not) of COVID. Senior doctors take shelter behind the Indian Council of Medical Research's guidelines. Perhaps some of this is unavoidable, yet there are cognate issues which await clarity. National protocols need to prevail but when will there be greater specificity?

The merits of this can be debated. Some will claim that it is inherent in a situation like the ongoing pandemic, where so little is known about the virus. One of the media write-ups talked of seven types of mild-COVID. Notwithstanding this categorisation, apparently there is very little to distinguish the treatment of one Coronavirus from the other. Paracetamol *et al* is administered in each case and here enters the fanciful word-of-the-year: "Immunity." The last 11 months have seen this word riding the crest as never before in human history. The Indian healthcare systems, which subscribe to "the-way-of-life being the route to health and happiness" doctrine, seem to be having the last laugh.

Right from amla to apricot, everything has become a panacea and the source of immunity and health that people swear by. It doesn't seem to bother many that apricot itself is a seasonal fruit and cannot be the route to universal and sound health.

The second and the third waves of COVID have become a widespread topic of discussion in most drawing rooms across the country. As winter approaches and cases spike, much of Europe is undergoing or threatening to undergo another spell of lockdown. Interestingly enough, few authentic figures are available of what percentage of the spike is a result of relapsed cases in patients, who were discharged from hospital even though they had met the existing protocol of release. The ambiguity of the situation may be partly inherent but it still does not explain why the issues of treatment of different categories of COVID patients are not being pushed to their logical conclusion.

Is it not prudent to keep the patient under the care of the same set-up for a longer period of time before s/he is allowed to travel and there is reasonable guarantee that the person will not be a candidate for a repeat infection? It is obvious that it is difficult to give firm answers to these tricky questions. However, it is pathetic that the broad contours of the situation are not being sufficiently discussed. There is a need to recognise this aspect and take it on board for a deeper analysis and remedy.

Clearly, the powers that be, the medical fraternity and civil society, must come to grips with the situation. These are, indeed, not the only imponderable issues needing far-more concerted attention. But they are important nonetheless.

(The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute)

I CAN SENSE MASSIVE PUBLIC ANGER AGAINST THE MAMATA BANERJEE GOVERNMENT AND THE DEATH KNEEL OF HER REGIME HAS BEEN SOUNDED.  
—UNION HOME MINISTER  
AMIT SHAH

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



THE HOME MINISTER IS BEHAVING LIKE A BJP ACTIVIST. SHAH AND BJP SHOULD STOP DAYDREAMING ABOUT COMING TO POWER IN BENGAL.  
—TMC MP  
SOUGATO ROY

# Clash of objectives

While the private sector favours market orientation for procurement of commodities, the public sector supports inclusivity for farmers in meeting their livelihood needs



INDRANIL DE

SRIVIDHAR VISHWANATH

The passage of the Farmers' (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services (Special Provisions and Punjab Amendment) Bill, 2020 by the Punjab Assembly served a body blow to the Central Government's three farm Acts that were passed in September. The Centre's Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act allows growers to sell their produce outside the markets notified under the State Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) Act. It attempts to develop "one nation, one market" besides bringing in a framework for both, the agriculturalists and the buyers, for contract farming across States and imposing stock limits on farm commodities only in extreme situations in retail prices. Let us look at how private procurement and State purchase may co-exist in Punjab and the implications if other States pass similar Ordinances.

To understand these Ordinances, we need to grasp the basic purpose of public procurement of foodgrain. The Central Government, through the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and other State agencies, procures foodgrain and other essential commodities from domestic producers at the Minimum Support Price (MSP). The objective is to provide price support to farmers, distribute subsidised foodgrain to the poor through the Targetted Public Distribution System (TPDS) and maintain buffer stocks to ensure price stability and food security. The Government's procurement system also encourages farmers to increase production due to assured prices. The foodgrain procured through this system gets distributed through fair price shops across the country.

Although there are deficiencies and leakages in the PDS, it served as a basic support of nutrition to around 50 per cent rural and 30 per cent urban households in 2011-12, according to the latest National Sample Survey data. Moreover, the dependence on PDS rose considerably between 2004-05 and 2011-12 in both rural and urban India. Under the TPDS, people Below the Poverty Line (BPL) are provided foodgrain at a highly subsidised rate under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY). In fact, the PDS system provided great succor to the needy during the COVID-19 pandemic-induced lockdown.

In this sense, the State procurement and PDS system serve the purpose of doing public good. As farmers get better prices and poor consumers get food at lower prices, it serves the dual social objective of food security and a hunger-free nation. The latter benefits one and all, as a country that risks running out of food stock may face civil unrest that emanates out of the desperation of the poor. In contrast, private procurement is part of a system that enables farmers to produce goods which are both excludable and rivals. Food stocks procured through private procurement serve consumers who can afford market prices and exclude others. They are produced in a limited amount, hence rivals in consumption. These two systems have two different objectives and serve different purposes but both are equally important. The new Ordinances passed in the Punjab Assembly pits two systems against each other.

The Ordinance disallows sale/purchase of wheat/paddy unless the price paid is equal to or greater than the MSP. This appears to be serving

“IN THE PUNJAB ASSEMBLY ORDINANCE, THE FARMERS ARE GIVEN THE DISCRETION TO APPROACH THE CIVIL COURT OR OTHER REMEDIES UNDER EXISTING LAWS, BUT ALL THESE INVOLVE LONG AND EXPENSIVE LITIGATION AND CANNOT BE TAKEN UP BY INDIVIDUAL FARMERS. THIS COUPLING OF BOTH THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR OBJECTIVES THROUGH THE CONDUIT OF ONE OVERARCHING ORDINANCE WILL LIKELY BE AGAINST THE INTEREST OF FARMERS. PRIVATE PROCUREMENT AGENTS AND CONSUMERS OF BOTH FOODGRAIN AND ALLIED PRODUCTS



the social welfare objective of public goods production. However, it is more apparent than real. This is primarily because the procurement criteria of Government and private agents are very different as they serve two different objectives.

The criteria set by the Government are designed to exclude as few as possible. The grains are screened based on the moisture content, proportion of organic and inorganic foreign materials and test weight at a very basic level. The foodgrains that pass these criteria are accepted. However, all accepted foodgrains are offered the same price, the MSP.

On the other hand, private procurement is more fine-grained and priced differently. Hence a product, which marginally passes the Government's procurement system, may fetch a lower price in the private one or be excluded from a price equivalent or higher than the MSP due to the grading system being applied. While the Government's criteria of procurement may be standardised across India, private gradation is adjusted according to several factors, such as the cost of extraction of the end substance, the milling properties and the impact on the end product for the consumer. Hence, a penal clause by the Punjab Government's Ordinance of imprisonment of no less than three years and a fine to the private procurement agent or company could be construed as being unjust.

Fine grading of agricultural produce is very essential from the viewpoint of manufacture of different food products. Due to the diversification of the consumers' food palate, the focus is not only

the cost but also the quality of the produce. This has led to greater attention by private procurement agents on factors like varieties, the agro-climatic zones and seasonal variations of the commodities during procurement. This has meant a finer grading mechanism as well to get both quality and cost optimisation. For example, in the case of wheat, a critical factor of concern is the density of the grain. The denser the grain, the more nutrients it contains and hence more will be the extraction during the milling process on a per weight basis. An important quality factor is the gluten content, a protein that impacts the baking properties of the flour and is used to determine the type of products that can be made. Hence, organisations create specifications in the procurement of commodities dependent upon the consumer segments and their needs.

The emergence of food retail has intensified the choices for the consumer. More choice and consumer awareness have resulted in shorter product life cycles, increased innovation and competition and demand for newer offerings. The repeal of the APMC Act by several States, creation of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and increased participation by the food retail and processing sector have led to the shortening of agricultural value chains. Procurement determines the profitability as it controls 60 to 75 per cent of the total costs in the system. Thus, procurement of raw agricultural commodities has become a strategic function from a back-office role.

It is imperative to understand that private agents would price their procure-

ment of commodities based on the profitability and price behaviour of end consumers. It, therefore, bears out that they would pay less for a quality where an additional cost would need to be incurred for processing the grain to bring it in line with the consumer's demand. This reduced price may result in the procurement price becoming lower than the Government's prescribed MSP.

Thus, while the private sector favours market orientation of procurement of commodities, the public sector supports inclusivity for farmers in meeting their livelihood needs. The two objectives clash with each other. If corporates are punished for procuring at a price lower than the MSP, then they would also apply pressure tactics to go soft on implementation or again change the law, which may, in turn, affect the objective of public goods provision. This would lead to instability in the whole institutional set-up of the agribusiness.

In the Punjab Assembly Ordinance, the farmers are given the discretion to approach the civil court or other remedies under existing laws, but all these involve long and expensive litigation and cannot be taken up by individual farmers. This coupling of both the public and private sector objectives through the conduit of one overarching Ordinance will likely be against the interest of farmers, private procurement agents and consumers of both foodgrain and allied products.

(De is Associate Professor and Vishwanath is Assistant Professor, Institute of Rural Management, Anand. Views expressed here are personal)

# The last refuge of failing regimes

As the Opposition's narrative gains momentum amid political repression and utter governmental incompetence, the conspiracy cards are out again



NADEEM PARACHA

In 2007, the Musharraf dictatorship found itself in the doldrums. Suddenly, it was up against a charged protest movement, an economy that had begun to falter and the return of two political leaders from exile, Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto. Both had been kept out from the political system designed by Musharraf during his tenure as President. He was also unable to smother private TV news channels that, ironically, had mushroomed during his Government. By 2007, almost all of them had become chattering vessels for Opposition leaders and narratives.

