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# Nitish returns as CM with new deputies

Tarkishore Prasad, Renu Devi are Dy CMs; BJP's Nand Kishore Yadav picked as Speaker; 14-member Council of Ministers takes oath; BJP bags 7 berths, JD(U) 5, HAM, VIP 1 each

PNS/PTI ■ PATNA

Nitish Kumar was on Monday sworn in as the Chief Minister of Bihar for the seventh time in two decades, in the presence of top NDA leaders, including Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP national president Jagat Prakash Nadda.

Nitish, who heads the JD(U), was administered the oath of office at Raj Bhavan by Governor Phagu Chauhan, a day after he staked claim for the formation of a new Government in the State, armed with unanimous support of all legislators of the NDA despite his party's plummeted tally.

The 69-year-old, who has had a continuous run since November 2005, except for the period in 2014-15 when Jitan Ram Manjhi kept the chair warm for him, is on course to becoming the longest serving CM of the State, surpassing the record of Shrikrishna Singh who held the top post since before Independence till his death in 1961.

A 14-member Council of Ministers, headed by Nitish, was on Monday sworn in. Those who were administered oath of office included two Deputy Chief Minister designates Tarkishore Prasad and Renu Devi both from the BJP which bagged a lions share of seven berths.



Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP national president JP Nadda, Bihar Governor Phagu Chauhan, HAM(S) chief Jitan Ram Manjhi with Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, Deputy Chief Ministers Renu Devi and Tarkishore Prasad pose for a group photograph after the oath-taking ceremony at Raj Bhawan in Patna on Monday PTI

Since the post of a Deputy CM is not a constitutional one, the two took oath as Ministers and their posts would be notified by the Cabinet in due course. The two sat alongside Kumar on the podium which confirms their elevated position in the Cabinet.

Five Ministers were from the JD(U), while one each was from smaller allies Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM) and

Vikassheel Insaan Party (VIP). JD(U) Ministers included old hands like Bijendra Prasad Yadav, Ashok Choudhary and Vijay Kumar Chaudhary besides new faces Mewa Lal Chaudhary and Sheela Kumari Mandal.

Other than the two Deputy CM designates, those from the BJP included Mangal Pandey, who held the health portfolio in the previous Government

besides Amarendra Pratap Singh, Rampriti Paswan, Jibesh Kumar and Ram Surat Rai.

HAM MLC Santosh Kumar Suman, whose father Jitan Ram Manjhi is a former Chief Minister and the national president of the party, also took oath besides Mukesh Sahni, the founder of VIP who formerly worked as a set designer in the film industry.

A political greenhorn,

who represents Jale in Darbhanga, took oath in their native Maithili language.

Among the two Deputy CM designates, Prasad is a fourth term MLA who is getting inducted into the council of ministers for the first time.

Renu Devi, who is a former national vice president of the BJP and a four-term MLA from Bettiah, has previously served as a member of the council of ministers headed by Nitish Kumar in 2010.

Senior BJP legislator Nand Kishore Yadav will be the new Speaker of the Bihar Assembly, sources said on Monday. Vijay Kumar Chaudhary, a close aide of the Chief Minister, was the Speaker of the previous Assembly. Chaudhary has taken oath as a minister.

Nand Kishore Yadav, a seven-term MLA from Patna Sahib, has been intimidated about it by the party's leadership, they said.

He has served as a minister in all the previous NDA Governments in Bihar. He was the Minister for the Road Construction Department in the last government. The Speaker's post will go to the BJP as per the understanding reached within the alliance, the sources said.

The BJP has emerged as the largest party within the ruling coalition with 74 seats, while the JD(U) has a strength of 43.

Sahni could not tame his exuberance and shared a screenshot of the communication he had received from Raj Bhawan on his Twitter handle much before the ceremony, attended among others by Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP president JP Nadda, commenced.

Rampri Paswan, who is the MLA from Rajnagar in Madhubani, and Jibesh Kumar

## Covid vaccine efficacy 94.5%, says Moderna

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Moderna, the US-based biotech firm, on Monday said its vaccine shots provide strong protection with at least 94.5 per cent effectiveness against coronavirus.

Last week, Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech announced that their vaccine was 90 per cent effective.

The Moderna announcement that its experimental vaccine against Covid-19 was 94.5 per cent effective was based on the early results from a clinical trial with more than 30,000 participants.

However, the study is continuing, and Moderna acknowledged the protection rate might change as more Covid-19 infections are detected and added to the calculations. Also, it's too soon to know how long protection lasts. Both cautions apply to Pfizer's vaccine as well.

Dr Stephen Hoge, Moderna's president, termed it "really important milestone" but said having similar results from two different companies is what's most reassuring.

"That should give us all hope that actually a vaccine is going to be able to stop this pandemic and hopefully get us back to our lives," Hoge told a news agency.

"It won't be Moderna alone



that solves this problem. It's going to require many vaccines to meet the global demand," he added.

"Since early January, we have chased this virus with the intent to protect as many people around the world as possible. All along, we have known that each day matters," said Stéphane Bancel, Moderna's chief executive officer.

"This positive interim analysis from our phase 3 study has given us the first clinical validation that our vaccine can prevent Covid-19 disease, including severe disease," he said.

The US firm expects to have about 20 million doses, earmarked for the US, by the end of 2020 while Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech expect to have about 50 million doses globally by year's end.

Continued on Page 6

## Eyeing 2022, Yogi set for Cabinet expansion

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With a year-and-half left for the UP Assembly polls in 2022, the Bharatiya Janata Party is trying to correctly tick all the boxes and hence the Yogi Adityanath government is set to carry out another ministry expansion.

"There are vacancies in the government. Two cabinet ministers, Chetan Chauhan and Kamla Rani Varun died of COVID-19 while four other seats fell vacant recently. The chief minister can accommodate six faces as ministers," a senior BJP functionary said.

The ministry expansion is expected soon after the completion of biennial polls to 11 graduate and teachers' constituencies of UP Legislative Council by December 10.

Sources in the BJP said that the chief minister might affect a minor expansion any time after approval from the Central leadership.

Presently, there are 54 ministers in the Yogi government, including 23 cabinet ministers, nine ministers of state with independent charge and 22 ministers of state.

The sources said that the chief minister could induct four to five new ministers and

could even promote some of the ministers of state to the cabinet rank.

"Caste factor will be the main criterion for selection of new incumbents and Brahmin and Backward leaders could get importance in the expansion. Besides, new MLAs elected in the recent bypolls could also be given a look in," the BJP leader

said. There is also a possibility of some ministers being dropped as Yogi Adityanath is not satisfied with their performance. In the last expansion in August, 2019, Yogi Adityanath had inducted 18 new ministers and promoted five. At that time, the chief minister dropped five ministers, including senior BJP leader and

Finance Minister Rajesh Agarwal, Irrigation Minister Dharampal Singh, Primary Education Minister Anupama Jaiswal and Excise Minister Archana Pandey.

Besides, Transport Minister Swatantra Dev Singh resigned after being appointed the new president of the state BJP unit.



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath reviewing progress of construction of a rest house for UP pilgrims at Kedarnath shrine on Sunday

## Malabar drill from today, much to China's chagrin

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Signifying the growing ties between the Quad countries, the navies of India, the USA, Australia and Japan will commence the second phase of the Malabar series of maritime exercise from Tuesday.

Lending muscle and stature, the aircraft carriers of India and the USA, including INS Vikramaditya and USS Nimitz, will take part in the four-day event off Goa in the Arabian Sea.

The first phase of the exercise was held off Visakhapatnam in the Bay of Bengal for four days from November 3 even as China protested against Australian participation. Beijing claimed the Quad coalition was getting militarised with four nations coming together for the exer-

cise and posing threat in the Indo-Pacific region.

However, India brushed aside Chinese objection and invited Australia to take part in the exercise. The move was welcome by the all the four Ministers during their conclave under the aegis of 2+2 dialogue between India and US here in October.

Incidentally, the US and Japan all along advocated the case of Australian participation. The last time Australia was part of the Malabar series was in 2007. China lodged a strong diplomatic protest with all the four countries.

As regards the second phase of the Malabar, Navy officials said this phase will involve coordinated operations of increasing complexity between the Quad navies.

Continued on Page 6

## Lowest Covid count in 4 months raises hopes

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With 30,548 new Covid-19 infections reported in the last 24 hours, India registered lowest increase in daily infections in last four months, a big relief to the authorities despite fear of a sharp surge in the cases post-Diwali.

The total number of cases stands at 88,45,127. With 435 new deaths reported in the last 24 hours, the toll has mounted to 1,30,070, the Union Health Ministry said on Monday. "Daily new cases numbering 30,548 is a historic low that assumes significance given many countries in Europe and America are experiencing a continuous steep rise in daily new cases," said the Ministry. The number of total active cases stands at 4,65,478 after a decrease of 13,738 while

the total discharged cases stand at 82,49,579 with 43,851 new discharges in the last 24 hours.

According to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), a total of 12,56,98,525 samples have been tested for Covid-19 up to November 15, of these 8,61,706 samples were tested on Sunday.

The Recovery Rate has improved to 93.27 per cent on Monday. Also, 78.59 per cent of the recovered cases reported in the last 24 hours are from ten States/UTs. Delhi saw the greatest number of recoveries as 7,606 confirmed cases recovered. Kerala registered 6,684 daily recoveries while West Bengal followed by reporting 4,480 new recoveries.

The Ministry said 76.63 per cent of the new cases have been reported from ten States/UTs.

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# Sharma complains to CM about slack preparations for Vrindavan Kumbh Mela

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Energy Minister and MLA from Mathura, Shrikant Sharma, has written a letter to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to direct Mathura officials to speed up preparations for the age-old Vrindavan Kumbh Mela on the Yamuna banks slated early next year.

Sharma requested the chief minister to direct UP Braj Teerth Development Authority and other departments concerned to start preparations for the Vrindavan Kumbh Mela at the earliest. Despatched on November 11, the letter was released to the media on Monday.

Sharma, also the UP government spokesperson, said that the Kumbh Mela in Mathura was a traditional function held before Haridwar Kumbh by the Vaishnav sect of Hindus.

“The proposed Mathura Kumbh is slated to be held between February 16 and March 28, 2021 for 41 days. It is, however, unfortunate that no work has started yet and the Mathura district authorities and other departments concerned are yet to start preparations,” he said.

During his visit to Mathura on March 3 this year, the chief minister had assured saints that the Mathura Kumbh would be held on a grand scale and the government would ensure that it was held with all religious grandeur.

“Despite a clear directive from the chief minister, the Mathura district administration is yet to wake up. This is a prestigious project of the

## Yogi prays at Kedarnath



**Lucknow (PNS):** A day before the closing of the Kedarnath shrine for winters, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath offered prayers at the shrine amid heavy snow-fall on Monday.

Yogi also reviewed the ongoing construction work at Kedarnath Dham with his Uttarakhand counterpart Trivendra Singh Rawat and said that major disputes between the two neighbouring states had been resolved..

“There is no more property dispute between Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Most of the disputes have been resolved. There are one or two issues left which will also be resolved through dialogues,” Yogi said on Monday.

The chief minister further said that there was a dispute over Alaknanda Guest House in Haridwar that was pending in the Supreme Court.

“Both governments resolved it. UP has decided to

hand it over to Uttarakhand and in turn, it will be given land on which a new guest house will be constructed. Work is going on in full swing for the construction of UP’s Tourism Rest House in Haridwar and it will be completed before Kumbh Mela,” he said.

Both the chief ministers reviewed construction work of Kedarnath Dham.

“The construction is being carried out under the direction of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Once completed, this area will be developed into a top religious tourism spot,” he said

Yogi will also visit Badrinath, which is due to close on November 19.

“I thank Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat for such a warm welcome. I am here to pay my obeisance to Baba Kedar and pray to bestow his blessings upon all of us,” Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said.

# SP to align only with small parties in 2022

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

After burning his fingers in a pre-poll alliance with the Congress and Bahujan Samaj Party during two crucial elections, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav said that his party would not be aligning with any major party in the 2022 Assembly elections.

Akhilesh is ready to bury the hatchet with estranged uncle Shivpal Singh Yadav who has formed his Pragatisheel Samajwadi Party (Lohia). He said that if the SP came to power, Shivpal’s party would have representation in the cabinet. The SP had forged an alliance with the Congress for 2017 UP Assembly polls and with the BSP and Rashtriya Lok Dal for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

While in the 2017 UP Assembly polls, the BJP romped home with 312 seats,



Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav paying tribute to Chitragupta Ji on Chitragupta Jayanti in Lucknow on Monday. Pioneer

the Congress won only seven seats and the SP won 47 seats. Similarly in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the SP could bag only a meagre five seats while the BSP could manage 10 seats.

“We will adjust Pragatisheel Samajwadi Party (Lohia) too. Jaswantnagar is his (Shivpal Yadav’s) seat and the

SP left the seat for him. In coming times, we will make their leader a cabinet minister and also make needed adjustments,” Akhilesh said.

Earlier, Samajwadi Party had withdrawn its plea for disqualification of Shivpal Yadav from the membership of UP Assembly. This was seen as

coming together of the estranged nephew and uncle. After this, Shivpal also returned the gesture and called up nephew Akhilesh and thanked him for taking back the disqualification application.

Shivpal Yadav was elected from Jaswantnagar Assembly seat in 2017 elections. After his

public spat with nephew and then chief minister Akhilesh Yadav, he floated Pragatisheel Samajwadi Party (Lohia) and unsuccessfully contested the 2019 Lok Sabha poll on its symbol from Firozabad.

Alleging rigging in recently concluded bypolls to seven Assembly seats in UP, the SP chief alleged, “When the elections are contested by poll officers, SPs, ADMs, SHOs and police personnel, who can win? The BJP was not contesting the bypolls, government officials were.”

On the Bihar elections, Akhilesh commented, “The people supported Rashtriya Janata Dal led Mahagathbandhan while the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance stole people’s mandate. The Bihar poll was neither free nor fair and all pre-poll and exit polls showed a clear edge to the grand alliance, which suddenly changed.”

## Two brothers shot dead

**Lucknow (PNS):** Two brothers were shot dead in Hardoi district late on Diwali night on Saturday.

A heavy police force was deployed in the area to avert fresh clashes.

The deceased were identified as Mukesh and his brother Sunil, both of Chambray village.

Reports said Mukesh and Sunil had an old enmity with Vijay Singh Yadav of the same village. On Saturday night, both picked up a fight with Vijay and later Vijay and his son opened fire on both the brothers, injuring them seriously. The victims were rushed to the district hospital from where they were referred to KGMU Trauma Centre in Lucknow in view of their serious condition. Both died later.

The police said the deceased belonged to the family of a former gram pradhan while the accused were from the family of present gram pradhan.

## Mission Shakti volunteers spread awareness about women empowerment

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

At a time when Diwali and Bhai Dooj were being celebrated, volunteers of Mission Shakti reached out to brothers and sisters across the state to spread the message of women empowerment on Monday.

Police personnel in Mathura surprised women by interacting with them at public places like markets, malls and religious places, a day after Diwali.

“To instil a sense of security among women, the cops briefed them on Mission Shakti and how they should contact the police in an emergency. A similar programme was held in Balrampur where policemen briefed women and children about Helpline numbers like 1090. The Labour department also organised a

registration camp for women workers in Balrampur,” a government spokesman said in Lucknow on Monday.