This was something new in Pakistan. The State-owned PTV was not the only TV channel anymore. The content of the new chan-

nels could not be conveniently moulded and shaped according to a sitting regime's needs and interests. Therefore, it won't be an overstatement to claim that the channels contributed in expediting Musharraf's downfall and ultimate ouster.

All this was being closely watched by a startled "establishment." After Musharraf's departure, the establishment eventually began to harness this phenomenon by gradually arm-twisting and reining in numerous channels, first to help it create brand Imran — especially among an urban generation of youth who had come of age during the Musharraf era — and then to demonise anyone or anything that stood in the way of turning this brand into a ruling possibility.

But this was in the near future. Because during the period the Musharraf regime was badly wavering, all it could think of or do (to retain the attention of Musharraf's aforementioned urban constituency) was to pull in certain characters from what is often referred to as the "conspiratorial lunatic fringe", and forcibly create some space for them on TV channels.

With Musharraf's Ministers

badly faltering in convincingly addressing the rapidly proliferating narrative against the regime, the script provided to the conspiracy theorists was simple: Explain the movement against Musharraf as an evil scheme hatched by the enemies of the country and their Pakistani agents.

These colourful and articulate theorists drew their material from various popular conspiracy gurus such as the Turkish Harun Yahya and the American Alex Jones. This was then fused with sensational narratives from popular conspiratorial cultural products that included fabricated texts such as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and low-budget straight-to-YouTube "documentaries" such as *Loose Change*. These were then peddled with a healthy dose of cherry-picked sections from *Allama Iqbal* and tales of ancient Muslim warriors drawn from literature, that was more historical fiction than fact. Did all this attract the attention of the urban youth? It did. Unable to grasp the complexities of the ways in which political turbulence emerges and evolves, they were provided ready-made answers through which they could under-

stand the commotion in an entirely angled manner.

According to the British academic and author Jovan Byford, in his 2011 book *Conspiracy Theories: A Critical Introduction*, "Conspiracy theories seduce not so much through the power of argument, but through the intensity of the passions that they stir. Underpinning conspiracy theories are stories about good and evil. This gives conspiracy theories a strong emotional dimension." So those who put the conspiracy theorists to work on TV amid the turmoil during the Musharraf regime, knew exactly the kind of emotions they were looking to stir (against the Opposition).

But did it help stall or evade Musharraf's fall? No. His constituency was limited and largely apolitical. This too was noted. Therefore, from 2011 onwards, the establishment began to aid Imran Khan to adopt Musharraf's constituency, expand it and then rapidly politicise it. Nine years later, Khan was able to form a minority Government, largely popular among the urban bourgeoisie. Even though the conspiracy theorists, who had appeared during the tail-end of the Musharraf regime,

were eventually discredited and their tirades debunked by a host of historians, an idea that they had introduced during their figurative 15 minutes of fame, stuck.

This idea was simple: If one continues to lie about something with conviction from a mainstream platform, that lie, especially when carried and proliferated by social media sites, often begins to be taken as a "fact" by large groups of people. The purpose of these so-called "facts" is not to enlighten people but to sustain an audience in times of crisis and make sure it doesn't drift away into the Opposition's camp. If it needs to be lied to, then so be it.

But the untruth requires to be told in such a manner that it works to emotionally and psychologically reinforce narratives that have begun to erode in the minds of the targeted audience.

Because once this audience is emotionally invested in the lie, it is also likely to treat anything debunking it as a grand conspiracy.

During times of crises for a regime, daily micro-battles can be fought through this approach. However, as we saw during the last year of the Musharraf regime, and as

we are now seeing in Modi's India and Trump's America, the rising intensity of this approach may as well be signalling that the war engulfing the daily micro-battles is being lost. And in Imran Khan's Pakistan, too, the intensity of this approach has risen amid the rising tide of Opposition against the Government and its backers.

In a feature on the February 1990 elections in Nicaragua, which an Opposition alliance won by defeating the ruling Sandinista Party that had come to power in 1979 through a revolution, *Time* magazine quoted a man who had supported the Sandinista but voted for the Opposition.

He told the magazine that a majority of Nicaraguans had voted for the Opposition "with their stomachs that had become empty." The Sandinista had painted the Opposition as being anti-poor and made emotional appeals to the electorate to not allow a rollback of the revolution. But these slogans had no meaning to those fearing starvation and joblessness.

As the Opposition's manoeuvres and narrative in Pakistan gain momentum and currency in a sce-

nario riddled with rampant inflation, political repression and utter governmental incompetence, the conspiracy cards are out again. But this time they are not being played by those brought in from the "lunatic fringe."

However, the content and modus operandi are the same. We are now seeing Ministers adopting this role. A recent example is the manner in which the Information Minister Shibli Faraz explained the Opposition alliance, the PDM, as "the third piece of the axis of evil." The other two pieces being India and Israel.

This may sound entirely ridiculous to most because it smacks of typical conspiratorial claptrap. But Faraz is talking to a constituency that had actually bought the curious Utopian fusion of a theocratic fantasy and modern developmental economics sold with great passion by brand Imran and his makers.

However, to an empty stomach it is nothing but hogwash and that too, coming from an incompetent regime which has been reduced to now defending its "selection," knowing well that the claim of it being elected has been shot to pieces.

(Courtesy: Dawn)



# GSTN infra upgraded to handle up to 3 L users concurrently

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

GST Network's infrastructure has been upgraded to handle up to 3 lakh logged-in users at a time, GSTN said on Sunday.

Besides, the Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN) has introduced auto-populated sales return form GSTR-3B in PDF form which will be available from October 2020 tax periods onwards. The complete PDF with auto-population of input tax credit will be available on the common portal (GSTN) from November 12, 2020, GSTN said in a statement. GSTN said it has augmented the capacity of the gateway from 1.5 lakh to 3 lakh concurrent logged in taxpayers to handle the expected sharp surge in the indirect tax-related activities on the portal after easing of lockdown.

**GSTN has introduced auto-populated sales return form GSTR-3B in PDF form which will be available from October 2020 tax periods onwards**

Further, the upgrade has enabled GSTN to handle and scale up to 5 lakhs concurrently logged-in taxpayers, if necessary, it added. The number of active taxpayer numbers have effectively doubled since the launch of GST at about 1.3 crore. As per GSTN data, September 2020 witnessed a sudden jump in filing of GSTR-3B, the monthly return filed by normal taxpayers. This surge was also due to the backlog in filing of previous months' returns for which relaxations were provided to taxpayers in view of the COVID-19 outbreak. The subsequent month also saw increased traffic which

was successfully handled by the GST portal, it said.

GSTN said detailed breakup of various tables of GSTR-1 (supply return) and GSTR-3B which have been used to auto-populate GSTR-3B have also been provided in the PDF. In the first phase, system has started auto-populating details from GSTR-1 to GSTR-3B from July 2020 period onwards for all GSTR-1s filed after August 27, 2020, GSTN added. All taxpayers are requested to go through their GSTR-3B (PDF) and provide feedback (if any) on any aspect by raising a ticket on the self-service portal," GSTN said.

The GST Council, in its 39th meeting on March 14, had recommended adopting and implementing an incremental approach of linking the present system of filing of GSTR-3B and GSTR-1.

# Liquor sales fall 29% in Apr-Sep amid lockdown impact, high tax levies

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

Sale of Indian-made foreign liquor declined 29 per cent during the first half of the current financial year, according to data released by the Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC).

In a statement, the industry body said that the fall in demand was severe in Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Puducherry, and Rajasthan, which still continue to impose corona tax as high as 50 per cent. In these states, sales dropped by almost 50 per cent.

"All India sales volume growth for IMFL segment for the first half of the year 2019-20 was 29 per cent. Leaving out April when the entire liquor trade was shut down under lockdown, the sales growth for the period May to September

in 2020 was '-16 per cent' over the same period last year," the CIABC said in a statement.

It noted that though the pan-India liquor sale has improved in the second quarter, it was the first quarter (April-June) which did the maximum damage. In the second quarter (July-September), sales improved over first quarter, rising up to 78 million cases (9 litres each) of IMFL which was 9 per cent below the same period last year. Overall, sales recovery in states that imposed no tax or came up with marginal tax increases in light of corona pandemic was better.

The major states which reported maximum drop in sales in Q2 were Andhra Pradesh (down 51 per cent), Chhattisgarh (40 per cent), West Bengal (down 22 per cent) and Rajasthan (20 per cent).

# Good opportunity for India to export sugar: Govt

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government is reconsidering extension of sugar export subsidies as India has got good opportunity to sell the sweetener in the international market during November-April of the 2019-20 season that commenced this month, according to Food Secretary Sudhanshu Pandey.

India, the world's second-largest sugar-producing country, had to offer export subsidies during the last two years in order to reduce surplus stocks and help cash-starved sugar mills clear cane payment to growers.

Sugar mills exported 5.7 million tonnes of sugar against the mandatory quota of 6 million tonnes set for the 2019-20 season (October-September), as per official data.

Speaking to PTI, Pandey said: "Thailand's production is expected to be down this year,

while Brazil's crushing will only start in April 2021. From now till April, there is good export opportunity for India." "This is the opportunity the industry has to encash upon, we are doing our best given that India is expected to have a bumper sugar production this year," he added.

According to official sources, the food ministry is working on a proposal for seeking cabinet approval for extension of the existing sugar export policy for about 6 million tonnes in the 2020-21 season. On October 30, Food Minister Piyush Goyal had said the government was not considering extension of the export subsidy policy, but after several rounds of consultation with stakeholders and policy makers, a fresh thought is being given to the proposal, sources said.

Industry experts are of the view that India needs to export

more than 5 million tonnes of sugar this year to ensure domestic rates do not fall below the cost of production and make it difficult for mills to pay cane growers on time.

The surplus stock situation is expected to continue this season as well because domestic sugar production is pegged at 31 million tonnes, well above the annual demand of 26 million tonnes. To avoid sugar glut-kind of situation, Pandey said the government is encouraging mills to produce ethanol instead of sugar as the former can be used for blending with petrol under the National Biofuel Policy. The subsidised loans are being given to millers for distilleries capacity expansion in order to achieve the ethanol production of over 360 crore litres and meet the ethanol blending with petrol target of 10 per cent by 2022 and 20 per cent by 2030, he added.

# Expansion time for construction equipment firms as demand picks up

IANs ■ CHENNAI

Construction equipment companies are smiling as demand from core sectors like roads, railways, irrigation, energy and other sectors for their products is picking up, said top officials of industry majors.

Major industry players like Schwing Stetter India and Ajax Engineering are expanding their capacities to cash in on the impending surge in demand.

"It is smiling time for us. Business during September and October was better than corresponding period of 2019. Similarly, November business is also looking good," VG Sakthikumar, Managing Director, Schwing Stetter India, told IANS.

According to Sakthikumar, the machines of the rental players have got deployed in projects.

"The demand for construction equipment is picking up for the past couple of months and it is expected to accelerate further owing to the demand from sectors like roads, railways, energy, irrigation and others," Jagadish Bhat, Managing Director and CEO,

Ajax Engineering, told IANS.

Both Bhat and Sakthikumar said trade enquiries for their machines have picked up.

"The demand is from highways, railways, metros, and sectors. Bulk of the proposed \$1 trillion investment mentioned in the National Infrastructure Pipeline will happen next year," Sakthikumar said.

The companies are hoping to close this fiscal with better revenues than what they had expected when the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown happened.

"Last year, we closed with a turnover of about Rs 1,730 crore. This year, we hope to close with a business of Rs 1,400-1,500 crore," Sakthikumar said.

Schwing Stetter India makes concrete mixers and other machinery used in construction works. It also sells earthmoving equipment of XCMG, China.

The Indian company is a wholly-owned subsidiary of German group Schwing Stetter. The German group is owned by the Chinese XCMG group, which is ranked sixth globally among the construction equipment machinery makers.

# Indian IT industry looks forward to working together with new US Admin

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Nasscom on Sunday welcomed Joe Biden's win in the US Presidential election, and said the Indian IT industry looks forward to working with the new administration in pivoting technology, skills and digital transformation for the US.

The US is the biggest market for the Indian IT sector, accounting for a lion's share of the industry's revenue.

"NASSCOM congratulates US #PresidentElect @JoeBiden on his win. We look forward to working with him and his administration in pivoting technology, skills and digital transformation for the United States," it said in a tweet.

Nasscom has projected a revenue growth of 7.7 per cent at USD 191 billion for the IT sector in the ongoing fiscal. The industry has added a net 2 lakh jobs, taking the overall workforce to 4.36 million.

Indian IT players will keep a close watch on Biden's approach and policies related to H-1B work visas that are used by a large number of Indian technology professionals.

In June, during the COVID-19 pandemic, US President Donald Trump banned the entry into the US of workers in several key non-immigrant visa categories,

including H-1B, until the end of the year, arguing that they eat into American jobs.

Those affected include the family members of the H-1B, L-1, and certain categories of J1 visas.

Later, the Trump Administration announced certain exemptions in H-1B and L-1 travel bans for those continuing employment with the same employer, a move that could help Indian IT professionals and those working in the healthcare sector.

The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. Companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China.

In a statement, Nasscom said its member companies have an important history in the US.

"... They work with over three-quarters of the Fortune 500 companies in the US, providing them vital technology services and helping them innovate, compete, and grow," it said.

The industry body also noted that India-US bilateral trade increased by over 400 per cent since 2005, with the total increase in value from USD 37

billion in 2005, to USD 149 billion in 2019, and that technology sectors of both countries have played a critical role in driving this.

"The Indian technology industry makes critical contributions to the US economy and workforce, including local investments and job-creation, workforce development and upskilling their US employees, CSR and community services," Nasscom said.

Nasscom said a key challenge that the sector faces is the lack of required Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) talent in the US clearly highlighted by the high degree of overall unemployment on one hand, and more than half a million job vacancies in computer occupation on the other.

"Nasscom looks forward to working together with the new US Administration, to find solutions to the STEM skills gap, and enable America to be more competitive, to grow and create more jobs," it added.

Tech Mahindra Managing Director and CEO C P Gurnani tweeted "Democracy wins" and extended wishes to Biden and Harris on their win.

"Congratulations @JoeBiden @KamalaHarris from the largest democracy to the world's oldest democracy...

## US is the biggest market for the Indian IT sector

Wishing a term of prosperity and peace for not just America but the world," he said.

A Democrat, 77-year-old Biden became the oldest man ever to be elected to the White House.

He will be the 46th president of the United States.

Along with Biden, Kamala Harris, 56, would be sworn in as the vice president of the United States on January 20, 2021. She will also be the first-ever Indian-origin, first-ever Black and first-ever African-American vice president of the US. Nasscom President Debjani Ghosh shared Harris' message where she said "While I may be the first woman in this office, I will not be the last — because every little girl watching tonight sees that this is a country of possibilities".

Ghosh said: "This...Should be a solemn promise we all make".

The IT sector globally has been working on increasing participation of women in the workforce as well as expanding the diversity of teams.

Cyient Executive Chairman BVR Mohan Reddy termed it as a "historical day". "I feel proud to see the glass ceiling shattered and many barriers broken. Here is to many new paradigms of collaboration, inclusion and unity," he tweeted.

# Govt eases condition for claiming ESIC scheme benefits



IANs ■ NEW DELHI

In a bid to benefit workers who lost their jobs during COVID-19 pandemic, the Centre has decided that claims through affidavit form are no longer required under the Atal Beemit Vyakti Kalyan Yojana (ABVKY) of the ESIC.

"While analysing responses of scheme beneficiaries under relaxed conditions, it was found that the condition of submitting claims in affidavit form was causing them inconvenience. It was decided that claimants who submit online their claims under the Atal Beemit Vyakti Kalyan Yojana and upload scanned copies of required documents, i.e., copies of Aadhaar Cards and bank details need not submit physical claims," a government statement said.

If the documents are not uploaded during online filing

of claims, the claimant can submit printouts of claims duly signed along with the required documents.

The ESIC in its meeting in August had extended Atal Beemit Vyakti Kalyan Yojana from July 1, 2020 to June 30 next.

It also enhanced relief under the scheme from 25 per cent of the average daily earnings to 50%, while relaxing eligibility conditions for a certain period to provide relief to workers rendered unemployed during the pandemic.

The Employees' State Insurance Corporation is a social security organisation providing comprehensive social security benefits like reasonable medical care and a range of cash benefits in times of need such as job injuries, sickness and death. It covers about 3.49 crore insured workers/family units at present.

# Lakshmi Vilas Bank's sustenance depends on improving liquidity

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

Lakshmi Vilas Bank's sustenance as a going concern is dependent on its ability to improve liquidity, asset quality and capital base, according to the auditors of the bank.

In the bank's July-September earnings, the auditors said that as per the opinion of the bank, based on their internal assessment and the likely capital infusion, the lender will be able to realise its assets and discharge its liabilities in its normal course of business and hence the financial results have been prepared on a going concern basis.

"The said assumption of

**During the quarter ended September, the banks reported a net loss of ₹397 crore, compared to ₹357 crore during the same period last fiscal**

going concern is dependent upon the bank's ability to achieve improvements in liquidity, asset quality and solvency ratios, augment its capital base and mitigate the impact of Covid-19 and thus a material uncertainty exists that

may cast a significant doubt on the Bank's ability to continue as a going concern," they said as per the bank's regulatory filing.

"However, the bank opines that there are mitigating factors to such uncertainties," it said.

During the quarter ended September, the banks reported a net loss of Rs 397 crore, compared to Rs 357 crore during the same period last fiscal.

The banks saw a marginal improvement in its asset quality. Gross non-performing asset (GNPA) ratio stood at 24.45 per cent as of September compared with 25.4 per cent as of June. Net NPA ratio improved to 7 per cent from 9.64 per cent in the previous quarter.

# Indian Metals and Ferro Alloys' Jul-Sep net profit at ₹44 cr

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Metals & Ferro Alloys (IMFA) has reported a net profit of ₹44.17 crore for the July-September quarter.

During the same period of last fiscal, the company had reported a net loss of ₹33.07 crore. Its total income for the period under review rose by 14.9 per cent to ₹455.34 crore.