The official said that several police teams were formed to spread information about the Mission Shakti campaign in villages through the traditional method of ‘munadi’.

“Special steps were taken by Anti-Romeo Squad to tighten the noose around suspected eve teasers and they were warned against indulging in any wrongful act,” he said.

In Amethi, Anganwadi workers organised awareness programme on prevention of child marriage.

“In special events, women folks were told how it was against the law and a violation of the fundamental rights of children to marry them at an early age,” the official said.

Webinars on women security were organised in all development blocks of Ayodhya under the aegis of Integrated Child Development Services in which over 350 people participated.

Discussions were also held about mental health and psycho-social issues in Sahadatganj in Ayodhya. Dry ration was distributed among the women of self-help groups by NRLM and Bal Vikas Seva Evam Pushtahar department.

“Awareness programme was also organised at Madrasa Arabiya Misbahul Uloom, Madarsa Anwarul Uloom and Madarsa Arbia Anjuman Islamia Unwal in Gorakhpur. Likewise, awareness programmes were also held in districts like Sant Kabir Nagar, Baghpat, Lakhimpur Kheri and Gonda,” the official said.

## Poll double whammy corners Cong brass

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The double whammy of debacles in Bihar Assembly polls and abysmal performance in UP Assembly bypolls has put the Congress leadership headed by general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra in a tight spot as the electorally important states together return as many as 119 members to the Lok Sabha.

Though there has been no open protest, Congress leaders have been questioning the hands-on style of Priyanka’s functioning in UP, which they feel has so far failed to make impact on the electoral fortunes of the party.

After decades of being in power, Congress remains a fringe player in the electorally most significant state in the country and in the recent bypolls to seven Assembly seats in UP, its candidates lost deposits on four seats and could garner a meagre 7.53 per-

cent votes. The only silver lining was that Congress candidates did finish second on two seats — Bangarmau (Unnao) and Ghatampur (Kanpur Dehat). The state of the Congress organisation in UP and its ability to contest polls can be gauged from the fact that nomination of the Congress candidate for Tundla Assembly bypoll was rejected as the papers were not in order.

However, UP Congress chief Ajay Kumar Lallu chose to counter the charge and tried to present the brighter side.

“The Congress finished as runners-up on two seats and third on one seat. Our vote percentage also went up. We have been visibly active as the main opposition party in UP. So, it would be wrong to say that the Congress has not become stronger since Priyankaji entered the state’s politics,” he said. Lallu further said, “Congress has been constantly fighting against the Bharatiya

Janata Party misrule in the state and we will learn the right lessons from the results of these bypolls, plan ahead and work harder.”

Interestingly, top leaders from opposition parties preferred to stay away from campaign for the bypoll to seven Assembly seats in UP.

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav and Bahujan Samaj Party supremo Mayawati chose not to campaign in the bypolls, while Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath first addressed virtual meetings of the party cadres in each constituency and later addressed poll meeting in all seven constituencies.

A senior UP Congress leader opined, “In the era of fierce competitive politics in UP, Congress cannot remain a relevant political force with the ‘work from home’ kind of culture and daily burst fire on social media.”

“After the outbreak of the pandemic, Priyanka did interact with some UP leaders through video conferencing. But there was no direct communication with grass-root workers. If the Congress intends to protect its poll fortunes and prevent a repeat of 2019 Lok Sabha poll debacle, then the party brass will have to come out from the work from home mode,” the Congress leader said.

Earlier in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the Congress could win only Rae Bareilly seat and lost its stronghold, Amethi which was earlier represented by Rahul Gandhi.

BJP spokesperson Chandra Mohan said: “Both Priyanka Gandhi and SP chief Akhilesh Yadav are only leaders on Twitter. This is why the BJP has remained at the forefront. Narendra Modiji and Yogi Adityanathji are strong everywhere — from ground level to social media.”

### SCHOOLSCAN



#### GOLD MEDAL

Shah Mohammad Umar Farooqui, a class VI student of City Montessori School, Rajajipuram Campus I, won the gold medal in national-level inter-school online competition, ‘Brainobrain Wonderkid-2020’, organised by educational institution Brainobrain. Students of various noted schools participated in this competition wherein Shah showcased his talent in mental maths, logical ability, general knowledge and speed typing, and walked away with the gold medal.



No. 15344284A SPR Kuldeep Singh presently serving at 410(I) ENGR SQN C/o 56APO, Jaisalmer have changed my daughter's name from Mehak Singh to Mahek Singh vide Affidavit.

## Six killed, many injured in two road accidents

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Six persons, including two children, were killed and four injured in a road accident in Siddharthnagar district on Monday morning.

As per reports, ten persons were travelling in a car which fell into a culvert near Dhoswa village in Siddharthnagar district. Six among them, including two children, killed and four others sustained injuries.

They were going to Bihar to Mairwa Mata Sthan for a ‘munda’ ceremony when the car fell into a culvert in Madhubaniya road, police said. “One Munil Kumar (30), a resident of Raxaul village under Kapilwastu police station area in Siddharthnagar district, was driving the car and he proba-

bly dozed off leading to the mishap.

Umsesh (18), Himanshu (3), Shivangi (8) both children of Munil, Savitri (42), Saraswati, (67) and Kamlawati (35) died on the spot, police said.

The injured were identified as Munil, Shiwanshu (4), Gita (12) and Savitri (26). Savitri and Shiwanshu were referred to Gorakhpur BRD Medical College hospital and the rest two were undergoing treatment in the district hospital.

Meanwhile, around a dozen passengers were injured when a private bus going to Sikathia from Ramadevi suddenly overturned on Maharajpur highway on Monday afternoon.

The police with the help of

passers-by rescued the passengers trapped in the bus by breaking the window glasses.

A dozen passengers sustained serious injuries in the mishap. There were around 70 passengers in the bus.

Due to the mishap, movement of traffic on the highway remained disrupted for some time. According to reports, a speeding bus overturned after crashing into the road divider near KIT on Kanpur-Prayagraj highway.

Police sent all the injured to a nearby private nursing home in Chakeri.

The seriously injured passengers were identified as Ramesh, Priyanka, Amitosh of Fatehpur, Anand, Dipu, Rama, Anita and Sonia of Chaudagra (Fatehpur).

## BSP changes UP unit chief after bypoll debacle

**Lucknow (PNS):** Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati has appointed Bhim Rajbhar as the new president of the party’s UP unit, replacing Munkad Ali. Appointed state BSP chief in August last year, Ali had to face the axe ostensibly due to the party’s failure to win a single seat in the recently concluded UP Assembly bypolls.

Bhim Rajbhar is a native of Mau district and

belongs to the Most Backward Class category. His appointment is aimed at bringing the MBCs closer to the BSP.

On Sunday, the BSP candidate in Deoria bypoll, Abhay Nath Tripathi, quit the party, alleging that it was pursuing wrong policies and also accused party coordinators of exploiting him mentally and financially.

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# PM 2.5 levels increased by 282% on Diwali

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Despite ban on firecrackers, the pollution levels rose considerably in the city on the occasion of Diwali, with PM 2.5 increasing by 282 percent and PM10 levels by 164 percent.

These were the findings of the assessment of air quality during Diwali by IITR. Head of Environment Division (IITR) GK Kisku said that on Diwali night, the level of PM2.5 suddenly increased to 402.22 µg/m<sup>3</sup>, which was an increase by 282% from 105.11 µg/m<sup>3</sup> over the pre-Diwali night, and reduced to 100.95 µg/m<sup>3</sup> on post-Diwali night.

On Diwali night, the level of PM10 suddenly increased to 604.12 µg/m<sup>3</sup>, which was an increase by 164 % from 228.44 µg/m<sup>3</sup> over the pre-Diwali night, and reduced to 205.04 µg/m<sup>3</sup> on post-Diwali night.

“Diwali leads to a small, but statistically significant increase in air pollution. The results of survey clearly indicate significant deterioration of air quality in Lucknow. The inhalable fine particulates (PM10 and PM2.5) levels at most of the monitoring locations were found higher than the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS),” he said.

IITR conducted the survey at seven locations — Aliganj, Vikasnagar, Gomtinagar, Charbagh, Aminabad, Alambagh and Amausi — to assess the impact of firecrackers on air quality during Diwali.

Before Diwali, the 12-hour mean concentration of PM 2.5 ranged from 59.94 to 145.88 µg/m<sup>3</sup> with an of average 102.6



µg/m<sup>3</sup> during day time while it ranged from 52.78 to 151.41 µg/m<sup>3</sup> with an average 105.11 µg/m<sup>3</sup> during night time.

On Diwali, the 12-hour mean concentration of PM2.5 ranged from 48.17 to 164.77 µg/m<sup>3</sup> with an of average 121.51 µg/m<sup>3</sup> during day time while it ranged from 173.63 to 652.86 µg/m<sup>3</sup> with an average of 402.22 µg/m<sup>3</sup> during night time.

After Diwali, the 12-hour mean concentration of PM2.5 ranged from 112.82 to 224.57 µg/m<sup>3</sup> with an average 161.82 µg/m<sup>3</sup> during day time while it ranged from 78.85 to 141.16 µg/m<sup>3</sup> with an average of 100.95µg/m<sup>3</sup> during night time.

The 12-hour mean concentration of PM10 ranged from

119.4 to 302.35 µg/m<sup>3</sup> with average of 219.97µg/m<sup>3</sup> during day time before Diwali while it ranged from 191.29 to 272.06µg/m<sup>3</sup> with an average of 228.44µg/m<sup>3</sup> during night time.

On Diwali, the 12-hour mean concentration of PM10 ranged from 202.25 to 259.13µg/m<sup>3</sup> with an average 240.68 µg/m<sup>3</sup> during day time while it ranged from 315.78 to 913.73 µg/m<sup>3</sup> with an average 604.12 µg/m<sup>3</sup> during night time.

After Diwali on November 15, the 12-hour mean concentration of PM10 ranged from 216.69 to 378.24 µg/m<sup>3</sup> with an average 296.36µg/m<sup>3</sup> during day time while it ranged from 139.90 to 270.91µg/m<sup>3</sup> with an average of 205.04 µg/m<sup>3</sup> dur-

## Rains help improve city’s air quality

**Lucknow (PNS):** Strong winds and rains brought down the pollution levels considerably in Lucknow n Monday. On Sunday, the air quality of the city was 327 which improved to 202 on Monday. However, it was still in the poor category. There were strong winds, thundering clouds and heavy rains in the city after midnight and continued till 6 in the morning, after which the skies cleared.

MeT director JP Gupta said the speed of winds was 20-25 kmph even as the city received 26 mm rainfall till 8.30 am. “The rains occurred because of the western disturbance over Pakistan and Afghanistan, which later moved over Jammu & Kashmir. The impact will now be seen in the eastern parts of the state and not on the western parts,” Gupta said, adding western disturbance is a frequent occurrence in November, December and

ing night time.

The highest noise level was recorded at Charbagh area with 84.3 dB whereas the lowest was recorded at Chowk area with 71.6 dB on Diwali night. The night time noise levels exceeded the prescribed CPCB night standards at all locations.

“The large quantity of pollutants formed due to bursting

January. “The rains washed away the pollution which is evident as there is no smog in the morning,” he said.

Regional pollution officer Ram Saran Mishra said the rains helped the AQI improve to a large extent.

IITR director Alok Dhawan said the rains came as a blessing in disguise. “Winter rain is very important as it helps pollution settle down. However, we cannot depend on nature for improvement in the air quality. Despite government directives, people were bursting crackers on Diwali. We should be aware that this is a serious issue which cannot be taken for granted,” he said.

The strong winds uprooted trees in some areas, causing disruption in power supply. LESA chief engineer Pradeep Kakkar said the power supply to most of the areas was restored as soon as the weather improved.

of firecrackers during Diwali may be the cause of increase in air pollution in Lucknow, which may also be the cause of increased mortality and morbidity in urban areas. Individual bursting of firecrackers should be discouraged. However, alternatively community celebration may be allowed at pre-defined areas,” Kisku said.

# Challenges continue for Health dept officials

## 231 more test positive for coronavirus

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The post-Diwali Covid positivity rate of Lucknow is 4 per cent while the recovery rate 94.9 percent, according to a senior official at the CMO office. The cumulative positivity rate of Lucknow has come down to 6.8 percent. However, the festive period is not over yet as ensuring precautions for Chhath Puja celebrations on November 20 is also going to be a challenge.

As many as 231 persons tested positive for coronavirus in Lucknow on Monday while 221 recovered. The new patients included 29 from Gomtinagar, 28 from Indiranagar, 19 from Mahanagar, 16 from Talkatora, 13 from Rae Bareilly road, 12 from Aliganj and 10 from Aminabad. There were four deaths in Lucknow and three of the deceased belonged to the city while another to Hardoi.

Across the state, 1,573 persons tested positive, including 128 in Prayagraj, 158 in Ghaziabad and 168 in Meerut, taking the UP tally to 5,12,850. There were 21 deaths across the state, including three in Meerut, and one each in Kanpur, Prayagraj, Gautambuddh Nagar, Saharanpur, Shahjahanpur, Hardoi, Etawah, Bulandshahr, Pratapgarh, Sitapur, Sultanpur, Sonbadra, Bahraich, Kannauj,

Etah & Kaushambhi, taking the toll to 7,393. Besides, 1,889 patients recovered, taking the state's recovery figures to 4,82,854. There are still 22,603 active cases in the state.

The senior official said a lot of people are expected to visit Lucknow for Chhath, and thus the Health department is alert and transit teams still working. “Sampling is being done by the transit teams that are covering bus & railway stations and airport. Since those coming from other districts are also testing positive for coronavirus in our sampling, there is no laxity on our part as far as the containment exercise is concerned,” the official said. He added that the focus would continue to be on testing of those coming from other districts as well containing the circulation of the virus locally.

The five focal areas in Lucknow which had maximum coronavirus cases have also shown signs of a decline. “Sampling was affected because of the festive period since some of the members of rapid response teams took leave for Parewa a day after Diwali and the number of cases is bound to be low for the same reason,” he said. He added that Alambagh and Aliganj currently have maximum cases among the focal areas which also include

Gomtinagar, Indiranagar and Chinhat. The official said one big problem is that apparently people are no longer afraid of catching the infection and are openly moving around without masking up. “Not only are they less afraid and not understanding the risk involved, they also have a false sense of security that like others have recovered, they will too, and also that their immunity is strong,” he pointed out.

Meanwhile, District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash said Chhath Puja celebrations would be allowed on the banks of Laxman Mela ground. However, the organisers have been urged to adhere to Covid-19 protocols.

President of All-India Bhojpuri Samaj Prabhunath Rai said it's the first time after 36 years that Chhath Puja would be a low-key affair in Lucknow. “I have appealed to people to celebrate Chhath Puja at their homes, but arrangements have been made for people who may come to offer 'arghya' to Gomti river. No cultural programmes are being held this year because of the pandemic. All those reaching the banks of river will be screened and police will be deployed for ensuring restricted entry of people,” he said.

He added that volunteers would also be present to manage the crowd.