IMFA Managing Director Subhrakant Panda said: "We have operated through the lockdown period by virtue of the exemption available to continuous process industries and

delivered a strong operational performance, while healthy market conditions in terms of demand & price have helped boost profitability."

"While inherent uncertainties remain due to the unpredictable nature of the pandemic, the proactive approach of the Central and state governments to save lives and livelihoods augurs well. Going ahead, we also expect the imposition of export duty on chrome ore by South Africa to have a positive impact on ferro chrome prices."

# 3-day Sanasar to Shankhpal trek concludes

**Jammu:** To encourage the adventure tourism quotient in Jammu, the Directorate of Tourism, Jammu conducted a three day trekking expedition from Sanasar to Shankhpal, which concluded today.

The participants consisted of young adventure enthusiasts, nature lovers, bloggers, vloggers, etc from within Jammu and Kashmir, and also from outside.

Raj Kumar Katoch, Director Tourism, Jammu had flagged off the expedition from Jammu on Thursday.

Pankaj Anand, Dy Director (Adventure and Registration), and

Anil Kumar Chandail Dy Director (Publicity) along with Dr. Umesh Shan, Assistant Director Tourism (NHW) led the participants, while adven-



ture experts of the department, Amar Paul Singh, Rakesh Koul and Meenakshi accompanied them.

The group traversed the route which is part of the world renowned trek from Pancheri to Sanasar to Patnitop to Sudh Mahadev to Mantalai, which provides spectacular views of Lesser Himalayas on one side and Greater Himalayas on the other side.

The Shankhpal temple, believed to have been originally built nearly 400 years ago, is located at an altitude of 2897 metres, which is the highest point on the Shankhpal ridge.

All trekkers were happy to be part of the trek, and found it an enlivening experience. They recognised the eco-tourism potential of the region and termed it as a rewarding trek.

"This trek has been a great experience, taking back a lot of memories. With majestic views and beautiful trails, this has been a lifetime experience. I am now resolved to explore Jammu region more," says Akriithi Jain, a blogger from Tamil Nadu. Jammu based trekker and biker, Preeti Chaudhary says, "I really enjoyed being a part of the trek. It was well organized, especially given the COVID19 SOPs. I am looking forward to being a part of more such events in the future."

Vikas Manhas, an avid trekker, says, "Had wonderful two days with the administration and staff of the Directorate of Jammu Tourism at Sanasar, who had organised a well managed trek. Looking forward to more such initiatives by the department."

## NTPC shaping

**New Delhi:** "NTPC is shaping up well for the future with its diversification plans and as a responsible corporate, NTPC is committed towards environment and the fast growing capacity addition in the renewable portfolio is testimony to the commitment," said RK Singh, Hon'ble Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Power, New and Renewable Energy and Minister of State for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of India.

Sanjiv Nandan Sahai, Secretary, Power, Ashish Upadhyaya, Additional Secretary, SKG Rahate, Additional Secretary, Vivek Kumar Dewangan, Joint Secretary, Gurdeep Singh, CMD NTPC, Directors of NTPC and other senior officials attended the occasion

## future with its diversification plans: Power Min

■ NTPC celebrates its 46th Raising Day completing 45 years of excellence and leadership on November 7, 2020  
■ On the occasion, Power Minister RK Singh congratulated NTPC for its commitment and dedication towards the growth of India's power sector and nation building

online.

Singh was speaking on the occasion of 46th Raising Day of NTPC addressing the senior management of India's largest power producer along with the employees and their fami-



ly members through the digital platform.

Congratulating NTPC on its Raising Day, Shri Singh said, "during the pandemic

NTPC has ensured uninterrupted power supply to the nation reinforcing the significance of affordable power in our daily lives."



# Message of election 2020: Trump lost, but Trumpism did not

**Washington:** President Donald Trump lost. But Trumpism did not.

It won in the parts of the country and with the voters whom Trump catered to over four years, constantly jabbing the hard edges of almost every contentious cultural issue into Red America, on the bet that fear and anger were a winning hand. It almost was.

Joe Biden defeated Trump to win the presidency, and is on pace to win up to 306 electoral votes, a total that would match what Trump exaggerated as a “landslide” four years ago.

In a typical election year, such a victory would mean Biden would have carried other Democrats along with him. Instead, several promising Democratic Senate and House candidates, including incumbents, lost.

For Trump, the situation was the inverse. His popularity among his base voters helped protect incumbent Republicans but was not enough to save him. He won more votes for president than any other candidate. Except Biden. The rejection of Trump was personal.

The election did little to suggest that the country was suddenly less polarized. Trump wrung out votes from areas where he already had a core of support, in rural and small-town America. Biden did the same, only more, in urban and suburban America while also holding down Trump margins in some rural areas.

The outcome didn't change



A supporter of President Donald Trump during a rally in Beverly Hills, California

AP

the fact that much of the country is still speaking two different political languages.

“This defied everyone’s expectations. Everyone said if Joe Biden wins, Democrats win the Senate. If Trump wins, Republicans win the Senate,” said Rahm Emanuel, the former mayor of Chicago and chief of staff to President Barack Obama. “That’s not what happened. Clearly there was an undertow.”

“Life is not binary,” Emanuel said. “It’s more complicated. Florida, a state that voted for Trump, voted for the minimum wage. Illinois, a state that voted for Biden, voted down a progressive income tax. California, cobalt blue,

voted against affirmative action in the place of employment.”

Emanuel said that Democrats may have erred in not offering clearer plans about how they would rebuild the economy while also gaining control over the virus and in not battling back Republican efforts to label them socialists.

“Trump played to people’s fatigue about COVID,” he said. “If we had brought the same sense of urgency to getting the economy moving as we did getting COVID under control, it might have been different.”

Instead, some Democrats were advocating for expanding the Supreme Court and ending the filibuster in the Senate, proposals that might have prompt-

ed fear about one-party control.

“It’s clear there was more voter frustration with Trump than with the ideology of the Republican Party,” said Mike Murphy, a strategist to several Republican presidential campaigns who broke with his party over Trump. “Clearly the presidential race was operating in its own world from the congressional race.”

Since Trump campaigned largely on friendly turf, he also helped Republican candidates in those areas.

“Trump lifted Republican candidates by vastly boosting turnout in areas of Republican strength,” said David Axelrod, former senior adviser Obama. “In the states and districts that

favor Republicans, they ran up the score.”

Many voters offered a consistent refrain about Trump: They liked his policies but could not abide his anger-fueled personality, his constant use of Twitter as a weapon, and the way he ridiculed anyone who dared disagree with him.

Biden’s call for a return to decency, and his appeal to be a president for all Americans and not just the base of his party, was an important part of his formula.

But the closeness of the race, even with the president’s persistently low approval ratings, was also a testament to the inherent power of an incumbent seeking reelection. There’s a reason only three elected incumbents before Trump had lost in nearly a century.

When an incumbent loses, the challenger’s party often gains. In 1980, when Ronald Reagan defeated President Jimmy Carter, Republicans took 12 Senate seats from Democrats. In 1992, Bill Clinton’s victory over President George H.W.

Bush also came with three Democratic Senate victories over incumbent Republicans. When Franklin D. Roosevelt defeated President Herbert Hoover in 1932, Democrats gained nearly 100 House seats and a dozen in the Senate, giving Roosevelt the muscular majorities he needed to pass sweeping New Deal legislation.

But no president in recent memory had maintained such iron-grip allegiance from his own party as Trump, with only a handful of Republicans in Congress ever willing to cross him, fearing that they were always one presidential tweet away from a primary challenge. They stuck with him during his impeachment, when only Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, voted to convict him, and Trump ostracized him. And several were sticking with him even in defeat, offering up unproven allegations of voter fraud. Some voters liked Trump’s tough talk on trade and getting other nations to pay more for common defense. They gave him credit, right or wrong, for an economy that was buoyant before the pandemic struck. **AP**

## Harris’ election sends message Black, Brown children belong here, say Diaspora groups

**New York:** Indian-American and South-Asian political, diaspora organisations have hailed the “hard-fought victory” of President-Elect Joe Biden and Vice President-Elect Kamala Harris, describing it as “truly a remarkable win for the future of America” and that Harris’ political rise will “supercharge the political engagement of the Indian American community.”

The Democratic Biden-Harris ticket has defeated incumbent President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence in a bitterly-fought election that attracted a record number of Americans to cast

their votes. South Asians for Biden (SAB), a national grass-root, political organisation, on Saturday said it is elated to celebrate the hard-fought victory earned by Biden and Harris in this election.

“This is truly a remarkable win for the future of America, our democracy, and the entire South Asian community. That the Biden-Harris ticket unseated an incumbent president is a historic feat and represents a convincing repudiation of President Trump and his abhorrent world view,” National Director, SAB, Neha Dewan said. **PTI**

## Biden may bring respite to China-US Cold War, but rivalry to continue: Chinese observers

**Beijing:** The victory of Joe Biden in the US presidential election may provide a respite to China from President Donald Trump’s declaration of the “Cold War” and offer a limited chance to reset the turbulent ties even as high-intensity rivalry is expected to continue, Chinese observers said on Sunday.

Trump’s four years in power is the worst phase in China-US relations as the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC), headed by

President Xi Jinping, struggled to deal with what Chinese officials said is the most elusive and unpredictable American leader ever since the former US president Richard Nixon’s historic visit to Beijing in 1972, establishing ties for the first time with the Communist nation.

Trump pushed aggressively on all aspects of the US-China ties, including with his relentless trade war, challenging Chinese military hold on the disputed South China

Sea, its constant threats to Taiwan and branding coronavirus as ‘China virus’ after it emerged from Wuhan in December last year.

The Biden tenure could usher in a “buffering period” for already-tense China-US relations, and offer an opportunity for breakthrough in resuming high-level communication and rebuilding mutual strategic trust between the two countries, a report in the state-run Global Times said. **PTI**

## Kamala’s husband Douglas Emhoff will be America’s first ‘Second Gentleman’

**New York:** With the historic electoral win by Vice President-elect Kamala Harris, her husband Douglas Emhoff also scripted history as he will be the first ‘Second Gentleman’ - the first male spouse of a vice president in the US when she takes the oath of office in January.

The wife of a US President is addressed as First Lady while that of Vice President as Second Lady. America has never in its history before had a female President and Vice President so it remains to be seen what formal title - ‘Second Gentleman, Second Husband’ - will be given to the first male spouse of an elected leader.

So while Harris election as America’s next Vice President

is groundbreaking as she brings to the office a litany of firsts - she will be the first woman, the first Black woman, the first woman of Indian descent and the first daughter of immigrants to be sworn in as Vice President, her husband will also be making history in his own way.

Harris is married to Emhoff, 56, a successful entertainment lawyer, who has been a strong and supportive presence for Harris during the election campaign.

“So proud of you,” Emhoff tweeted on Saturday, with a picture of him and Harris hugging as TV networks called the presidential race for Biden and Harris. **PTI**

## Iran’s Prez calls on Biden to return to nuclear deal

**Tehran:** Iran’s president called on President-elect Joe Biden to “compensate for past mistakes” and return the US to Tehran’s 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, a state-run news agency reported Sunday.

Hassan Rouhani’s comments mark the highest-level response from Iran to Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris clinching the November 3 election.

“Now, an opportunity has come up for the next US administration to compensate for past mistakes and return to the path of complying with international agreements through respect of international norms,” the state-run IRNA news agency quoted him as saying.

Under President Donald

Trump, tensions between the US and Iran have escalated, reaching fever-pitch earlier this year. One of Trump’s signature foreign policy moves was unilaterally withdrawing the US from Iran’s nuclear deal in 2018, which had seen Tehran limit its enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions.

The US has since reimposed punishing sanctions on Iran that have crippled its economy, which was further battered by the coronavirus outbreak. In an effort to pressure Europe to find a way around the sanctions, Iran has slowly abandoned the limits of the nuclear deal.

“The people of Iran, though their heroic resistance against the imposed econom-

ic war, proved that the US maximum pressure policy was doomed to fail,” Rouhani said.

He added Iran “considers constructive engagement with the world as a strategy.”

Meanwhile, Iran on Sunday reached its highest ever single-day death toll from the coronavirus with 459 new deaths recorded.

This brings Iran’s total recorded deaths from the virus to 38,291 nationwide. Another 9,236 new confirmed cases of the virus were confirmed over the past 24 hours, bringing total confirmed cases to more than 682,000 nationwide since February.

Iran has struggled to contain the virus and has seen daily surges and highs over the past month. **AP**

## Xi orders advancing construction of rail line in Tibet, close to Arunachal Pradesh

**Beijing:** Chinese President Xi Jinping on Sunday instructed officials to expedite the construction of the new \$47.8 billion railway project connecting the country’s southwest Sichuan province to Linzhi in Tibet close to the Indian border in Arunachal Pradesh, saying it would play a key role in safeguarding stability in the border areas.

The Sichuan-Tibet Railway will be the second railway line into Tibet after the Qinghai-Tibet Railway project. It will go through the south-east of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, one of the world’s most geologically active areas, according to the Chinese official media.

The Sichuan-Tibet Railway starts from Chengdu, capital of Sichuan province

and travels through Ya’an and enters Tibet via Qamdo, shortening the journey from Chengdu to Lhasa from 48 hours to 13 hours.

Linzhi, also known as Nyingchi, is located close to Arunachal Pradesh border.

The India-China border dispute covers the 3,488-km-long Line of Actual Control, the de-facto border between the two countries. China claims Arunachal Pradesh as part of south Tibet which is firmly rejected by India.

Linzhi also has an airport which is one of the five airports built by China in the Himalayan region.

The Ya’an-Linzhi section runs 1,011 km with 26 stations. Trains are expected to run at speeds between 120 and 200 kms per hour. The total

cost of the entire Sichuan-Tibet Railway project is around 319.8 billion yuan (USD 47.8 billion), according to a recent report by the state-run Global Times.

In a video conference, ahead of the commencement of the construction of the project, Xi identified it as a major measure in facilitating the ruling Communist Party’s general plan for governing Tibet in the new era, and stressed the project’s important role in safeguarding national unity, promoting ethnic solidarity and consolidating stability in border areas. He made the instruction ahead of the beginning of the construction of the Sichuan-Tibet Railway’s Ya’an-Nyingchi section on Sunday, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. **PTI**

## Thai police use water cannons on pro-democracy protesters

**Bangkok:** Thai pro-democracy protesters were confronted by riot police and sprayed by water cannons Sunday as they tried to approach Bangkok’s Grand Palace to deliver letters about their political grievances addressed to the country’s king.

The protesters had pushed aside a bus that was serving as a barrier to try to approach the palace, which houses the royal offices. The protesters had met earlier at Bangkok’s Democracy Monument and marched as darkness fell, pushing past an initial thin line of police.

The water cannons were employed by the police for just a short time, and it was not clear if anyone was hurt in the chaos.

Thailand’s pro-democracy movement has been pushing a bold challenge to reform the monarchy with almost daily demonstrations.

Sunday marked the sec-



Police use water cannons to disperse pro-democracy protesters during a street march in Bangkok, Thailand on Sunday

AP

ond time water cannons had been used against them during several months of demonstrations.

The student-led movement, which over several months has seized the political initiative, has put enough pressure on the gov-

ernment of Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha to call for Parliament to deal with at least some of their demands.

They are seeking Prayuth’s resignation, changes to the constitution to make it more democratic and reforms to the

monarchy to make it more accountable.

The protesters believe Prayuth lacks legitimacy because he came to power after an election last year whose rules were set up under military rule. Prayuth as army chief in 2014 led a coup ousting an elected government and then headed the junta that ran the country until last year’s polls.

A new constitution was put into effect by the junta that the protesters also consider illegitimate and anti-democratic.

The third demand, calling for reform of the monarchy, is the most controversial. The monarchy has traditionally been an untouchable institution, regarded by most Thais as the heart and soul of the nation.

A lese majeste law mandates a prison term of up to 15 years for anyone who defames the king or his close family.

Until the protesters raised the issue, public criticism of the royal institution was virtually unknown.

While the protesters have increasingly put the monarchy issue front and center, they have received serious push-back. Even the main opposition party, otherwise sympathetic to their other points, has said it does not want to amend laws covering the monarchy, and royalists have started holding counter-demonstrations.

Parliament has agreed to debate amending the constitution and political leaders are discussing setting up a reconciliation committee, an effort that so far has been rejected by the protesters.

But Prayuth has insisted he won’t step down, and any effort to reform the monarchy seems to be a dead end, leaving the situation deadlocked. **AP**

## Azerbaijani leader: Forces seize key Nagorno-Karabakh city

**Moscow:** Azerbaijani forces have taken control of the strategically key city of Shushi in Nagorno-Karabakh where fighting with Armenia has raged for more than a month, the country’s president said Sunday.

In a televised address to the nation, President Ilham Aliyev said “Shusha is ours — Karabakh is ours,” using the Azerbaijani version of the city’s name.

Shushi is of significant military value because it sits on heights about 10 kilometers (6 miles) south of the region’s capital of Stepanakert and lies along the main road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia.

Nagorno-Karabakh is within Azerbaijan, but has been under the control of local ethnic Armenian forces backed by Armenia since 1994. The latest outbreak of fighting started on Sept. 27 and has left hundreds — if not thousands — dead.

Aliyev vowed to continue the fighting until Armenia withdraws from the territory. **AP**

## Aung San Suu Kyi party set to win Myanmar vote with weak Opp

**Yangon:** Voters in Myanmar’s biggest city, Yangon, turned up early Sunday in large numbers to vote in nationwide elections that are expected to return to power the party of Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.

Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy party won the last elections in 2015 in a landslide, ending more than five decades of military-dictated rule in the country.

With Myanmar under threat from a coronavirus surge, mask wearing was mandatory in the lines at polling stations, and many voters also donned plastic face shields and gloves. Body temperatures were taken and hand sanitizing gel was freely dispensed by officials, but social distancing rules were only fit-

fully observed.

Traditional campaigning ahead of the election was severely limited by social distancing and quarantines in some areas.

“The voter turnout here is more than we expected,” said Zaw Win Tun, a neighborhood administrator and official at Yangon’s Pho Myae polling station. “I think people are excited to vote, as they would like to escape from the political struggles. They want real democracy.” He did not elaborate, but appeared to be referring to a power struggle between Suu Kyi’s civilian government and the military.

The ability of Suu Kyi’s administration to run the country has been hamstrung by a clause in the 2008 army-drafted constitution giving

the military 25% of the seats in Parliament, allowing it to block constitutional reforms.