# Three killed, several injured in separate road mishaps

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A youth, identified as Ramu Yadav (22) of Juggaur, was killed in a road mishap while his companion Rajan (17) of Juggaur fractured his leg in Indiranagar on Sunday evening. Reports said the bike bike collided head-on with another motorcycle at Juggaur turn around 5:30 pm. Ramu suffered head injuries, to which he succumbed later while Rajan was admitted to RMLIMS. The youth on the other bike fled the scene, abandoning the vehicle.

In another incident, a 55-year-old man was fatally mowed down by a train behind Beema Hospital in Sarojininagar police station area on November 13 afternoon. The victim was identified as Aman aka Pintu of Shaktipuram in Sarojininagar.

Police said Aman was in a drunken state and went to the railway tracks to answer nature's call. He was hit by a train and he died on the spot.

Meanwhile, a 55-year-old man, identified as Rakesh Saini

of Unnao, was killed in a road mishap near Medanta Hospital under Sushant Golf City police station area on November 14 afternoon. Reports said bike-borne man was hit by some unidentified speeding vehicle.

Meanwhile, a man was injured after the car he was driving hit the road divider and later overturned near Sai Hospital in Gudamba police station area on Monday evening. He was identified as Vivek Singh of Barabanki. Other occupants of the car — identified as as Ram Kumar and Ravindra — escaped unhurt.

In another incident, a woman, identified as Anjali (50) of Chinhat, was hit by a speeding bike near BBD police outpost on Sunday evening. The woman suffered injuries in the mishap and was hospitalised.

Meanwhile, a youth, identified as Lavkush (26) of Barabanki, suffered injuries in a freak incident near Husadiya crossing in Gomtinagar on November 14. Reports said

Lavkush was driving his scooter when kite manjha got stuck around his neck. He was admitted to RMLIMS.

Besides, body of a 42-year-old man, identified as Pankaj Bahuguna, was recovered from a room which was locked for the last three days in Madaion. Reports said neighbours felt putrid smell and alerted police. The cops reached the scene and recovered the body which was sent for autopsy. The police said the body appeared to be three days' old. Pankaj was a native of Pauri Garhwal in Uttarakhand and was staying in Lucknow all alone.

### SUICIDE

A 38-year-old differently-abled man reportedly ended his life on Sunday evening. Reports said Santosh Kumar of Pink City (Phase-2) in Para police station area was found hanging from the staircase railing on the top floor of his house around 6:30 pm. Santosh was said to have been depressed over some issue.

## Thieves target two shops, one house

**Lucknow (PNS):** Thieves struck at two shops and a house in Thakurganj and Para police station areas on Diwali night and decamped with cash and valuables. The thieves sneaked into a medical store owned by Saeed Raza of Muftiganj and a shop selling electronic goods owned by Assu Arshad of Saadatganj. In his complaint, Saeed stated that he closed the shop on November 15 night. He said the thieves made off with Rs 30,000 in cash. While the police were carrying out investigation, Arshad also complained of theft at his shop. He said the thieves made off with Rs 5,000 in cash and other goods.

In another incident in Para, thieves made off with cash, ornaments and other valuables from the house of a loco pilot. Bhopendra Singh left for his workplace on November 15 night. When he returned home on Monday morning, he found the locks broken.

### FIRE

A fire broke in the office of an advocate in Kaiserbagh under mysterious circumstances on Sunday evening. Reports said the office of Sushil Singh Chauhan of Gomtinagar Extension locality is situated opposite Dayanidhan Park. Around 6:30 pm on Sunday, a fire broke out in the office and Singh was alerted by locals. Police said the fire was doused within a few minutes.

# Couple thrashed by gamblers

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A man and his wife were thrashed by a gang of gamblers in Gomtinagar on Sunday night. Police arrested three of the accused while efforts were on to nab others. As per reports, Dharma Rawat and her husband Ram Lahan Rawat of Vivek Khand run a grocery shop in the outer portion of their house. Around 9:30 pm on Sunday, they closed the shop and spotted around two dozen men playing cards at an isolated place close by. They asked the gamblers to

leave as it might land them (the couple) in trouble.

“Irked over this, the gamblers swore at me. My husband came to my rescue and he was also abused. They later attacked us with sticks” Dharma complained to the police. A team of police nabbed three of the accused while the rest managed to flee the scene. Those arrested were identified as Vijay Singh, Nihas Shukla and Dilawar Yadav of Nawabpurwa village. The police booked them under different sections of IPC and also SC/ST Act.

## CM launches incense sticks made from flowers offered at temples

**Lucknow (PNS):** Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath launched the novel brand of incense sticks called ‘Shree Gorakhnath Ashirwad’ made at Gorakhnath Temple from the floral wastes by Mahayogi Gorakhnath Krishni Vigyan Kendra with technical support of CIMAP and temple trust controlling the production and distribution. The raw material for the product is flowers used in worship places and later disposed of.

“The flowers offered in the places of worship are disposed of in rivers. However, the initiative of CIMAP will help in con-

verting the raw material of flowers offered for the value added product of incense sticks,” the CM said at the launch. He said this initiative would be replicated across all major temples in UP.

CIMAP director Prabodh Kumar Trivedi said incense sticks are already being made from flowers at the Sai temple in Shirdi and Vaishno Devi shrine. The flowers are dried in a machine and converted into powder, which is then kneaded along with the natural binding powder and coated on thin wooden sticks which are soaked in aromatic oil and packed.



## भारत निर्वाचन आयोग

### विशेष संक्षिप्त पुनरीक्षण/मतदाता (वोटर) पंजीकरण कार्यक्रम

**दिनांक: 17 नवम्बर, 2020 से 15 दिसम्बर, 2020 तक**

**लोकसभा/विधानसभा क्षेत्रों की मतदाता सूची में पंजीकरण कराने हेतु सूचना**

**मतदाता बनने की पात्रता :-**

- भारतीय नागरिक हों एवं उत्तर प्रदेश के सम्बन्धित निर्वाचन क्षेत्र में सामान्यतः निवास कर रहे हों।
- 18 वर्ष की आयु पूरे कर चुके हों अथवा 01 जनवरी, 2021 को 18 वर्ष की आयु पूर्ण कर रहे हों।

**आवेदन की व्यवस्था**

मतदाता सूची में नाम जुड़वाने एवं संशोधन इत्यादि करने हेतु भारत निर्वाचन आयोग द्वारा एक ऑनलाइन वेबपोर्टल [www.voterportal.eci.gov.in](http://www.voterportal.eci.gov.in) विकसित किया गया है, जिसके माध्यम से जन सामान्य निम्नलिखित सेवाएं प्राप्त कर सकते हैं:-

1. निर्वाचक नामावली में नाम को सम्मिलित करने के लिए-	<b>फार्म-6</b>
2. किसी प्रवासी निर्वाचक द्वारा निर्वाचक नामावली में नाम सम्मिलित किए जाने के लिए -	<b>फार्म-6ए</b>
3. निर्वाचक नामावली से नाम विलोपित कराने के लिए -	<b>फार्म-7</b>
4. निर्वाचक नामावली में प्रविष्टियों की शुद्धि के लिए-	<b>फार्म-8</b>
5. एक निर्वाचन क्षेत्र में निवास स्थान को एक स्थान से दूसरे स्थान पर स्थानान्तरित कराने के लिए -	<b>फार्म-8ए</b>

उपरोक्त सेवाएं जन सामान्य [www.voterportal.eci.gov.in](http://www.voterportal.eci.gov.in) पर अपने **Mobile Number/E-mail ID/ Voter ID Number** अथवा अपने **Facebook/G-mail/Twitter and Linkdin** द्वारा **Login** करके प्राप्त कर सकते हैं।

**फार्म-6, 6ए, 7, 8 व 8ए में सम्बन्धित आवेदन ऑफलाइन भी यथानिर्दिष्ट स्थानों पर जमा कर सकते हैं।**

उक्त के अतिरिक्त ऊपर दिए गए वेबपोर्टल पर अपना नाम **Search in Electoral Roll** बटन द्वारा निर्वाचक नामावली में खोज सकते हैं।

**आवेदन की सामान्य व्यवस्था**

- संक्षिप्त पुनरीक्षण की अवधि में सभी फार्म अपने बूथ लेवल अधिकारी, पदाभिहीत अधिकारी, तहसील स्थित मतदाता पंजीकरण केन्द्र, जिला निर्वाचन अधिकारी के कार्यालय से अथवा वेबसाइट [www.ceouttarpradesh.nic.in](http://www.ceouttarpradesh.nic.in) से डाउनलोड कर प्राप्त किए जा सकते हैं।
- सम्बन्धित फार्मों पर अपना आवेदन (फोटो, पता, जन्मतिथि के प्रमाण सहित) निम्नलिखित स्थानों पर जमा कर सकते हैं:-
  - सम्बन्धित पोलिंग बूथ के बूथ लेवल अधिकारी के पास
  - तहसील स्थित मतदाता पंजीकरण केन्द्र पर
  - तहसील के उप जिलाधिकारी / निर्वाचक रजिस्ट्रीकरण अधिकारी के कार्यालय में
  - तहसील के तहसीलदार / सहायक निर्वाचक रजिस्ट्रीकरण अधिकारी के कार्यालय में
  - जिलाधिकारी / जिला निर्वाचन अधिकारी के कार्यालय में
- उपरोक्त सभी आवेदन चयनित **CSC (कॉमन सर्विस सेण्टर)** के माध्यम से भी निर्धारित शुल्क का भुगतान कर किए जा सकते हैं।

**काल सेन्टर/शुल्क रहित निर्वाचन हेल्प लाइन नं. - 1950**

**मुख्य निर्वाचन अधिकारी, उत्तर प्रदेश**

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Website: [www.ceouttarpradesh.nic.in](http://www.ceouttarpradesh.nic.in)**

**मतदान केन्द्रों पर पंजीकरण हेतु विशेष अभियान दिवस**

**22 नवम्बर 2020 रविवार**

**28 नवम्बर 2020 शनिवार**

**05 दिसम्बर 2020 शनिवार**

**13 दिसम्बर 2020 रविवार**

**मतदाता सूची में नाम देखने की व्यवस्था :**

- मतदाता सूचियों का आलेख्य 17 नवम्बर, 2020 से 15 दिसम्बर, 2020 के मध्य सभी मतदान केन्द्रों पर देखने के लिए उपलब्ध होगा।
- वेबसाइट [www.ceouttarpradesh.nic.in](http://www.ceouttarpradesh.nic.in) पर **Search your name Electrolal Roll** बटन पर क्लिक कर मतदाताओं द्वारा अपने से सम्बन्धित विवरण को देखा जा सकता है।



# Varanasi close to 18K-mark

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The number of COVID-19 cases in the district has inched close to the 18K-mark as 54 new positive patients have been detected on Monday, increasing the total number of cases to 17,934. The day also saw two more deaths, increasing the toll to 288. During the day, the follow-up negative reports included 77 and out of them, 71 have been recovered from home isolation while six from the hospitals, increasing the number to 14,185 and 2,843 respectively. The total

number of patients who has been recovered so far is 17,028, leaving 618 active cases. The recovery rate is 94.94 per cent, while mortality rate 1.60 per cent.

Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr VB Singh has informed that in the first report of the day, 32 positive patients were found out of 1,744 reports received. Till then, the total test reports received were 3,71,787 and the results of 4,594 are awaited. Out of them, 3,53,875 were negative, while 17,912 positive. The total number of samples collected was 3,90,801. Earlier,

a male aged 57 from Niyar (Cholapur) succumbed to Covid-19 at SSH BHU. With the addition of five new red zones, the total number of hotspots has increased to 2,408 including 200 red zones. Four green zones have been converted into red zones again. There are 2,208 green zones with three new ones.

Under the 'Mission Shakti' campaign, a total of 3,825 women / girls were mobilised at 107 places and 883 leaflets were distributed by the district police. A total of 1,084 women / girls were sensitised by the Anti-Romeo Squads at 107

places. Action was taken against 10 under MB Act, 15 under 151 CrPC, apart from warning 82 eve teasers. Apart from this, the police arrested 69 persons under Section 151 of CrPC while challaned under Section 188 and took action under Section 51 of Disaster Management Act against seven persons.

During checking at various points, 697 vehicles were challaned and four seized. Apart from this, ₹ 17,400 were realised from 25 vehicles, while ₹18,800 from 702 persons for moving on the roads without wearing masks.

## Annakut Mahotsav held in temples

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Annakut Mahotsav was celebrated at various temples including Kashi Vishwanath (KV) and adjoining Annapurna Mandir here on Sunday amidst traditional gaiety and religious fervour. Despite all COVID-19 restrictions, rush of the devotees was seen at some temples to offer prayer to the deities. On the occasion, the silver idol was decorated with 500 ladoos during Shringar Bhoj Aarti bhoj and then 6.51 quintal sweets were offered at KV temple. Divisional Commissioner (DC) Deepak Agrawal, District Magistrate (DM) Kaushal Raj Sharma, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Sunil Kumar Verma and many other senior officers were present.

The Annakut Mahotsav of Annapurna Mandir is most



Annakut Mahotsav being celebrated at Swami Narayan temple in Varanasi on Sunday

Pioneer

famous where 80 quintal sweets containing 56 dishes were offered which included 21 quintal ladoos.

The festival also marked the end of five days festival started on the occasion of Dhanteras. Mahant

Rameshwarpuri and others were also present. The festival was also celebrated in many adjoining temples in Gyanvapi premises Surya, Saani, Kailash, Rani and other temples. Besides, big function was

also organised at Swami Narayan temple (Machoudhari) where 25 quintals of Chhapan (56) Bhog were offered and in the special Aarti, UP Minister of State Neelkanth Tiwari and other dignitaries were present. The entire temple was decorated and the festival which was started in the afternoon continued till 8 pm.

Under the guidance of Mahant Swami Prem Swaroop Das, Jyanendra Swami did Shringar of idols while priest Ghanshyam and Yagman Jasubhai Patel were also present apart from corporator Kunwar Kant Singh, Paresh Bhagat, Pankaj Bhagat, Kanchan, Yogeshwar Swami, DK Swami, IPS officer Rajeev Narayan Mishra, Dr Deepika Baranwal, Bhavsh Bhai, Dinesh Bhai, Vicky Yadav and Purushottam Swami.

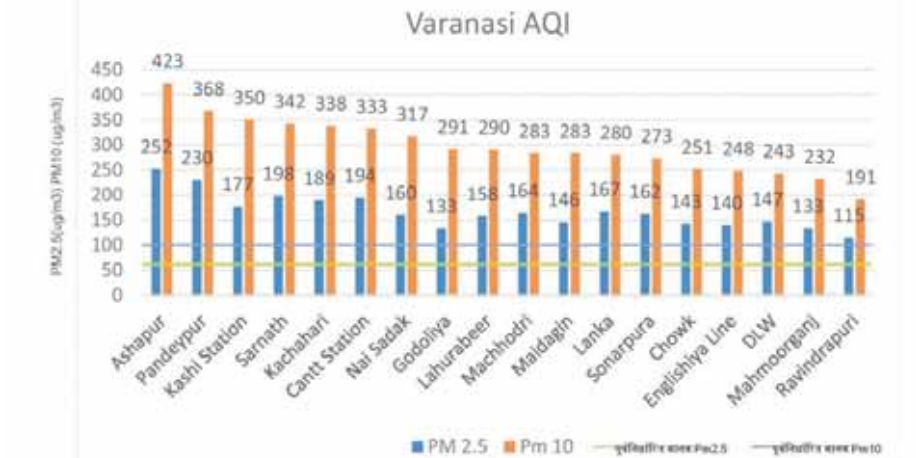
## NGT order on firecrackers violated: Report

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

For the fifth consecutive year, the Climate Agenda has released a post-Diwali Air Quality Index (AQI) report on Varanasi city here on Monday. The report finds out that the order of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) for a blanket ban on firecrackers in Varanasi clearly violated, which resulted into city air plummeting to severe levels. The order for a blanket ban on firecrackers was aimed to protect COVID-19 patients as there are studies saying that the poor air quality may hamper recovery of COVID-19 patients and may cause a hike in new cases.