At another polling station, 19-year-old Eaint Yadanar Oo said she was excited because it was her first time voting.

“I came here to vote to perform my civic duty,” she said. She explained that she was afraid of the coronavirus pandemic, but that she “came here with full protection because I want better educational and job opportunities.”

More than 90 parties are competing for seats in the lower and upper houses of Parliament, while there were also elections at the state levels. There were more than 37 million people eligible to vote, including 5 million first-timers. **AP**

## Ethiopian leader defends military conflict in defiant Tigray

**Nairobi:** Ethiopia’s Prime Minister has sought to defend a major military action against the country’s defiant Tigray region on Sunday, and urged citizens not to target the ethnic Tigrayan people amid fears of civil war.

At least 60 people have been wounded and six killed in one location along the Tigray border alone, Doctors Without Borders said Saturday, and the United Nations warns of a major humanitarian crisis if millions flee all-out fighting or if the Tigray region remains cut off from the world.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed tweeted that his military campaign is to bring the Tigray region to abide by Ethiopia’s “rule of law.”

“The government’s law enforcement action in Tigray aims to bring the greedy Mekele junta under the rule of law and maintain the constitutional order.

This step will benefit the widest Tigrayans more than anyone else,” Abiy tweeted. “I also urge all Ethiopians to take responsibility for ensuring that Tigrayans do not fall prey to any illegal activity that follows the government’s actions.”

The conflict pits two heavily armed forces against each other in the heart of the strategic but vulnerable Horn of Africa region, and experts worry that neighboring countries, including Sudan, Eritrea and Somalia could be sucked in.

Diplomats and others assert that the conflict in Tigray could destabilize other parts of Ethiopia, Africa’s second-most populous country with 110 million people, scores of ethnic groups and other regions that have sought more autonomy even as the Nobel Peace Prize-winning Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed tries to hold the country together with exhortations of national unity.

Communications remain largely cut off in Tigray, with airports and roads closed.

The Tigray leader in a letter to the African Union chair, seen by The Associated Press, has warned that Ethiopian forces are preparing to launch a large-scale offensive. **AP**



## Trend Slazer

### Ajay Devgn to direct Big B

**AJAY DEVGN** is all set to direct **Amitabh Bachchan** in a film titled *Mayday* that will also see the two actors reunite before the camera.

Big B and Ajay have worked together in *Major Sahab*, *Khakee*, *Satyagraha* and *Hindustan Ki Kasam*, and the new film, which belongs to the drama genre, sees the two stars collaborate after over seven years.

*Mayday* is being dubbed as “a thrilling, absolute edge-of-the-seat human-drama.” It is said that Ajay will be seen playing a pilot. Details about Big B’s character are being kept under wraps.

The rest of the cast is still being finalised. The film is produced by Ajay Devgn.



**‘I never considered myself ‘not attractive’ until I began working in the industry. At**

**the beginning of my career, many people told me how I am not skinny enough to play a lead actor or healthy enough to play a fat girl. You are in the middle so either put on weight or lose weight. I was like, ‘this is who I am, normal girls look like this’. Why does it have to be about weight at all?’**

**—Maanvi Gargroo**

Singer **SONU NIGAM** says he is working towards making songs with depth these days.

He has released *Ishwar Ka Vo Sacha Banda*.

“The track is *Vaishnava Jana To* song translated in Hindi — a language that most people in India understand easily. Whatever said and done, *Vaishnava Jana To* is a Gujarati song, so the language gets limited to only Gujarati speaking people. Now it’s made available to all,” Sonu said.

Sonu said he was in Dubai when he was approached to sing it.



### Salma unveils her version of *Eternals*

Hollywood actor **SALMA HAYEK** is disappointed with the delay of *The Eternals*, and has shared inside pictures of the trailer that the star used while filming her superhero project.

The actor posted pictures on Instagram to reveal how she channelled her creativity.

“If we had not had the COVID-19 pandemic, *Eternals* would have hit the cinemas today. Since I cannot yet share with you the trailer of the film, I will share with you pictures of my trailer while shooting the film. P.S. I decorated it myself,” Hayek wrote with the pictures.



Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, a new report revealed that only two in 10 consumers have complete confidence that their food is safe to eat. Zebra Technologies, a global leader in providing solutions and services to enterprises, in the study ‘Food Safety Supply Chain Vision’ included approximately 4,957 consumers and 462 food and beverage industry decision-makers in the manufacturing, transportation & logistics, retail and wholesale distribution markets in North America, Latin America, Asia-Pacific and Europe.

The report highlights the views of consumers as well as the food and beverage industry decision-makers worldwide from

## FEAR FACTOR

Only 20 per cent of the consumers believe that food deliveries are safe, says a study



distribution and warehouses to grocery stores and restaurants around safety, traceability and transparency.

Surveyed consumers reported their top food safety concerns to include restaurant kitchen and wait staff hygiene, foodborne outbreaks, illness from contaminated food and, food and beverage recalls.

“Findings from our study show that while the industry is taking measures to ensure a more transparent supply chain, more work needs to be done in order to increase consumer confidence and improve food traceability,” Deep Agarwal, Regional Sales Director of India, Zebra Technologies, said in a statement.

According to the report, on average less than 40 per cent of food and beverage industry decision-makers place complete trust in the industry to ensure food and beverage safety. Consumers can be quite unforgiving if they experience a food incident as approximately six in 10 reportedly would never eat at a restaurant again if they contracted a foodborne illness or food poisoning, the study said.

Slightly more than 80 per cent of surveyed consumers said companies have an important role to play in implementing food safety solutions and ethical responsibility to ensure the safe handling of their food.

Most consumers (70 per

cent) said it is important to know how their food and ingredients are manufactured, prepared and handled, while 69 per cent agreed knowing how their food is sourced is also important.

The findings also showed that almost seven in 10 decision-makers say the industry is prepared to manage food traceability and transparency, but only 35 per cent of consumers agree. Furthermore, only 13 per cent of consumers felt the industry was extremely prepared today to manage food traceability and be transparent about how food travels through the supply chain, whereas 27 per cent of decision-makers reported feeling this way.



## MIRROR OF OUR TIMES

Artist **BALAJI PONNA**’s exhibition — *When Nothing Goes Right, Go Left* — showcases artworks that respond to the social and cultural realities of the times we live in. By **UMA NAIR**

Artist Balaji Ponna doesn’t escape from reality, rather he engages with what he sees and experiences around him. His exhibition — *When Nothing Goes Right, Go Left* — has a satirical slant about it and Balaji, the graphic genius, creates a series of water-colour on canvas that must go down in art history as a lesson in the lineage of exploring mixed media like soot, indigo and pastels. The street, the landscape and the expression of everyday realities become a part of his canvas, layer upon layer.

### FEEDING OFF BOOKS AND LITERATURE

Political sub-texts and mainstream politics converge in his works. He is skilled in the art of accommodation and links painted text-phrases with images. In fact the text frames the meaning and the subtext of the visual images. The brevity and simplicity of the imagery are key in this regard.

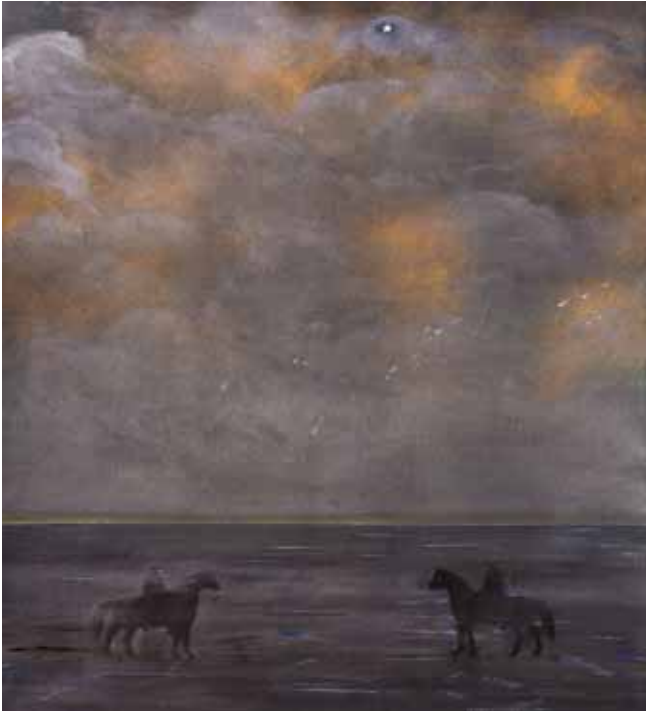
A voracious reader, his work is inspired by two classical German philosophers, Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche. The far reaches of their writing that embrace truth, morality, language, aesthetics, cultural theory, history, nihilism, power, consciousness and the meaning of existence become milestones in the evolution of Balaji’s own intellectual history.

Philosophy then becomes the bedrock on which his works evolve; knowing that his quietude is fashioned by India’s great thinkers, J Krishnamurti and Ramana

Maharshi, Srirangam Srinivas (Sri Sri) and Chalam from Telugu writers.

Balaji explains, “This series of works follows my continuing engagement with what may be called ‘human-scapes’. It is also the outcome of my concerns and comments about existing society. It is in many ways the mirror of our dystopian times. When hatred and treachery become a norm, the hope for a better life fades into oblivion.”