According to the report, Ashapur remained the most polluted locality where PM 2.5 and PM 10 concentration was 4 and 4.5 times higher than the government's standards, respectively. Sarnath, Kashi Station, Pandeypur and Kachahari area were found to be on the top 5 polluted areas list whereas Ravindrapuri locality was found to be better than others.

Describing the ill effects of such air quality in the city,



lead campaigner of the Climate Agenda, Ekta Shekhar said "there have been reports worldwide which claim that the poor ambient air quality has an adverse impact on COVID-19 recovery chances and it also increases the risk of higher number of COVID-19 positive cases. Taking this into account, the NGT had passed an order for a blanket ban on firecrackers in some cities including Varanasi. It is disappointing to see that the administration of the Prime Minister's constituency

failed miserably in effectively implementing the NGT's order."

She further added 'along with existing COVID-19 cases, this failure in implementing blanket ban on crackers will have serious health repercussions on children and senior citizens as well. The situation could have been prevented, if the administration behaved responsibly'.

The report indicates that PM 10 is the major pollutant in Varanasi. It proves that along with the firecrackers,

the poor waste management, waste burning on the road side as well as bumpy roads is also contributing to the poor state of city air.

Welcoming the recent announcement of three new continuous air quality monitors to be set up in Varanasi, Ekta Shekhar said "it will not only help monitor the data on a micro level, but will also help the departments in preparing feasible plans to curb the pollution. Though, the decision is delayed, the implementation needs to be time bound"

# Women celebrate Godhan Puja

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Bhaiyya Dhuj and Godhan Puja were celebrated with all traditional gaiety and religious fervour in different parts of the city here on Monday. Majority of residents hailing from different parts of Bhojpuri-speaking eastern UP and adjoining Bihar celebrated the day as typical Godhan Puja in which the sisters made some figures with cow dung and prayed for the long life of their brothers.

Singing traditional songs, they prayed the Almighty to save their brothers from the impacts of bad evils. The women also abused their brothers and after that they burnt their tongues as per tradition. At several places in the city, groups of women were seen gathered to offer the prayer and festival mood was seen at Niranjani Akhda area in Shivala. As this holy city is of cosmopolitan character where the people hailing from different states live in different localities, the families of different states celebrated the day as Bhaiyya Dhuj, famous across the country as the festival falls second day after the festival of Deepawali.

Earlier, the families of many Yadvuvansis ( Yadvavs) celebrated Govardhan Puja,

praying Lord Krishna who uplifted Govardhan mountain to save the life of the people. On the occasion, a grand shobha yatra is taken out but due to COVID-19 restrictions the same could not be carried out this year. However, under the auspices of Govardhan Puja Samiti, the traditional Govardhan Puja was celebrated at Govardhan Dham (Khirkhiya Ghat) on Sunday. Speaking on the occasion, Samiti President Shalini Yadav highlighted the importance of the festival and narrated the story how Lord Krishna save the humanities from bad evils. She said that as the entire world is facing a pandemic, we should pledge to mobilise the people to prevent spreading of COVID-19. She also appealed to all to follow the COVID-19 guidelines.

Under the leadership of general secretary Bhola Yadav havan-pujan was held. On the occasion, ISKCON team presented Srikrishna bhajan and then prasad was distributed. The member of Govardhan Trust Board Gopal Yadav, Panna Lal Yadav, Ganesh, Jai Prakash Yadav, Ajay Yadav, Chandra Bhanu Pradhan, Jitendra Yadav and many others were present and the entire programme was held under the guidance of Mahant Kishore

Kishori Das. **CHITRAGUPTA PUJAN SAMAROH HELD:** To mark the Bhagwan Shree Chitrugupta Jayanti, the various organisations on Monday organised Shree Chitrugupta Pujan Samaroh at various places in the city. They limited the Jayanti Samaroh of their Aradhya Devta just to pujan and aarti because of COVID-19 pandemic.

Instead of holding a grand sobha yatra, the Akhil Bharatiya Kayasth Mahsabha, Varanasi organised a programme of pujan and aarti at the statue of Swami Vivekanand in Nadesar here. The office-bearers and members of the Mahasabha offered prayer to deity Chitrugupta and also performed aarti. The prasad was also distributed among people present on the occasion. It is pointed out that the Mahasabha had taken a decision two years ago that it would take out a grand sobha yatra every year on this auspicious occasion but it had to limit its programme just to pujan and aarti because of COVID-19 pandemic. Prominent among those who were present on the occasion included the regional president of the BJP Mahesh Chandra Srivastava, Dr Mukesh Srivastava, Anil Kumar

Srivastava, Raman Srivastava, Manoj Kumar Srivastava, Ashish Srivastava and Manoj Srivastava.

Under the auspices of Chitrugupta Yuvak Mandal, the Jayanti Samaroh was observed symbolically at Chitrugupta Mandir in BLW. Rajesh Kumar Srivastava and a few others attended the programme. The Jayanti Samaroh was also held at Varunapuri Colony in Phulwaria where the program began with pujan. The hawan and the path of Sunderkand was also held by the devotees. Prominent among those who became part of the programme were Aruni Chandra Sinha, Rakesh Kumar Srivastava and Abhinav Srivastava.

The Kayasth Samiti Sarnath Varanasi also observed the Jayanti Samaroh of diety Chitrugupta at Lohia Nagar Colony in Ashapur where the members of the organisation participated with their family members. The function was also held at Ashok Puram Colony in Meirapur Basahin. The prasad was distributed among devotees and others.

The Jayanti Samaroh was organised at each place by following the guidelines of COVID-19 and using face-mask.

## 82 more test positive in Prayagraj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The number of corona infected in the district has crossed to 25,000 marks with 82 new cases of Coroanviurs being reported within the last 24 hours on Sunday night. At the same time the number of those who beat the COVID-19 was 69. The district has a total of 855 active cases.

At the same time, as many as 17,955 persons have also completed their home isolation on the same day. And one

infected also lost his life taking the count of the death toll to 328 in the district so far while at least 6,004 people have become infected so far.

Similarly, on Saturday, 94 new cases of corona infections were reported. At the same time, the number of those who beat Corona for the fourth consecutive day was less than the infected. One patient also died during treatment.

According to CMO Dr. GS Bajpai, 25,142 people have

been infected with Covid in the district so far. On Saturday, 25 people were discharged from Covid hospitals. At the same time, 52 people completed home isolation. So far 17,809 people have become healthy in home isolation with 77 people who have become infection free. At the same time, 5,972 people have been discharged from various Covid hospitals after treatment.

The number of Covid patients is within a hundred,

but the number of ten or five patients has been increasing since four days. On Saturday, 90 infected in L3 SRN Hospital, 36 in Beli and 14 in the United Medicity are being treated. According to Nodal Officer for Corona Dr Rishi Sahai, a total of 4,621 people were tested for Covid testing. The report can be obtained online. For which OTP will come after putting the registered mobile number on the site, which will get the report, added Dr Sahai.

## Deepotsav programme held

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) organised a Deepotsav programme at Arail Ghat in Naini on Sunday evening to strengthen Indian traditions and inculcate the feeling of nationalism among the masses. Speaking on the occasion the RSS Prant Pracharak (Kashi Prant) Rameshji said that the Sangh had been working hard to strengthen the national feeling among the masses, and this strong nationalism has established India on a higher international platform, and it is a matter of pride. Aarti of Maa Bharati and Ganga was organised on the occasion.

Equality can be ensured only after ensuring unity, and this will make India into a self dependant nation, he said and added that Deep Daan is a symbol of fighting the darkness. There is no meaning in cursing the darkness, but efforts should be there bright-



RSS Deep Daan at Arail Ghat, Prayagraj

en the darkness.

Sangh office-bearers paid rich tributes to the martyrs who opted for the supreme sacrifice on the borders of China and Pakistan, and said that owing the brave soldiers

and their family members, the borders of the nation are safe.

This programme was presided over by Chandradeo Maharaj of Sachcha Baba Ashram.

As many as 11,000 Deep Daan was done on the occasion.

Yam Dwitiya, Bhaiya Dooj, and Chitrugupta Pujan were celebrated in the Sangam City in traditional way

## Maurya condoles death of Tripathi's mother

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya is on a four-day visit to Prayagraj. During this, he is joining various programmes here. In the same sequence, Deputy Chief Minister also reached the residence of Chairman of Higher Education Council of Uttar Pradesh and former Vice-Chancellor of BHU Prof. GC Tripathi.

The Deputy Chief Minister condoled the death of Professor Tripathi's mother here. He also asked for his well-being and prayed to God that Prof. Tripathi gets strength in this difficult time.

Prof. Tripathi expressed the affection of his mother by being emotional with the Deputy CM. He said that the mother spent her entire life for the children. "Today, this is the first time when she is not together". On any festival, she used to prepare weeks in advance and used to wish chil-



dren on every festival. I am missing her on this Diwali, added Triptahi. The Deputy Chief Minister also got emotional after hearing his words.

After this meeting, Deputy CM also met the workers at his residence. He also exchanged the sweets and

Whenever a party wins an election, the worker wins.

Earlier, a meeting was also held at the city unit office of the BJP. Earthen lamps were also lit in the name of soldiers on the occasion.

The city unit president said that the soldiers of the country have responded by smashing the enemy on the border of Pakistan. If they still do not desist from their cowardice act then even more stringent action will be taken against them. On this occasion, everyone raised slogans of Bharat Mata and also announced Vande Mataram.

Party workers said that we are happy and safe on the strength of our soldiers. We are all celebrating Deepawali with our family members in the country. Our soldiers are alert for us on the Sarhad. We are all grateful to the brave sons of our country. Rajesh Aggarwal, Suvoth Singh, Anil Kesarwani, Vijay Kumar, Raghav etc. were present on this occasion.

## Bhoomi puja for Magh Mela performed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

On the auspicious occasion of Yama Dwitiya the police administration of Prayagraj, led by the IG Range and the SSP/DIG performed bhoomi puja in the Sangam area for the coming Magh Mela 2021. Akhara Parishad chairman Mahant Narendra Giri was the priest who conducted the whole puja to ensure that the Magh Mela passes off without any untoward incident.

Bhoomi puja is the annual tradition and the officials of the district and the police administration do it separately. This marks the beginning of the Mela preparations with leveling of surface, preparation of a blue print of the mela area with clear demarcation of land for Kalpawasis, saints, Akharas, roads and other amenities.

On Monday the IG and the SSP reached the Mela area where Mahant Narendra Giri had been invited as the head priest to perform bhoomi puja in a traditional manner.

**JUNK DEALER KILLED** : Crimes continue unabated in Prayagraj district. Just on the night of Diwali, a 30 year-old young man was brutally killed by some unidentified miscreants in the area of Karchana police station. Now on Sunday night a junk dealer was brutally murdered by the killers in the Tharwai area.

His body was found along the Tharvai-Sahason main road by the villagers. On the receipt of information, police reached the spot and after reviewing the

scene it questioned the family members of the deceased. SP trans Ganga Dhawan Jaiswal and other officials also reached the spot. However, no clue has been received by the police about the killers.

A 30-year-old Raju alias Salim son of Idrish, a resident of Kaudhiyara village of Kaudhiyara police station area, lived in an area under the Tharavai police station. He used to do junk business here. On Monday morning, Raju's body was found on the track in the pool of blood along the Tharavai-Sahason main road in Basmahua. The villagers going there saw the body.

A crowd gathered there shortly. On receiving information, Tharavai police also reached there and with the support of the villagers, the young man was identified as Raju alias Salim.

On getting the information, Raju's sister Reshma along with other family members also reached there. Police suspected that there is a possibility that Raju might have been killed by some unidentified goons at some point in the night. He was brutally stabbed to death. His head was brutally crushed and strangled to death with a sharp weapon. However, after reviewing the scene the Tharavai police questioned family members and nearby people but failed to get any clue as to who killed Raju and why. Family members are also unable to say anything in this connection, police added.

**22 GAMBLERS HELD:** A day after Deepawali, 22 people who were gambling on Sunday night, were jointly arrested by police and SOG team from different places. Nearly ₹ 5 lakh was recovered from them. Along with this, police have also recovered mobile phones, cars, bikes, stolen license pistols, cartridges from their possession. The police are now interrogating these gamblers.

The police raided a house in Gaddopur of Phaphamau on the information of gambling, and the gamblers present started to flee on which 13 people were sieged. More than ₹ 4 lakh were recovered from them. When police searched everyone, the license pistol and cartridge were recovered from one of the gamblers.

On being inquired, it was found that the pistol they had with them was stolen. Meanwhile, the Kaundhiyara police nabbed nine people while gambling. About 70,000 in cash from the spot and ₹ 5,000 were recovered from their possession on being frisked.

Police of several police stations including Kotwali, Muthhiganj, Kydganj, George Town, Kareli, Attarsuiya, Dhoomanganj, Cantt, Shivkuti, Daraganj, continued to raid throughout the night on Monday, but no major gambling was caught. However, there was chaos in the streets over secret gambling. They kept running away from the repeated movement of the

police. **DEATH OF SAUMITRA MOURNED** : Death of the veteran actor Saumitra Chatterjee was mourned here at Prayagraj by the Bengali Social and Cultural Association. Saumitra Chatterjee was a favourite actor of Satyajit Ray, and he was the recipient of Padma Bhushan besides the prestigious Dada Saheb Phalke award.

Roop Katha had invited Saumitra Chatterjee in 2016 to honour him at its national theatre festival, but he could not make it owing to ill health. Later Kalyan Ghosh, Prof Ashim Mukherjee, and Shankar Chatterjee went to Kolkata to honour this great actor.

**MANY INJURED IN BOMB ATTACK:** Crude bombs were exploded near Allahpur overhead tank, Matiyara Road under the Georgetown police station on Monday morning. About half a dozen persons sustained injuries in this incident.

The local residents alleged that Gunnu Pasi used to attack people with bombs, but the police were not initiating any action against him for certain unknown reasons. Why the police officials are shielding criminals, is an unanswered question, they said and added that this type of patronage grooms a petty criminal into a mafia don.

The local residents have decided to meet the SSP in this connection to get rid of Gunnu Pasi.



# CMO asked to identify city areas reporting a rise in Covid cases

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Divisional Commissioner Raj Shekhar has directed Chief Medical Officer Dr AK Mishra to identify areas of the city reporting a rise in number of COVID-19 cases and to deploy additional surveillance teams to find out new positive cases and their contacts and also make the masses aware of preventive measures.

He also stressed on immediate antigen test of patients reporting symptoms of flu, followed by RT-PCR test and confirmation through

TrueNat and along with proper treatment.