His works engage with everyday idioms that are as pointed as they are poetic and fantastic. The sooty grey skies in his landscapes sometimes have horses, sometimes just remnants of human habitation and at other times a few humans as miniature models as in *The World Is Flat*. Balaji reimagines a motif common to the history of both individual and collective history. The suggestions of humans, the tiny sculpted figures of the horses, the skulls, meant to serve as a means of either structural or metaphorical



moorings, all have a certain structure and purpose.

### SPECTACLE OF SUMMARIES

For his part, Balaji stages an intellectual aesthete’s intervention, liberating the landscape from traditional artifice. In his two skull-related works, he talks about the architects of time who want to convey a far more conservative/honest set of values.

Simultaneously historic and humanoid, each landscape is unique, with an individualised textural terrain. He uses soot for ornamentation, and pastels for a dulcet patination. Balaji’s embellishments take a great deal of inspiration from aerial views that he uses as his backdrop. The horizontal and vertical planes that coalesce allude to earth songs murmuring through the planes of differential plates. Belonging to no one time or place, Balaji’s collective as well as single figures are invariably stately, resilient and self-possessed. They announce their authority and autonomy even

though they are so minuscule. They bring us a universe of new ideas and fresh perspectives.

### BLENDING REALISM AND SURREALISM

What is clearly visible in Balaji’s work is a strong narrative approach along a quasi-surreal plane, with imagery formulating a language that seeks to create a satirical yet sensitive commentary on the lifestyles, dogmas and discourses we are faced with in everyday living. Tranquility and tension both combine in the canvas in *Branches for Birds...Sculptures for Streets*. The painting is a symbolic representation of objects with a strong narrative; the mention of the birds is a lamentation as well as a satirical comment on urban history.

“What I put across and suggest for all of us is to pick up those simple commonsensical markers which can lead us somewhere better. Like the shadow that follows even a visually impaired person, however, oblivious he is of that fact. The effects of our inhuman and unconcerned deeds would follow us everywhere to remind us of our impending doom,” says Balaji.

This show constitutes one of Balaji’s most important and remarkable bodies of work to date, the culmination of sustained artistic experimentation and rigorous research into the relationship between power, culture and the dynamics of existence.

## READING LIST

## For the sheer power of language

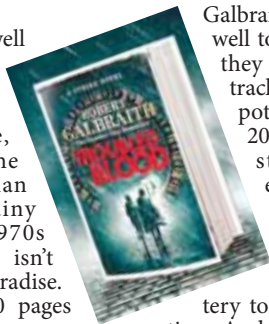
J K ROWLING’s latest thriller, *Troubled Blood*, is chilling to boot and vividly descriptive, transforming the reader more than once to a rainy evening in 1970s London. But all isn’t hunky-dory in paradise, says **KAVITHA MURALI**

*Troubled Blood* is J K Rowling’s fifth and latest thriller written under the Robert Galbraith pseudonym. It is also the first cold case our detectives, Robin and Strike, pick up. A forty year cold case, which means every suspect is either a grumpy senior citizen or dead.

Anyone who has read Harry Potter readily agree that Rowling is a master storyteller. She can flesh out characters with ease, giving them depth and colour we never imagined possible. And there’s an ease with which she uses language that is particularly endearing. I have a soft corner for writers who can

employ importune and knackered with aplomb.

The story is well set-up and drawn out, chilling to boot, vividly descriptive, transforming the reader more than once to a rainy evening in 1970s London. But all isn’t hunky-dory in paradise. The book is 950 pages long. That’s a size one can relax with in a regency classic savoured over tea and cookies. In a murder mystery with a potential serial killer angle, this leads to



feverishly sleepless nights. Galbraith would have done well to go light on the “will they won’t they” parallel track of Robin and Strike’s, potentially cutting down 200 to 300 pages, while still retaining the essence of their chemistry. Also, I suspect that future novels in this series will have more than one mystery to solve, with equal air time. And that may be a sustainable technique too.

You may remember the controversy surrounding the book when it was released — about her

portrayal of cross dressers and transgenders in poor light. Exaggeration would be a mild word to describe that hogwash. If Rowling is guilty of something, it is of bringing a gay/lesbian angle to one too many characters. Is she trying to send a signal to the world that she isn’t homophobic? Or is she trying to normalise her books with more inclusion and diversity? One doesn’t know.

If you are a Galbraith fan, you will pick this book up, my review notwithstanding. If you aren’t, you can still pick it up, for the sheer power of language. But consider yourself warned, you won’t sleep easy for days to come!





# INSTRUMENT OF PROGRESS

Panchayat representatives need to become more accountable in J&K so that they can use their powers transparently and responsibly, says **YAAR MOHAMMED TANTREY**

In 2011, Panchayat Elections were held in the then state (now a Union Territory) of Jammu and Kashmir after a long gap of 33 years. The event promised hopes to the residents of J&K who were more than eager to participate in the democratic process of electing their local leaders. But the hopes died within the next five years as the representatives of local self-government — sarpanches and panchs — felt demoralised and saddened by their experience as they demanded 73rd amendment prior to the 2016 elections. It is important to note here that the 73rd amendment of the Panchayati Raj Act that advocates decentralised planning and offers more powers to panchayats, is not applicable in J&K. Now, a frontline organisation of elected panchayat members — The All Jammu and Kashmir Panchayat Conference (AJKPC) — has reiterated its demand for complete empowerment of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in the Union Territory by implementing this amendment in entirety.

The demand holds importance because Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) will be able to function effectively and fulfill their responsibilities with this devolution of power to Panchayats. However, at the same time, there is a need to check the working of these local institutions that are responsible for execution of all government schemes meant for the upliftment of the rural communities and have massive funds dedicated to them.

In the border district of Poonch (250 kilometers from Jammu city), villagers of the Bedar Panchayat in the Mandi Block are not happy with the way Panchayat members are functioning. According to them, some representatives of their Panchayat are following corrupt practices while allocating benefits of gov-



ernment schemes to the public. They also shared a recent incident where an audio clip was circulated on social media in which the Deputy Sarpanch of Bedar Panchayat was heard demanding a commission from one Abdul Rashid.

The brother of 55-year-old Rashid had filed an application proving his eligibility for the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Gramin (PMAYG), a government housing scheme that aims to provide a pucca house, with basic amenities, to all houseless families and those families living in kutcha and dilapidated houses, by 2022. The file was approved and an installment of ₹50,000 was also deposited to the account of the beneficiary. It is from this amount that the Deputy Sarpanch of Bedar Panchayat was found demanding money from the beneficiaries as a commission.

Soon the said audio recording between the two parties went viral bringing the matter to the notice of the Block Development Officer (BDO) and Block Development Chairman (BDC) of Mandi tehsil. The two parties were summoned to their office where apart

from a few dignitaries from the village, employees of the department stationed in Bedar Panchayat were also present. During the investigation, it was proved that the Deputy Sarpanch along with the Sarpanch Panchayat was also involved in demanding money from the beneficiaries and that the employees of the department had no role to play in it. Although a thorough investigation was conducted by the BDO to prove these charges but so far, no legal action has been taken against the accused.

Incidents like these not only create a trust deficit between the public and the elected representatives but dilute the overall objective of the social welfare schemes. 60-year-old Ghulam Ahmed Sheikh from the same Panchayat lives in one small room along with his wife and three daughters. He works hard to sustain his family but with his daughters growing up, it has become difficult for them to manage in a single, dilapidated room that leaks every time there is rainfall. With no money to build a house of his own.

"Panchayat people did not include my name in the PMAYG list as they demanded a commission to register my name. If

I had so much money, I would have built or repaired my existing room," rued Ghulam as he talked about how he has been deprived of what was rightfully his.

The Panchayat representatives adopt a different route if their demands of commission are not met. Shah Mohammad, a resident of Ward No. 6 said that although his name was in the list of PMAYG, he never received any financial assistance. He was told that his account number is wrong in the records. He spoke with the Panchayat members on several occasions and requested them to correct the details but no one paid heed. Later, he decided to meet the BDO who, on checking his application form, found that the account number in his file was correct. "It proved that the Panchayat representatives are the ones who were trying to fill their coffers by misleading poor people like me. There are many others who have been deceived by their elected representatives," shared a disappointed Shah.

A person from the Sarpanch's family disclosed that he has registered four names from his own family in the list. It is from the public funds that he is getting

a magnificent building ready for himself clearly doing injustice to the vulnerable sections of the society.

When Mazhar Ali Jafri, the BDO, Mandi was contacted, he shared that people facing issues with the Panchayat should contact their office directly as they would like to support a more transparent process. He also assured that if any employee from his department is found following corrupt practices, strict action would be taken. After all these incidences, a few aware citizens have filed applications using RTI to know exactly how much money has been allocated for the scheme to this particular Panchayat and how it has been utilised so far.

On one hand, there are efforts by the people demanding 73rd amendment for Panchayats in J&K and on the other, there are such incidences which raise question over the credibility of the whole system. It is about time that elected leaders at local level understand that it is not about having more power but utilising existing power transparently and responsibly towards the betterment of the people.

—Charikha Features



## A transformed self

Self-purification is the solution to various problems of the modern world, says **RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI**

The current state of our society, characterised by hundreds and thousands of big and small problems, is that of an ailing society, which seems to be dynamic and progressive from outside but has become hollow because of negative traits like hatred, jealousy, anger, from inside.