He also directed the CMO to provide an adequate number of antigen test kits to GSVM Medical College.

He said in case of COVID-19 death, a proper death audit should be done and its report be sent to the district magistrate as well. He pointed out that most of the deaths of novel coronavirus positive patients were due to comorbid conditions.

The divisional commissioner said the government's focus was to strictly enforce

social distancing till the availability of vaccines. He said as per the protocol, wearing of mask was mandatory and was to be checked at various places by the authorities concerned.

He added that during the festival a big number of people were seen flouting the social distancing norms and this was dangerous as it could spread further.

He said the second wave of COVID-19 was likely to start thus every precautions had to be taken by the medical and district officials and also the people.

The divisional commissioner directed officials to continue to monitor the working of the government and private hospitals to find out if they were following all the guidelines.

He said with the approaching winter there was every possibility that the weather could trigger the second wave of COVID-19 and so people were required to remain alert and cautious.

He also asked the government and private hospitals to maintain adequate stock of oxygen.

## 88 more test positive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Nagar reported 88 more coronavirus positive cases on Monday evening. Chief Medical Officer Dr Anil K Mishra said that 88 more people had tested positive for coronavirus infection between Sunday evening and Monday evening taking the tally of confirmed cases to 29,092 cases. He said that 2 cases were discharged from hospital. He said one COVID-19 death in the city was reported till Monday evening keeping the death toll to 756. The CMO said at present 925 active cases were undergoing treatment. Dr Mishra said 2627 samples were sent for testing in the city.

## Kanpur traffic police plan drive to place reflectors

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Kanpur traffic police have decided to launch a fortnight-long drive to place reflectors as part of the Traffic Month.

SP (Traffic) Sushil Kumar appealed to hand and animal driven cart owners and rickshaw-pullers to place reflectors on their carts/rickshaws.

He said the Kanpur traffic police would hold camps at various places and put reflectors on all such modes of transport to prevent accidents.

He said during the drive, the tail lights of all commercial vehicles including goods carriers, tempos and cabs would also be checked and reflectors, reflective tapes and rear tapes would be placed on the back side of the vehicles.

He said according to the Motor Vehicles Act, 1989, Rules 104 to 104 D, it was mandatory to install reflectors and reflective tapes and rear marking tape fulfilling the AIS (Automotive Industry Standards) 089 and AIS090 regulations. He said reflective tapes were stuck on the front and back of four-wheelers as well so as to make them visible from a distance. He said these not only increased the visibility of the vehicles during night hours but also helped the traffic police in regulating the flow of vehicles. He said horse carts and cyclists were the potent cause of accidents on dark roads and thus it was necessary to put reflectors on them. It may be mentioned here that in the poorly lit Kanpur roads and the combination of animal and man driven carts and pedal rickshaws moving on the same road was a major reason for accidents, especially at night. He said high-visibility safety pedestrian reflectors were often the only affordable thing keeping a person visible on the road with less than optimal lighting. He said drivers may not always have the time or opportunity to notice pedestrian crossing the road. He said as the winter approached the visibility reduced and was a potent cause of accident and if the reflectors were there it could prevent a fatal accident on the roads.

Kumar said parents should be particular when children move out on bicycles that they have head safety gears and reflectors on their cycles and even motorcycles or scooters.

He said the Traffic police would also place reflectors at turnings and crossing so that it could be noticed by the vehicle drivers.

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## Woman kills husband

**KANPUR:** A woman strangled her 42-year-old husband, Anoop Kumar, in Nayapurwa locality under Moosanagar police station of Kanpur Dehat on Sunday night. The woman, Sandhya alias Munia, was freed from jail after completing her six-month conviction. When Anoop Kumar did not wake up on Monday morning, Sandhya raised an alarm. The police found marks of abrasion on the throat of Anoop and grilled Sandhya, who confessed her crime. It transpired that on Sunday night, Sandhya lured Anoop to consume liquor and when he became drunk, she strangled him to death.

# Criminal held with cell phones

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

Government Railway Police (GRP) arrested a notorious criminal along with 115 gms of intoxicating powder and six android mobile phones worth cost about ₹1 lakh on Saturday. As per the reports received here, SHO GRP Uday Shankar Kushwaha was patrolling along with his team when a suspicious-looking person tried to flee from platform No 2 on seeing them. However, he was overpowered. The cops frisked him and recovered 115 gms of intoxicating powder as well as six android phones from his possession. As per the SHO about one dozen cases were registered against the nabbed criminal identified as Seraj alias Javed, a resident of Godsar village under the Vindhychal police station in Mirzapur in the different stations of GRP.

After registering cases under relevant sections the police sent him to jail.

Meanwhile the GRP arrested a thief at Chunar and recovered a mobile phone set from his possession on Sunday. As per the reports, SHO GRP Mirzapur Uday Shankar Kushwaha was on patrolling duty along with his team at Chunar railway station on Sunday. The team was tipped off about the presence of a suspect in a train. On frisking him the team recovered an android phone worth about ₹20,000 for which he could not give a satisfactory answer. Considering it as a stolen one, the police booked him under the relevant sections of law and sent the accused identified as Rana Tej Pratap, son of Jitendra Singh, a resident of Ward No. 5 Kunaari Mandan Akhardheha Majorganj, Majorganj police

station in Seetamarhi district of Bihar, him to jail.

**VICTIM GETS MONEY BACK:** The Cyber crime branch of police succeeded in getting the amount which had been withdrawn in a fraudulent manner from the account of a victim back.

As per the reports received here, an ex-serviceman Chandrashekhar Gaud, a resident of Patharaura village under Adalhaar police station, had on November 7 informed the police that someone spoke to him and some how got the details of his account. He had stated that on October 29 a sum of ₹23,456 was debited from his account. The cyber crime branch of police acted instantly and got success in getting the money back in the account of the victim. The victim has expressed his gratitude to the police.

## Seminar organised

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

District Magistrate Sushil Kumar Patel has appealed to farmers to adopt technical and scientific methods for enhancing their income. These views were expressed by him in Rabi productivity seminar and a farmer-scientist dialogue at the meeting hall of Jila Panchayat recently.

Emphasising over the cultivation of mushroom and poultry farming the DM was of the view that without additional expenditure farmers could earn more but for it assistance of experts was a must. He opined too that the farming of black paddy could open the new scope for the area and the farmers who were into cultivation of such seed had good experience with it. Addressing the seminar Chief Development Officer (CDO) Avinash Singh sharing his experience about the farming of banana in the area said that under Rajgarh block some farmers had shown the path to develop it as a banana hub. He said that a proposal would be made and sent to the government to promote farming of banana through the experts and other facilities.

Addressing the seminar the scientists laid emphasised on adopting new technology in farming and exhorted the new generation to avail the government's facilities in a scientific way and change the farming as a business of profit. The speakers were of the view that from the soil testing if the expert's opinion was sought and was done accordingly farming might be a lucrative job. Deputy Director, Agriculture, Ashok Kumar Upadhyay assured the farmers that all facilities were available, including seed, fertiliser, pesticides etc and for any problems he was available to assist them. On the occasion all the officials concerned were present.

**MISHAP DEATHS:** Two persons were killed in separate road accidents recently. According to a report received here, Atal Bihari Singh (45), a resident of Kewtaber village died when he was hit by an unidentified vehicle near Baadaapur village under

Kachhawaan police station, recently. In another incident Ravi Shankar Pal, a resident of Pasaiya village, was on his way along with his mother, Munari



District Magistrate Sushil Kumar Patel addressing a seminar at Jila Panchayat in Mirzapur

Devi (60) on his motorcycle when it was suddenly hit by a truck near Padari Bazar under the Padari police station. The two injured were brought to a hospital for treatment where Munari Devi was declared as brought dead.

**NABBED:** Under the joint operation of SWAT team and Halia police arrested an accused carrying a reward of ₹15,000 on his head on Saturday. As per the reports received here, under the joint operation of the Excise department and the police, an illicit liquor factory was unearthed in Rateh village under Halia police station on September 27. The other accused in this connection had already been caught. However, as the said accused was remaining at large the police had announced the reward of ₹15,000 on his arrest. Seeing the seriousness of the case the SP had involved the SWAT team too to help Halia police. As a result the wanted was nabbed at Lavkush Mishthann Bhandar located at Gadbadra road Rateh on Saturday morning.

After completing the legal formalities the police sent the accused identified as Sanjay Jaiswal, son of late Ramji Jaiswal, a resident of Ranibagh under the Katra Kotwali police station, to jail.

## Newborn found

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

A newborn girl child was found lying in an unclaimed condition at Buskudia hillock under Halia police station on Saturday. As per the reports, Halia sub-inspector Ramgyan Singh was on the way along with woman constable Soni Nigam and his team under Mission Shakti Awareness drive when they heard a baby crying near Buskudia hillock on Halia Dadari road. The team reached the spot and found a girl child lying there wrapped in clothes. The team brought the child at the hospital where she was found to be well. After a medical examination the baby was sent to Mirzapur Childline.

**SWEETS DISTRIBUTED:** Cops distributed sweets, lamps etc among the poor in Purjagir village under Chilh police station on the occasion of festival of lights, Diwali. As per the reports, Chilh Station House Officer (SHO) Chhotak Yadav was gathering information about the law and order in the area from the field staff when he was told that some persons belonging to a locality situated at a some distance away from the police station were unable to enjoy the festival due to penury.



traditional items, including the clay lamps, oil, sweets, 'lai', rewari, cotton etc, then went to the locality accompanied by S-Is Kamlesh and Ram Pratap, constables Praveen, Sarvesh, Arjun, JP Yadav, Mansa Kumari and others and distributed the items there and stayed there till clay lamps were lit. This gesture of the police team won the hearts of the residents of the locality, including Motilal, Sangeta and Israaji. Praising and blessing the team they said that it had made their festival special and prayed for the bright future of the cops and their family members.

# Tension after death of youth in clash

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Communal tension flared up in Wazidpur locality under Chakeri police station after the death of a youth during a clash between two groups over a petty dispute late Sunday night.

As per reports, two groups clashed after some water inadvertently splashed on a youth in Wazidpur locality of Jajmau late Sunday night. The clash left Pintu Nishad dead and several others injured.

As the news of the death spread, tension gripped the locality.

After the autopsy, the body was allowed to be taken to the house of the deceased amid tight security. IG Mohit Agarwal, Divisional Commissioner Raj Shekhar, District Magistrate Alok Tewari and Senior Superintendent of Police Pritinder Singh also reached the spot.

The police later allowed the kin to take out the funeral procession. But after marching a few steps, the kin and locals suddenly placed the body on the road and staged a dharna, blocking the road. They demanded immediate removal of people living in illegal colonies. Despite district administration's efforts to pacify them, they refused to clear the road.

They said the cremation would be performed only after the launch of a drive to remove the illegal colonies.

With the situation going out of control, police force was summoned from other districts also. The officials later succeeded in pacifying the agitated kin and the locals.

The SSP said action under National Security Act would be initiated against the guilty.

On a complaint filed by the kin, the police registered FIR against 11 persons and arrested four of them.

The police, however, refused to divulge the names of the arrested accused.

Police and para-military forces were deployed in the Wazidpur locality so that no untoward incident took place.

Meanwhile, UP's Industrial Development Minister Satish Mahana met the kin of the deceased and



Irate mob staging agitation with the body in Wazidpur on Monday afternoon.

Pioneer



SSP Dr Pritinder Singh, Divisional Commissioner Raj Shekhar and other senior police officers inspecting the spot in Wazidpur on Monday afternoon

Pioneer

assured them of full justice. Mahana was also

informed about the presence of disgruntled elements in

various illegal colonies developed in the area.

# Domestic violence a burden on the social system: Chaturvedi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Mahila Manch general secretary Neelam Chaturvedi said domestic violence was a burden on numerous sectors of the social system and affected the development of a nation.

Addressing a virtual meeting on 'Domestic violence against women' at Shyam Nagar on Monday, she said it was a global issue that spread across national boundaries as well as socio-economic, cultural, racial and class distinctions.

She said in India, domestic violence was the major cause of concern, especially for women.

Chaturvedi said domestic violence could be described as the power misused by adult men and could take the form of physical assault, psychological abuse, social abuse, financial abuse, or sexual assault.

She said as per the Protection of Women from

Domestic Violence Act, any act, conduct, omission or commission that harmed or injured or had the potential to harm or injure a woman was domestic violence in the eyes of law.

She said there was need to create awareness among women that they need not suffer a prolonged period of abuse before taking recourse to law.

The Mahila Manch general secretary said it had been reported that 85 percent of all violent crime experienced by women were cases of intimate partner violence, compared to 3 percent of violent crimes experienced by men.

She said domestic violence was the most common form of violence against women and affected women across the life span from sex selective abortion of female foetuses to forced suicide and abuse, and was evident, to some degree, in every society in the world.

She said as per Indian official records, a substantial pro-

portion of married women had been physically or sexually abused by their husbands at some time in their lives.

She said the survey indicated that nation-wide, 37.2 percent of women experienced violence after marriage. She said UP topped the list with 42.4 percent.

Chaturvedi said domestic violence against women was an age old phenomenon. She said the gender imbalance in domestic violence was partly related to differences in physical strength and size.

She said moreover, women were socialised into their gender roles in different societies with a patriarchal power structure and with rigid gender roles, women were often poorly equipped to protect themselves if their partners became violent.

She said studies in Uttar Pradesh had also shown that unplanned pregnancies were significantly more common

among wives of abusive men. She said the research showed that battered women were subject to twice the risk of miscarriage.

She said violence against women had a far deeper impact than the immediate harm caused and had devastating consequences for the women who experience it and a traumatic effect on those who witness it.

The Mahila Manch general secretary said violence against women was a violation of basic human rights and was shameful for the states that failed to prevent it and societies that tolerated, and in fact, perpetuated it.

She appealed to women facing domestic violence to contact Mahila Manch so that they could be provided with long-term follow-up and assistance.

Others who spoke included Santosh, Amrita, Madhu, Suneeta, Asha and Prema.

## Ornaments, cash stolen

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

A gang of unidentified thieves sneaked into a house situated near a school under the Khorabar police station by breaking open its locks and stole jewellery worth lakhs of rupees and ₹10,000 in cash here recently. According to a report received here, Alok Kumar, a basically a resident of Amkol village in Sardar Nagar under the Chauri Chaura police station area, has one house in Khorabar village. Alok's wife, his mother and younger brother, Satyavan, lived in the house. Alok's wife and mother along with family members had gone to Pilibhit on October 26. Satyavan also left on November 11 to bring his mother and sister-in-law back. As a result the house was locked. When everyone returned home late on November 12, they were aghast on finding the door lock broken and all the items inside the house were lying scattered. Giving details Alok's younger brother, Satyavan, said that the burglars on finding the moment opportune had decamped with gold and silver jewellery worth lakhs of rupees besides ₹10,000 in cash. He said that they had made a complaint to the police in this connection. The police is investigating the matter, last reports received here said.

## Thief arrested

CORRESPONDENT ■ CHANDAULI

An accused in connection with the theft of a bag containing ₹20,000 in cash from the shop of a grocery businessman of Ilia town, Thakur Prasad Gupta, was arrested by the men in khaki from an area near Malda bridge here. He has been sent to jail. According to a report received here, there was rush on the auspicious occasion



The thief caught by the police in Chandauli

of Chhoti Diwali and the shopkeepers were busy. On finding the moment opportune, Raj Kishore Singh, a resident of Dhedhuwa village under Chand police station of Bihar sneaked into the grocery shop of Thakur Prasad Gupta and escaped with a bag containing ₹20,000 in cash. In the evening Thakur Prasad launched a search for the money kept in the bag. After his search ended in vain the shopkeeper checked the footage of the closed circuit television camera (CCTV) and saw a youth coming out carrying the bag containing the money from the box during the rush. At this the victim lodged a complaint in connection with the incident at the police station. On the basis of the CCTV footage the police arrested Rajkishore Singh while he was going home along with the bag containing the money just three hours after the incident. On frisking him the police recovered the ₹20,000 kept in the bag from his possession. Giving details Ilia police station incharge Mithilesh Tiwari said that the thief was arrested just three hours after the incident, a case was registered against him and he had been sent to jail.



# Dilip Ghosh vows Gujarat model, TMC criticises

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

A day after calling Bengal a terrorist hub “worse than Kashmir” State BJP president on Monday vowed to turn the State into “Gujarat” drawing sharp counter attack from the Trinamool Congress which said that “BJP’s dream will turn into its nightmare.”

Exuding confidence that his party would come to power with two-third majority Ghosh said “after coming to power we will turn the wheels of development in Bengal making it another Gujarat,” ruing the State had become a laggard in all respects with deteriorating law and order, education and economy.

“Today the situation is such that a State which was at the forefront of everything does not even produce IAS and IPS officers ... but when the BJP will come to power we will introduce all-round development

of the State bring back its glorious past.”

Ghosh’s remark came a day after he condemned the Trinamool Congress Government for making Bengal into a “terror hub worse than Kashmir.”

Saying that Bengal had become a hub of “terrorists and anti-nationals” Ghosh said how recently “six Al-Qaeda terrorists were arrested from Aipurduar (indicating that) a network has been formed in several places of the state. Even Bangladesh leader Khaleda Zia has said the terrorists are being trained in India and sent to Bangladesh to create disturbance. This state has become a hub of terrorists, and anti-nationals. Such is the situation that Bengal is now worse than Kashmir with the people living in fear.”

He alleged that even he had been in the hit list of the terrorists adding how he was

“attacked in Jaygaon in Alipurduar district where Rohingya Muslims are living” saying that the local political parties were providing shelter to the terrorists in Bengal.

“It is very alarming that a few political parties are giving shelter to the terrorists and anti-social elements.” Reacting to Ghosh’s statement senior TMC leader and Minister Subroto Mukherjee said his dream would never come true. “Everyone has a right to dream but it is his duty to see that the dream does not turn into nightmare,” Mukherjee said on Ghosh’s winning Bengal Assembly elections in 2021.

His ministerial colleague Firhad Hakim said “there are people who are aspiring to convert Bengal into Gujarat but they have no idea of Bengali culture. Bengal will never allow the State to become Gujarat as they don’t want to be killed in encounters. People will reject BJP”

# Govt allows ICRISAT to use drones for agricultural research

New Delhi: The Ministry of Civil Aviation has allowed Hyderabad-based International Crops Research Institute (ICRISAT) to use drones for agricultural research activities.

Granting the institute a “conditional” exemption from some of the rules applicable for deployment of drones, the Civil Aviation Ministry said the institute can gather data for agricultural research activities within the ICRISAT research field using remotely piloted aircraft systems or drones.

The exemption is valid for six months from the date of issuance of permission or until the full operationalisation of Digital Sky Platform (Phase-1), whichever is earlier, the release said, adding that the exemption will be valid only if all conditions and limitations are strictly adhered to.

“Drones are poised to play a big role in the agriculture sec-

tor in India especially in areas like precision agriculture, locust control and improvement in crop yield. The government is encouraging young entrepreneurs and researchers to look at ruggedized low-cost drone solutions for the over 6.6 lakh villages in India,” the release quoted Amber Dubey, joint secretary in Civil Aviation Ministry, as saying.

Last month, the ministry has allowed NTPC to use drones to carry out research and inspection activities at its three power plants in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Granting the public sector unit (PSU) a “conditional exemption” from some of the drone rules, the ministry said NTPC can use drones at Vindhychal super thermal power station and Gadawara super thermal power plant, both in Madhya Pradesh, and Sipat super thermal power project in Chhattisgarh.

## MAHA ACID-PETROL ATTACK DEATH

# Court remands accused in 8 days police custody

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

A day after he was arrested for allegedly killing his live-in girlfriend in an acid-cum-petrol attack, a Beed district court on Monday remanded the accused Avinash R. Rajure in police custody for eight days in connection with the ghastly incident.

Twenty-five-year-old Avinash, who had been arrested from Nanded town on Saturday, was produced before Beed district Court’s Joint Civil Judge Kadir A Sarvari, who sent the former to police custody till November 24.

Avinash had allegedly poured acid and petrol, set his girlfriend – identified as Savitra D. Ankulkar (22) on fire and left her abandoned in a bush along her roadside at Yellamb Ghat near Beed town in Marathwada region in the small hours of Saturday.

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

The motive behind the ghastly murder has not been established yet. The police have recorded the statement of the victim before her death.

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

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

petrol.

“First, the accused tried to strangle her. After she resisted the attempt, the accused threw acid from a bottle that he was carrying. She screamed for help. No help was forthcoming. The accused went further, removed petrol from his motorbike, doused her with it and set her on fire. Later, he pushed the burning victim girl into a ditch and fled the scene,” Investigating Officer from Nelnur Police Station Laxman Kendre said.

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

The victim, who had sustained 50 per cent burns, succumbed to the wounds at the Beed district civil hospital on Sunday morning.

# Tamil Nadu’s obsession with film politics continues

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu’s search for a political savior is continuing and as on Monday it has not yielded any result. Other than MK Stalin, the DMK president, and incumbent Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswamy, there are no viable choices to lead the State at this juncture.

While Stalin became DMK chief only because of him being the son of Karunanidhi, the former Chief Minister who led the party for almost 50 years, Palaniswamy was elevated to the Chief Minister’s post as a consensus candidate in the AIADMK in 2017. Since then the farmer from Edappadi village in Salem has established himself as the undisputed leader of the party.

Though there are no dearth of chief ministerial candidates in Tamil Nadu, the contenders themselves are not sure of their position. Vijayakanth, who had launched the DMDK in 2006 and introduced himself as Karuppu MGR (Black MGR), Tamil Nadu people are yet to accept him as a leader. The former film actor is not in the best of health and is unlikely to campaign as he is bed ridden for the last one year due to many ailments.

The spiritual politics of Rajinikanth has not reached anywhere though the actor has been speaking about it since 2017. The last one heard of him was a statement in which the matinee idol said that due to medical grounds he may not be able to travel and meet the voters. “Our firm belief is that

Rajnikanth would come with his political party. There is enough time for the assembly election and he is likely to make an announcement soon,” said Tamilaruvi Manian, a close associate of the actor.

When asked about the Covid-19 pandemic acting as the spoiler, Manian said one need not physically travel all over Tamil Nadu for meeting voters. “The digital and visual media are there and we will make use of them.” Said Manian.

Kamal Haassan, another super star, who had launched Makkal Neethi Meiam, a political outfit with Torch as its symbol came a damp squib in the 2019 Lok Sabha election. Though he had declared himself as the chief minister candidate of his party, chances are that he may join the DMK front

and flash the Torch light for Stalin’s route to the top post,” said Sam Rajappa, veteran commentator.

Anbumani Ramadoss, son of PMK founder S Ramadoss was the chief ministerial candidate of the Vanniyar dominated outfit. Though the Vanniar constitute 25 per cent of the Tamil Nadu population, it would not be sufficient for the realization of Ramadoss’ dreams. Many senior leaders like S Semmalai (AIADMK) and Durai Murugan (DMK) belong to the Vanniyar community. Wherever the community forms a major chunk of the voters, both the DMK and AIADMK field only Vanniyar candidates.

The latest to make his political dreams known is Joseph Vijay, popularly known as Thalapatthi. Though he has

not openly announced his decision to launch a political career, his new venture “Master” is being la

belled as a political movie. The actor plays the role of a college teacher and is seen throwing away the black shirt which his fans interpret as a signal that he was discarding Dravidian politics. The teaser has reportedly earned 24 million likes, according to the producers of the movie. But Vijay, who is yet to make a public speech other than the one-liners scripted by story writers, has to prove to the voters that he is a leader material.

Besides these movie stars, Tamil Nadu politics is agog with names like O Panneerselvam and K A Sengottaiyan (both AIADMK) as strong contenders for the top job.

# 390 more corona cases in J&K, 482 recoveries

Srinagar: A total of 390 more persons tested coronavirus positive in Jammu and Kashmir on Monday while 482 patients were discharged from different hospitals after recovery.

An official bulletin said that 150 of the new cases were reported in Jammu division and 240 in Kashmir division.

So far, 1,03,009 coronavirus cases were reported in J&K, of which 95,824 have recovered.

In all, 1,597 patients have succumbed to the dreaded virus in J&K, including eight patients on Monday.

Of the 5,588 active cases in the UT, 1,688 are in Jammu division and 3,900 in Kashmir division.

# Avalanche warning issued for 4 J&K’s dists

Srinagar: Avalanche warnings were issued on Monday for four districts of Jammu & Kashmir following fresh rain and snowfall in the Union Territory.

A medium danger avalanche warning has been issued for Kupwara and Baramulla districts while a low danger warning has been issued for Bandipora and Ganderbal districts.

Officials said the warning shall remain in force during the next 48 hours.

“People are advised not to move out unnecessarily in higher reaches of these districts during the next 48 hours,” an official of the provincial administration said.

The official said the danger of avalanches in higher reaches starts normally once the weather clears out.

After two days of rain and snowfall, weather in J&K has improved. Met officials said except for scattered rain/snow at isolated places, there would be no major change in general weather conditions during the next 7 days.

# Chilly winds, rain dampen festive spirit

Bengaluru: With the north-east monsoon setting in Karnataka, chilly winds and rains turned this year’s festive season wet in the state’s southern region, including the Bengaluru city, said a weather official on Monday.

“As part of the north-east monsoon, a trough developed in the south-east Bay of Bengal leading to a low-pressure depression and causing rains in the state’s southern region, including Bengaluru,” Bengaluru weather scientist C.

N. Prabhu told IANS.

Within days after the extended south-west monsoon ended on October 28, the south-east monsoon activated during the first week of November resulting in wide-spread rainfall from Kolar to Chamarajanagar in the state’s old Mysuru region.

“A cloudy sky, strong surface winds and moderate rains are the forecast for this week in the region as favourable conditions prevail in the Bay of Bengal,” said Prabhu.

With moderate to heavy rains lashing the region since November 13, the festival of lights has been wet and damp for the people reeling under the coronavirus pandemic over the last eight months.

“Being closer to northern Tamil Nadu, south interior areas of Karnataka benefit the north-east monsoon which lasts till December and help farmers in sowing of rabi crops,” Prabhu added.

According to the state Meteorological Office, the southern state had 19 per cent excess rainfall from November 1-15 with 188 mm actual rainfall as against 158 mm normal rainfall. The coastal region had 40 per cent excess rain during the first fortnight of November with 317 mm actual rainfall as against 227 mm normal rainfall.

IANS

## REOPENING OF TEMPLES & PLACES OF WORSHIP IN MAHA

# NCP slams BJP’s bid to claim credit, says it was PM who ordered temple closure

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

As the temples and other places of worship reopened in Maharashtra on Monday after a gap of seven months on Monday, the ruling Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) slammed the Opposition BJP for its efforts to claim credit for the development, by saying that it was Prime Minister Narendra Modi who had ordered the closure of temples during the lockdown.

As the BJP celebrated the reopening of temples as “Anandotsav” in different parts of the world and dubbed the development as a victory of devotees’, Maharashtra NCP president and senior minister Jayant Patil slammed the principal Opposition party, by saying: “The BJP tries to politicise each and everything. The BJP can in no way hog credit for reopening of temples. If anything, the credit for the development goes to the chief minister and Maharashtra government.”

Talking to media persons at Ahmednagar in western Maharashtra, Patil said: “The BJP should realise that it was Prime Minister Modi who had ordered the closure of temples... It should also realise that the Coronavirus crisis has not abated fully in the country. Even in Maharashtra, we have been working hard to reduce the Covid-19 cases. Hence we are unlocking various activities slowly. We started movement of trains and we have started several other things. As the final part of the unlocking process, we have decided to reopen places of worship. But, the BJP politicises everything.”

“A few months ago, the BJP workers – unmindful of the continued Coronavirus crisis – went in front of temples and staged a protest by banging thalis. Had they given us suggestions on how to reduce the Coronavirus, I would have understood. But, their effort was to see that they could contribute to the increase in the number of infections. When

the BJP was in the Opposition, we quietly heard what Narendra Modi had to say then in this kind of situation. Our stand was then and now is that we do not want to indulge in politics on this kind of an issue. The Coronavirus crisis has affected the entire world. Here, the BJP indulges in politics on this issue,” Patil said.

Earlier, in a statement issued here, State BJP president Chandrakant Patil said: “The MVA government’s decision to reopen temples and other places of worship is a victory of the devotees’ faith”.

Debunking chief minister Uddhav Thackeray’s statement that the reopening of religious places was not a government order, but was being done as the wish of the Almighty, Chandrakantdada – as he is known in the state political circles – said: “Despite having started the lockdown unlocking process some months ago, the state government had not permitted the reopening of temples and other places of

worship. So much so that we had to take the lead and organise protests demanding reopening of places of worship. Despite the devotees having shown readiness to follow all health protocols strictly, the state government was refusing to reopen temples and other places of worship”.

“Finally, it was devotees’ faith that defeated the state government to keep them away from God and prompted them to reopen temples. We welcome the decision,” Chandrakantdada said, as he appealed to the devotees to follow Covid-19 protocols while visiting temples in future.

While making an announcement about the reopening of places of worship with a note of caution, Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray had said on Saturday: “We should not forget that the demon Coronavirus is still in our midst. Even though that there has been some respite, we can ill-afford to be complacent.

Citizens need to follow discipline when the places of worship reopen”.

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

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

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

## FROM PAGE 1

# COVID VACCINE EFFICACY 94.5%, SAYS MODERNA

Moderna’s vaccine, created with the National Institutes of Health, is being studied in 30,000 volunteers who received either the real vaccination or a dummy shot. On Sunday, an independent monitoring board broke the code to examine 95 infections that were recorded starting two weeks after volunteers’ second dose – and discovered all but five illnesses occurred in participants who got the placebo.

But Moderna’s independent monitors reported some additional, promising tidbits: All 11 severe coronavirus cases were among placebo recipients, and there were no significant safety concerns.

The main side effects were fatigue, muscle aches and injection-site pain after the vaccine’s second dose, at rates that Hoge characterised as more common than with flu shots but on par with others such as shingles vaccine.

The Cambridge, Massachusetts, company’s vaccine is among 11 candidates in late-stage testing around the world, four of them in huge studies in the US.

Both Moderna’s shots and the Pfizer-BioNTech candidate are so-called mRNA vaccines, a brand-new technology. They aren’t made with the coronavirus itself, meaning there’s no chance anyone could catch it from the shots. Instead, the vaccine contains a piece of genetic code that trains the immune system to recognise the spiked protein on the surface of the virus.