The question therefore is that, what is the main cause or reason of its afflictions? A possible answer

could be that the problems are of different nature. For instance, there is economic, political, social, ethnic, racial, communal and all sorts of problems and it is, therefore, difficult to name one or two causes of the present sufferings. The answer seems to be correct but if we make a comprehensive list of the major global or national problems and classify them under various heads, we will find that these problems are mainly due to five basic factors. Take, for example, the problem of eve-teasing, rape, abduction — all of them are due to lust. The problems of obscenity in art, literature, cine films, cultural shows, etc, are also due to the same reason and the problem of overpopulation is also due to lack of control and less awareness. Likewise, anger is another factor that has led to a great social turmoil. Extremism, terrorism and violence of all kinds are offshoots of anger. Similarly, economic exploitation, tax evasion, adulteration, smuggling, hoarding, black marketing, corruption, bribery, are all due to greed, lust for money or obsession for possessions.

Lastly, pride is the factor that leads to confrontation, divisiveness, domination by a few people, prestige postures, etc. It leads to rivalry and revengeful attitude. Delving deeper into the subject will reveal that these five factors are the result of the degeneration of love. Love is the inherent quality of every human soul but it may exist either in its pure or perverted form. If it exists in its pure form, everything is fine but if it not, then it brings along a lot of miseries. When it takes the form of desire for physical relations or dependence on emotional bonds, based on physical relationships, it is called attachment. If it manifests in the form of desire for money, and material possessions, then it is known as greed. If it becomes self-centered, then it comes up as selfishness.

'Pure love' is the only solution to all the problems of the world as these are born from either the absence of love or greed and attachment. Hence, the remedy for getting rid of all the problems in the world lies in purification of love. This is what is called as self purification or self-change too. It is for this that one requires to learn and practice meditation and inculcate divine qualities within self. Meditation is a practise that enables one to stabilise and inculcate good qualities. It is, therefore, time that we understand the diagnosis of the ailments from which mankind presently suffers and cures itself by purifying its emotion of love.



The advent of COVID-19 pandemic has had a monumental impact in healthcare. The immediate and most direct impact has been the tremendous human toll of the virus. It has affected the nation's healthcare infrastructure, both public and private. The public healthcare sector has long been precariously poised. Overburdened and understaffed, this outbreak has stretched its resources to the breaking point. Although the private sector fared relatively better, it too has been adversely impacted by the lockdown and subsequent drop in footfall, the costs of activating their epidemic plans and the halt in medical tourism.

While there have been many discussions around the impact of COVID on healthcare as a whole, what is often neglected is the way it has changed how couples approach pregnancy, along with their views on pre and post-natal care. And as a practising obstetrician and gynecologist, I've had a first-hand view of how the coronavirus has changed the pregnancy plans of thousands of couples.

The largest impact has been a drastic decrease in footfall to clinics and IVF centres across the country. According to fertility experts, there was a steep fall in the number of patients seeking IVF treatment from 50,000 to

## When is the right time?

COVID-19 has changed the way couples approach pregnancy as there's a decrease in clinic visits and IVF centres. Teleconsultation and home diagnostics have become the new normal. By **DR LAVANYA KIRAN**

1,000 in a quarter from April to June 2020. Many couples who faced difficulty conceiving made the decision to delay their visit. They were afraid to leave their homes unnecessarily and were especially anxious to avoid visiting medical centres. Instead, they chose to postpone their plans and wait out the situation.

This course of action is perfectly understandable. Pregnancy is a scary, emotional and exhausting undertaking for any family at the best of times, never mind during a pandemic. Although there is no recorded data of the vertical transmission of COVID, many mothers-to-be decided not to risk it at all. After all, there's still a great deal that we don't understand about the virus, its transmission and its long-term impact on an individual's health.

However, for couples who faced difficulty in conceiving, the challenges were even greater. Multiple visits to clinics, frequent tests and appointments

and the need to venture from the safety of their own homes contributed to the dangers of the process. But as the year has passed, many patients have come to the realisation that the virus is here to stay. This has forced them to look for safer, more viable alternatives for what has become the new normal.

One option that some patients have turned to is teleconsultation. This healthcare pathway is extremely useful in an age of social distancing and allows the entire process — from appointment to consultation to diagnosis — to happen remotely. The long-awaited issuance of telemedicine guidelines this April by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), in conjunction with NITI Aayog and the Medical Council of India (MCI), has further boosted this methodology.

But for those couples who seek to overcome their troubles conceiving, a teleconsultation



isn't enough. Instead, the safest and easiest option is the various home diagnostic devices currently available on the market.

Home fertility monitors such as Inito, are capable of performing lab-grade fertility diagnostic tests at home, increasing the chances

of getting pregnant by 89 per cent. These devices measure hormones in a woman's body and suggest the best days to get pregnant. Inito, for example, also comes with an app which is AI enabled that helps in understanding the cycle variations of the user over time and gives accurate results, unique to every individual woman's cycle. These devices have proved to be the best alternative to lean on during these trying times. And couples' trust in these devices is evident in the numbers. For Inito alone, the number of tests taken per consumer witnessed a surge of around 40 per cent during April to September this year.

Although COVID poses various challenges to would-be parents, patients who are determined to have a child and have the health, financial resources, and emotional resilience to see the process till the end, should not be deterred. We don't know how long the virus will remain a threat or when a cure will be developed. But by thoroughly researching the options available to you, and with the help of the latest technological advancements, your dream pregnancy may be just around the corner.

(The writer is Senior Consultant, Narayana Health Hospitals, Bommasandra, Bengaluru.)

**Those who dare to fail miserably can achieve greatly.**

**—John F Kennedy**

### VIT D LESSENS ECZEMA SYMPTOMS IN KIDS

Research has revealed that vitamin D supplementation eased the symptoms experienced by children with severe atopic dermatitis or eczema — a condition wherein patches of skin become inflamed, itchy, cracked and rough.

The study, published in the journal *Pharmacology Research & Perspectives*, aimed to evaluate the impact of vitamin D supplementation on response to standard treatment in pediatrics with severe atopic dermatitis.

"Vitamin D supplementation could be an effective adjuvant treatment that improves the clinical outcomes in severe atopic dermatitis," said study authors from Mansoura University in Egypt.



Investigators reported on the results of 86 patients with the inflammatory skin condition who completed the trial and received either oral daily vitamin D or placebo, in addition to standard care, for 12 weeks.

### AI CAN IMPROVE PREGNANT WOMEN'S HEALTH

Disorders in pregnant women, such as congenital heart birth defects or macrosomia, gestational diabetes and preterm birth can be detected earlier when artificial intelligence (AI) is used, say researchers.

For the study, published in the journal *IEEE Access*, the research team carried out a rigorous and detailed analysis of how artificial intelligence has been used with pregnant women over the last twelve years.

Studies into cases involving artificial intelligence found a correlation between the number of pre-term births and the environmental pollution to which the pregnant women had been previously exposed.

"There is growing interest in the application of artificial intelligence in obstetrics and gynaecology," said study author Maria del Carmen Romero from the University of Seville in Spain.

### ANTI-DEPRESSANT DRUG MAY TREAT CANCER

In a major study, researchers have found that a commonly prescribed anti-depressant may halt the growth of a type of cancer known as childhood sarcoma.

In mice and laboratory cell experiments, the study, published in the journal *Cancer Research*, the research team ignited hopes of novel treatment strategies against this disease.

"This study gives us hope for repurposing common drugs for young cancer patients desperately requiring better treatment options," said study lead author Cairin Crudden from Karolinska Institutet in Sweden.

The study examined commonalities between two large groups of cell surface receptors, the so-called G protein-coupled receptors (GPCRs) and the receptor tyrosine kinases (RTKs).

GPCRs are targeted by more than half of all developed drugs to treat conditions such as allergies, asthma, depression, anxiety and hypertension, but have so far not been widely used to treat cancers.



### ACUTE CONFUSION EARLY SYMPTOM OF COVID

New research adds to the growing body of evidence that delirium, a state of acute mental confusion, accompanied by a fever could be an early symptom of COVID-19.

Delirium is an abrupt change in the brain that causes mental confusion and emotional disruption. It makes it difficult to think, remember, sleep, pay attention and more.

The study, published in the *Journal of Clinical Immunology and Immunotherapy*, highlights the fact that, together with the loss of the senses of taste and smell and headaches that occur in the days prior to the manifestation of coughing and breathing difficulties, some patients also develop delirium.



### CLIMATE CHANGE MAY CAUSE NEW DISEASES

Researchers have revealed that climate change will extract an acute toll worldwide, with rising temperatures, wildfires and poor air quality, accompanied by higher rates of cancer, especially lung, skin and gastrointestinal cancers.

In a study, published in the journal *The Lancet Oncology*, the researchers provided a synopsis of future effects from global warming on major cancers, from environmental toxins to ultraviolet radiation, air pollution, infectious agents and disruptions in food and water supply.

Ultimately, the most profound challenge to the global cancer picture could come from the disruption of the complex health care systems required for cancer diagnosis, treatment, and care, the authors wrote.

"In the worldwide battle to mitigate climate change, the international community is not on track to slow emissions of greenhouses gases," said lead author Robert A Hiatt from the UOC, San Francisco, US.