Another challenge is that the two competitors face is that distributing doses must be kept very cold. Both the Moderna and Pfizer shots are frozen but at different temperatures. Moderna announced on Monday that once thawed, its doses can last longer in a refrigerator than initially thought, up to 30 days. Pfizer’s shots require long-term storage at ultra-cold temperatures.

“This positive interim analysis from our phase 3 study has given us the first clinical validation that our vaccine can prevent Covid-19 disease, including severe disease,” said Moderna’s CEO.

The company plans to submit applications for emergency approval in the US and around the world within weeks, and said it expects to have approximately 20 million doses ready to ship in the US by the end of the year.

# MALABAR DRILL FROM TODAY, MUCH TO CHINA’S CHAGRIN

Phase 2 will witness joint operations, centered around the Vikramaditya Carrier Battle Group of the Indian Navy and Nimitz Carrier Strike Group of the US Navy. The two carriers, along with other ships, submarine and aircraft of the participating navies, would be engaged in high intensity naval operations over four days.

These exercises include cross-deck flying operations and advanced air defence exercises by MIG 29K fighters of Vikramaditya and F-18 fighters and E2C Hawkeye from Nimitz. In addition, advanced surface


and anti-submarine warfare exercises, seamanship evolutions and weapon firings will also be undertaken to further enhance inter-operability and synergy between the four friendly navies.

In addition to Vikramaditya and its fighter and helicopter air-wings, indigenous destroyers Kolkata and Chennai, stealth frigate Talwar, Fleet Support Ship Deepak and integral helicopters will also participate in the exercise, led by Rear Admiral Krishna Swaminathan, Flag Officer Commanding Western Fleet. Indigenously built submarine Khanderi and P8I maritime reconnaissance aircraft of the Indian Navy will also showcase their capabilities during the exercise.

US Navy’s Strike Carrier Nimitz will be accompanied by cruiser Princeton and destroyer Sterett in addition to P8A maritime reconnaissance aircraft. The Royal Australian Navy will be represented by frigate Ballarat along with its integral helicopter. Japanese navy will also participate in the exercise.

The Malabar series of exercises, which began as an annual bilateral naval exercise between India and the US in 1992, has seen increasing scope and complexity over the years. The 24th edition of Malabar highlights enhanced convergence of views amongst the four vibrant democracies on maritime issues, and showcases their commitment to an open, inclusive Indo-Pacific and a rules-based international order.

Australia joined the exercise this year for the first time since 2007 bringing together all four countries of the Quadrilateral grouping for the military games. Malabar formally became a trilateral format with inclusion of Japan in 2015.

**Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India**  
(A Statutory Body of Government of India)  
**Notice**  
Applications are invited for filling up 04(four) posts of Chief General Manager(CGM)/General Manager (GM) on deputation basis. The detailed vacancy may be seen at [www.ibbi.gov.in](http://www.ibbi.gov.in).  
Davp- 07121/11/0006/2021

**CENTRAL ORGANISATION FOR RAILWAY ELECTRIFICATION**  
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FAX No.: 0532-2408826 [www.core.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.core.indianrailways.gov.in)  
**Tender Details CORRIGENDUM-5** Publish Date:13.11.2020,17.05  
**Tender No.ELCORE-OHE-EPC-09A** Closing 15.12.2020  
(Open Tender) Date/Time 15.00  
**Name of Work:** EPC TENDER: Request for Proposal For Electrification of Railway Lines in Birur (Excl.)-Taluppa(Indl), Chikbanavar (Excl.)-Hassan (Excl), Chikmagalur (Indl)-Kaddur(Indl) and Hospet (Excl)-Swamihalhi (Indl) Sections of South Western Railway On Engineering, Procurement & Construction (EPC) Mode. [Bid/Package No. EPC-09A].  
**Items Modified**  
**NT Header**

Field Name	Existing Value	Modified Value
Tender Closing	01.12.2020	15.12.2020
Date Time	15.00	15.00
Bidding Start Date	17.11.2020	01.12.2020

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**कार्यालय- प्रक्षेत्र प्रबन्धक, राजकीय पशुधन एवं कृषि प्रक्षेत्र नीलगांव -सीतापुर**  
पत्रांक :- 872/ दूध देका/नीलामी/ 2020-21/ नीलगाँव/दिनांक 09-11-2020  
**अल्यकालीन निविदा सूचना**  
सर्वसाधारण को सूचित किया जाता है, कि राजकीय पशुधन एवं कृषि प्रक्षेत्र नीलगांव-सीतापुर पर सुबह तथा शाम को उत्पादित 100-120 ली० (जो मात्रा घट व बढ़ सकती है) गाय व भैस के शुद्ध एवं ताजा दूध वर्ष 2020-2021, ठेके व मूत पशुओं की खाल के लिए आमंत्रित निविदाओं को प्रक्षेत्र कार्यालय पर दिनांक 04.012.2020 को टेण्डर खोलने की तिथि निर्धारित की गयी है। निविदा फार्म दिनांक 28.11.2020 से 03.12.2020 तक रु० 200.00 (दो सौ रु० मात्र) व नियमानुसार जी०एस०टी० नगद जमाकर दिन के 5.00 बजे तक कार्यालय कार दिसर में खरीदा जा सकता है, जो दिनांक 04.12.2020 को दिन में 12.00 बजे तक सील बन्द लिफाफे में ओभोस्टेराइली के कार्यालय में जमा करना होगा, टेण्डर के साथ निर्धारित अमानत धनराशि रु० 20000.00 (बीस हजार रु० मात्र) दूध ठेके व मूत पशुओं की खाल के लिए धनराशि रु० 2000.00 (दो हजार रु० मात्र) जमा करना अनिवार्य होगा। अमानत की धनराशि किसी राष्ट्रीयकृत बैंक द्वारा निर्गत एफ०डी०आर०/खिनाड झ्रॉफ्ट जमा को प्रक्षेत्र प्रबन्धक राजकीय पशुधन एवं कृषि प्रक्षेत्र नीलगांव-सीतापुर के नाम देय हो के रूप में जमा करना होगा, बिना अमानत धनराशि जमा किये टेण्डर स्वीकार नहीं होंगे। प्राप्त निविदायें प्रक्षेत्र पर गण्डलीय क्रय-विक्रय परिषद के सम्मक्ष दिनांक 04.12.2020 को दोपहर 2.00 बजे उपस्थित टेण्डरदाताओं के सम्मक्ष खोले जायेंगे। क्रय-विक्रय समिति को यह अधिकार सुरक्षित होगा कि बिना कारण बताये किसी एक या सभी निविदाओं को निरस्त करने का अधिकार सुरक्षित होगा। निविदाओं में उचित मूल्य न मिलने पर उपस्थित टेण्डरदाताओं के सम्मक्ष निर्गोपित नी नी करायी जा सकता है, सभी टेण्डर दाताओं की उपस्थिति टेण्डर खोलने के समय अनिवार्य होगी। टेण्डरदाताओं की बाद में आपत्ति मान्य नहीं होगी, सार्वत कोर्इ निविदा मान्य नहीं होगी। नियम व शर्तों टेण्डर फार्म के साथ उपलब्ध कराये जायेंगी। विस्तृत जानकारी व अन्य शर्तें किसी भी कार्य दिसर में कार्यालय में आकर झलत की जा सकती है।  

राजीव कुमार) प्रक्षेत्र प्रबन्धक, राजकीय पशुधन एवं कृषि प्रक्षेत्र, नीलगांव - सीतापुर।

उपस० 156933 दिनांक 11.11.2020 विज्ञापन वेबसाइट [www.uppgov.nic.in](http://www.uppgov.nic.in) पर उपलब्ध है।

**NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY**  
**CORRIGENDUM No-3**  
Ref:E-Tender No.  
**Dy.CE-Con-G-GKP/3/2020**  
In reference to the above tender, the Similar Nature of work mentioned in NIT and Tender Document is hereby amended as under-  
**Item:** Item no. 7 of Schedule-A-1  
**Existing Entry:** Brick work with well burnt bricks in superstructure with in cement and coarse sand mortar 1:6 by contractor's own materials plants & equipments complete as per N.E. Railway standard specification. (Cement will be paid separately). Brick Work.  
**Amended Entry:** Dismantling cement concrete/RCC/Brick work in lime or Cement mortar & Stone Slab in foundations, superstructure with all labour & materials including disposal of surplus materials with all lead, lift, descend, Crossing of track, nallah, river complete as directed by the Engineer-in-charge. Brick Work.  
Other Terms & Conditions shall remain same. The corrigendum is available on website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>  
**XEN/Con/Survey**  
**CPRO/ W-142** Gorakhpur  
**About any passenger amenity complain SMS on Mobile No. 09794845955**  
**Never travel on roof and foot boards**



# Govt mulling new code of conduct for TV: I&B Min



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar on Monday said that the Government is considering a new code of conduct for television and mulling strengthening the regulatory mechanisms for OTT platforms.

Speaking at a webinar organised by the Press Council of India (PCI) on the ‘Role of media during the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on media’ on National Press Day, the minister touched upon the issue of absence of a regulatory body for TV channels and said a decision may be taken on bringing a code of conduct for them.

The Press Council of India is a self-regulatory body which has representations from vari-

ous media houses as well as parliament. There have been discussions on giving more power to the PCI, he said.

“But for TV channels there is no self-regulatory body like PCI. We are getting suggestions to make a code of conduct for all TV channels but we are yet to take a decision on it,” the minister said, adding that the government doesn’t want to interfere but press should present responsible journalism.

Javadekar further said just like TV, there is no regulatory body for over-the-top (OTT) platforms and the government is receiving suggestions on how to regulate its content.

OTT platforms such as Netflix, Hotstar, and others were recently brought under the ambit of the information and broadcasting ministry.

Neither there is any PCI nor any other body for OTT platforms which have very good content as well as very bad content. So, something needs to be done about it, he said.

Discussions are going on and we are getting suggestions

from a lot of people on what should be done to regulate the content on OTT platforms, he said.

He said a free press is the cornerstone of democracy and freedom comes with responsibility even as he asked news organisations to avoid sensationalism. “Freedom of press is the soul of democracy. Freedom of press is very important but any freedom comes with responsibility. So, there has to be a responsible freedom and no sensationalism by the press,” the minister said in the video message.

The news should not be to deliberately defame anyone, he said adding the way freedom of press is being attacked these days is not good.

Talking about the alleged Television Rating Points (TRP) manipulation by some news channels, the minister said a committee formed by the ministry will soon submit its report on the issue. To check the TRP manipulation and address the issue, we have formed a committee which will give its report very soon, he said.

# CBI takes over 3 land encroachment cases in J&K at HC behest

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has registered three separate cases at the behest of Jammu and Kashmir High Court and taken over the investigation of these cases, earlier registered by Vigilance Organization, Jammu (now Anti-Corruption Bureau, Union Territory of J&K).

The first case has been registered against unknown officials of Revenue Department, Jammu on the allegations that the Revenue Department officials conferred undue benefits upon the illegal occupants of the state land by intentionally ignoring the laid down provisions of Roshni Act and rules, thereby conferring ownership rights of the state land wrongfully to selective underserving persons and hence inflicted huge monetary loss to the State exchequer.

The second case relates to similar misuse of authority in Samba district.

The third case relates to a private person, resident of Gandhi Nagar, Jammu,

unknown officials of Revenue Department, Jammu; unknown officials of Jammu Development Authority (JDA) and unknown others on the allegations that the Revenue officers of Jammu district had entered into a criminal conspiracy with the said private person and conferred ownership rights with regard to land measuring five Kanal and two Marlas in Khasra No. 781 situated at village Deeli Tehsil and District Jammu.

These cases are the outcome of the orders of Jammu and Kashmir High Court in PIL No: 19/2011. The cases were earlier registered by Vigilance Organization, Jammu (now Anti-Corruption Bureau, Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir) vide FIR Numbers 23/2015, 5/2015 and 6/2014.

In the first case, it was further alleged that the purpose of Jammu and Kashmir State Lands (vesting of ownership rights to the Occupants) Act, 2001 which was generating revenue for undertaking developmental works in the state was defeated.

# Clarify your stand on Article 370, NC, PDP: Law Minister to Cong

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Law Minister and Senior BJP leader Ravishankar Prasad on Monday asked the Congress to clarify whether it is standing with the National Conference (NC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) on the issue of restoration of the Article 370 in Jammu & Kashmir.

“Sonia and Rahul tell clearly and categorically, are you with the demand for the restoration of the Article 370”, asked the law minister here at a press conference.

Politics around Article 370 is heating up with the union territory to undergo local bod-

ies elections .BJP has deputed Minister of State for Finance, Anurag Thakur to win it the forthcoming Jammu Kashmir local body polls. Polls will be held from November 22 to December 28.

Hitting out at the Congress, Prasad demanded to know as to why the opposition party is backing ‘Gupkar declaration’ and the “anti-nationals” who are “seeking China’s help and are disrespectful to the National flag”. The Minister was referring to the recent comments of former Chief Ministers Farooq Abdullah & Mehbooba Mufti.

Prasad said Article 370 denied women, children, backward classes and SCs an STs their basic rights in the erst-

while state and the scrapping of which has now facilitated implementation of all “progressive central laws” in the J&K.

The BJP leader said prevention of corruption Act was not allowed to be implemented by the Article 370 with political leaders making merry with the state funds.

Women of the state marrying outside were denied property rights in the state which is now a Union territory, he said.

“Are ‘Gupkar alliance parties and the Congress aiming to take the state backward and deny people of the J & K their legitimate rights”?, asked Prasad.

# Modi to attend virtual BRICS summit today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will on Tuesday attend the virtual summit of BRICS that will focus on cooperation in counter-terrorism, trade, health, energy and ways to offset the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

Chinese President Xi Jinping, Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro and Russian President Vladimir Putin are scheduled to attend the 12th summit of the Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS) grouping.

The BRICS summit is taking place at a time two of the bloc’s members, India and China, are locked in a bitter

border standoff in eastern Ladakh for over six months. Both Modi and Xi had come face-to-face virtually at the annual summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) on November 10.

“At the invitation of President Putin, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be attending the 12th BRICS Summit hosted by Russia, under the theme “Global Stability, Shared Security and Innovative Growth” on November 17,” the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in a statement.

The BRICS is known as an influential bloc that represents over 3.6 billion people, or half of the world’s population. The

BRICS countries have a combined GDP of USD 16.6 trillion.

The MEA said the leaders would be discussing intra-BRICS cooperation and key issues in the global context, including the reform of the multilateral system, measures to mitigate the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, cooperation in counter-terrorism, trade, health, energy and people-to-people exchanges.

“India will be taking over the chair of the BRICS, which would be the third BRICS Presidency for India since its inception (after 2012 and 2016) and will host the 13th BRICS summit in 2021,” the MEA said.

# Baricitinib may reduce death risk among elderly Covid +ve patients

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Drug Baricitinib, used to treat rheumatoid arthritis, may reduce the risk of dying for elderly patients with Covid-19, and provide a new weapon in the arsenal against the novel coronavirus, according to a study published in the journal Science Advances.

The scientists came with the conclusion after 83 patients with a median age of 81 and all suffering from moderate to severe Covid-19 infection were given the drug.

This medication was ini-

tially identified by scientists at Imperial College London in the UK using artificial intelligence (AI) as a drug that could have anti-viral and anti-inflammatory effects.

In the study, the patients, who were in multiple hospitals across Italy and Spain, had a 71 per cent reduced risk of dying compared to patients who had not taken the drug.

The study found that 17 per cent of patients who were given the drug died or needed to go on a ventilator, compared to 35 per cent in the control group who were not given the medication.

The research team says the findings are being followed up with large-scale clinical trials.

“We urgently need to find more effective treatments for Covid-19 while we wait for a vaccine to become widely available,” said Professor Justin Stebbing, co-lead author of the study from Imperial College London.

“This is one of the first Covid-19 treatments to go from computer to clinic and laboratory. It was first identified by an AI algorithm in February, which scanned thousands of potential drugs that could work against this virus,” Stebbing said.

The study suggests this drug can aid recovery of patients with moderate to severe Covid-19, and may provide a new weapon in the arsenal against the virus, the researchers said.

The team grew miniature human organs in the lab, called organoids, to investigate how exactly the drug may combat Covid-19.

The findings revealed that the drug may help work in two ways: reduce organ damage caused by inflammation, and blocking the virus entering human cells.

# Chirp of cricket to be used to monitor their species diversity: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The chirp of the cricket may soon be used to monitor their species diversity. Dr. Ranjana Jaiswara, a Department of Science and Technology (DST) Inspire Faculty Fellow at the University is working to establish a field crickets acoustic-signal library which can be used as a non-invasive tool in species diversity estimation and monitoring.

“The library will be a digital ones and can be used through mobile phone application for automated species recognition and discovery as well as documentation of new species of crickets from India,” she said.

Jaiswara explained that currently morphology-based traditional taxonomy has gone a long way to recognise and establish species diversity.

“But it is often not sufficient in delimiting cryptic species-- a group of two or more morphologically indistinguishable species (hidden under one species) or individuals of the same species

expressing diverse morphological features (which are often classified into multiple species).

“Therefore, identification solely based on morphological features leads to underestimation or overestimation of species diversity,” she added.

Dr. Jaiswara’s research as a DST-INSPIRE Faculty addresses the problem of cryptic species by using advanced tools in an integrative frame in delineating species boundaries.

These tools include acoustic signals, DNA sequences, and phonotactic behavioural data in studying species diversity.

She uses field crickets as the model organism. In her research published in Journal of Zoological Systematics and Evolutionary Research, she has shown that species-specific bioacoustics signals are a highly efficient and reliable tool in marking species boundaries and it can be used to get an accurate estimate of species richness and diversity estimate of any geographical area.

# India’s first indigenous coronavirus vaccine Covaxin enters third phase of human trials



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Even as India’s first indigenous coronavirus vaccine, Covaxin, is entering its third phase of human trials in 26,000 participants, Bharat Biotech on Monday wondered how the country’s 1.3 billion (130 crore) people will be vaccinated with its two-dose injectable vaccine.

Termining the exercise a “challenge” Krishna Ella, Chairman and Managing Director, Bharat Biotech said at a programme online that the company is also working on another vaccine for Covid-19 which would be in the form of nasal drops and can be ready by next year.

At the programme organised by the Indian School of Business, Ella said, “We have partnered with I C M R (Indian Council of Medical Research) for Covaxin and as we speak, we are enter-

ing phase III trials but I am not happy because it is a two-dose injectable vaccine. If we have to vaccinate 1.3 billion population with two dose vaccine, we need 2.6 billion (260 crore) syringes and needles.”

Ella asserted that the challenge is to vaccinate 1.3 billion population. Six billion (600 crore) people in the developing world have to be vaccinated but the opportunity is if 20 per cent of them are vaccinated, I have done my job as a scientist. You partly need vaccine because there will be herd immunity.

Ella also pointed out that 40,000 unknown viruses are existing. “10,000 viruses can hop from animal to animal and to human. What we are seeing today is only a sample. Because of its impact on economy it got more attention. We are yet to see lot many things.”

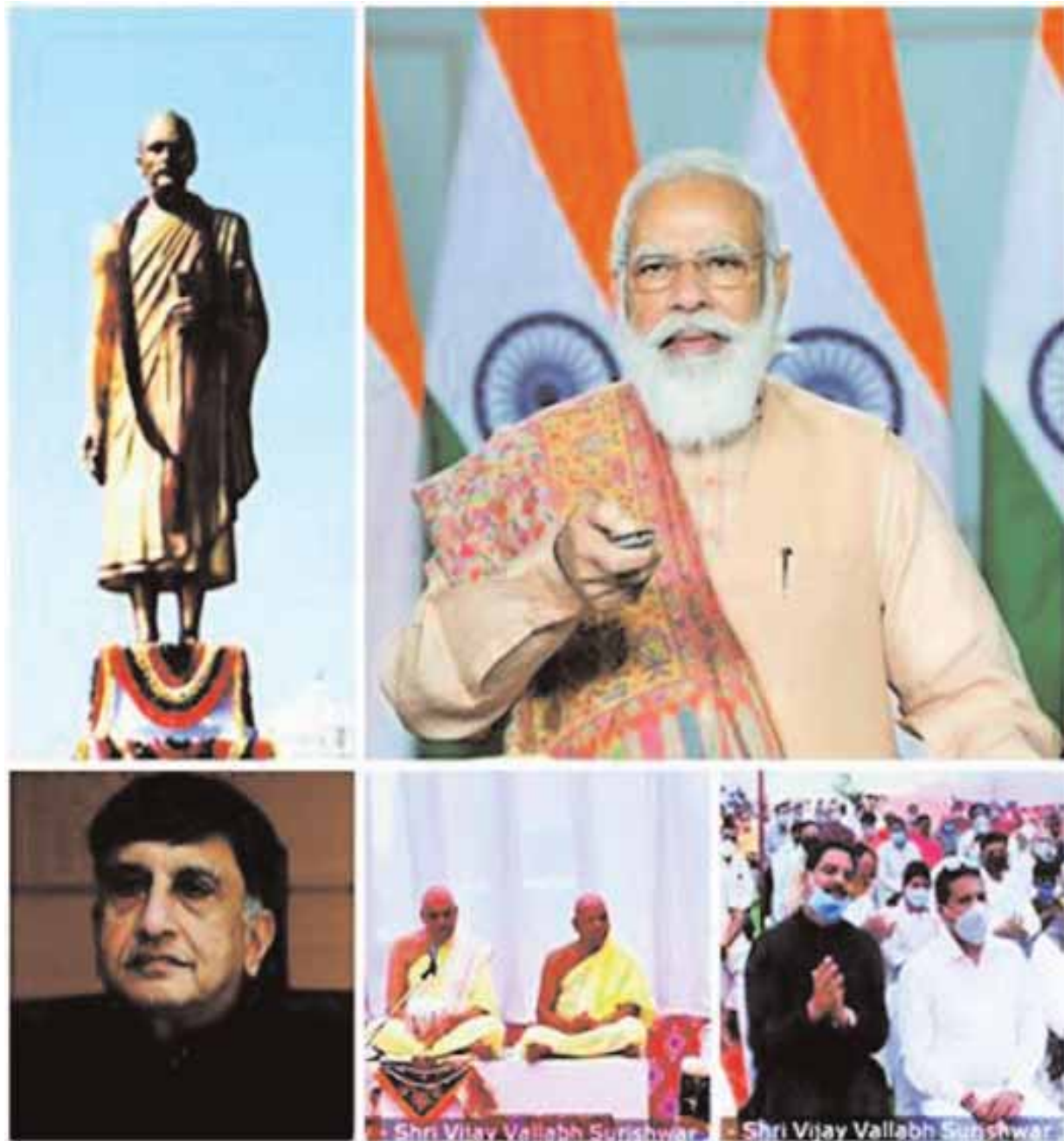
He said that Bharat Biotech is the only vaccine company in the world which has BSL3 production facility (Biosafety level 3).

Last month the vaccine maker said it had successfully completed interim analysis of Phase I and II trials of the vaccine and is initiating Phase-III trials in 26,000 participants.

The Hyderabad-based vaccine maker had on October 2 sought the Drug Controller General of India’s (DCGI) permission to conduct phase 3 randomised double-blind placebo-controlled multicentre trial of its COVID-19 vaccine.

“We are working on another vaccine through nasal drops my feeling is by next year it will reach the population,” Ella said.

BharatBiotech in September had said it entered into a licensing agreement with Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis for a novel “chimp-adenovirus” (Chimpanzee adenovirus), single dose intranasal vaccine for Covid-19.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveils the Statue of Peace to mark the 151th birth anniversary celebrations of Jainacharya Vijay Vallabh Surishwer Ji Maharaj, at Vijay Vallabh Sadhana Kendra, Jetpura, in Pali, Rajasthan, via video conferencing, in New Delhi on Monday

# SC issues notice on plea against arrest of Kerala scribe on way to Hathras

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday sought a response from the Uttar Pradesh Government on a plea challenging the arrest of Kerala-based journalist Siddique Kappan on his way to Hathras where a young Dalit woman had died after allegedly being gang-raped.

The top court, which has now posted the plea of Kerala Union of Working Journalists (KUWJ) seeking bail for Kappan on December 20, asked the union as to why it did not approach the Allahabad High Court seeking the same relief.

“We are trying to discourage (Article) 32 petition (Writ petitions under Article 32 are directly filed before the top court). This is not a comment on the merits at all,” said a bench of Chief Justice S A Bobde and Justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian.

“Issue notice returnable on November 20. In the meantime, as prayed for, the petitioner (KUWJ) is allowed to serve the Standing Counsel for the respondents (Uttar Pradesh),” the bench said in the order.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the journalists’ body, sought bail for the scribe saying



that there was nothing against the journalist in the FIR lodged at Mathura by Uttar Pradesh police.

The FIR has been filed under various provisions of the IPC and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) against four people having alleged links with the Popular Front of India, or PFI.

PFI had been accused in the past of funding protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act across the country earlier this year.

During the hearing, Sibal said, “the FIR does not name him (Kappan). No offences alleged. He has been in jail since October 5.”

When the top court said that the journalists’ body should not have directly come to the top court, Sibal responded by saying, “Your lordships have done this under 32 (Article 32 petitions).”

“We are quite aware about our powers under (Article) 32. We find there is a spate of Article 32

petitions,” the bench said Earlier, the top court had said it would hear the plea after four weeks and in the meantime, the journalists’ body could approach the Allahabad high court for the relief.

Journalist Siddique Kappan was arrested on October 5 while he was on his way to Hathras, home to the young Dalit woman who died after being allegedly lygang-raped by four upper-caste men.

The union had filed a habeas corpus petition in the top court against the arrest of the journalist and it also sought his immediate production and release from “illegal detention”.

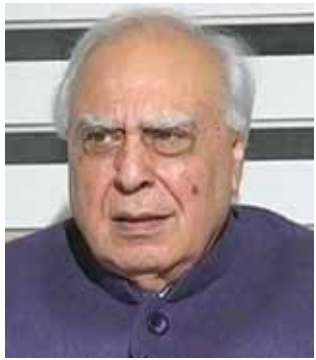
The police, however, had said it has arrested four people having links with the Popular Front of India in Mathura and identified the arrested persons as Siddique from Malappuram, Atiq-ur Rehman from

Muzaffarnagar, Masood Ahmed from Bahrach and Alam from Rampur.



# Congress a bleakhouse

Kapil Sibal pushes for CWC elections again, says party not people's choice anymore and needs actionable revival plan



The problem with the Congress is that anybody with a prescriptive formula to revive it is usually considered a rebel than a well-meaning loyalist or dismissed as a defector, usually to the other national party. It matters little that in the process of losing some of its best men and women, it is slowly losing its relevance as a national party, and now even as a regional party, trailing at third and fourth positions. In fact, if the status quo continues, then the BJP would be the only national party in the country and the Congress would be left with a rump of its own making. Yet the leadership is unmoved as it suffers debacle after debacle in each election with no attempt to even discuss the real state of affairs except finding a scapegoat or traitor to the cause. The last particularly applies to ambitious young leaders who want legacy over oblivion. And considering the way 23 of the party's senior loyalists were sidelined in August for writing a "dissent letter" and pleading for inner-party democracy, the party's first family, the Gandhis, have decided that their gatekeeping writ, that is no longer earned but rests solely on history, will not be challenged even if the party hurtles down the road to perdition. Still one of the letter writers, Kapil Sibal, has again renewed calls to rescue the moribund party after its dismal performance in the Bihar Assembly elections. The Congress managed to win only 19 of the 70 seats it contested and given its poor rate of conversion despite an anti-incumbency wave, prevented its alliance partner, the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), from forming the Government. The RJD went on to become the single-largest party, winning 75 seats despite losing Nitish Kumar to the BJP, being certainly less-resourced than the national party and the belated takeoff by a hastily-schooled Tejashwi Yadav. RJD leaders are already complaining about the Congress being the weakest link, not even managing to swerve the upper castes or Dalits, the latter's traditional votebank, in its favour. They even blame its half-heartedness for the rout. And the Congress is predictably making excuses that the 70 seats were not exactly its strongholds instead of calling a spade a spade. Why didn't it go for fewer seats that it could manage? But Sibal has stuck his neck out and said that people everywhere, not just in Bihar, "obviously don't consider the Congress to be an effective alternative." He said that the party had even lost the opportunity to introspect as the "the writing is on the wall" after it lost all the byelections in Gujarat and got less than two per cent of the votes in some seats in Uttar Pradesh. He tossed the chaos back to the leadership, saying it has the answers but was just not willing to listen. And he argued for basic reform — transforming the Congress Working Committee (CWC) from a nominated panel of entitled peerage to an elected, representative one that would keep the grassroots worker invested in the party.

But the Gandhis, fearing their irrelevance, would rather revel in their fading aura than prop up organisational builders or give them a seat at the high table. Sibal is the only one of the original letter writers to have revived the fighting spirit ever since party president Sonia Gandhi neutralised them with sycophants. While this may have served the dynastic cause, what Sonia doesn't realise is that the Congress worker, in a politically empowered India, sees no potential in the leadership of her children but would certainly like to rebuild the party. The voter has already rejected the Gandhi scions, so no magic can be worked there through activism and *padayatras*. Through their letter, the leaders had only suggested ways and means of reviving the Congress, that too by staying within the provisions and democratic processes already laid down in the party's constitution. The Congress last held CWC elections in 1998 and understandably this is the reason for the turmoil and impatience as worthy leaders have no say whatsoever. They are cut off by a sedimentary layer of courtiers, who are interested in simply playing along as long as their posts are secure. There's no doubt that the central leadership has had little role to play in States where the party is in power or is an alliance partner. That success purely goes to the solidity of State leaders like Capt Amarinder Singh, who have been fairly autonomous in their ways and cannot be ignored. Those who left the party because they were stifled have proved their credentials, like Jyotiraditya Scindia did in the Madhya Pradesh bypolls, helping the BJP pick up more than a fair share of seats. If the Congress wants to stick around, this is its last chance to self-correct, rise above ego, value honest counsel and appear selfless in the interest of a larger political legacy. Unless its leadership just wants to exist on the political map, like most Independents do, without really caring for growing roots and branches. Already its prospective allies in the Bengal and Tamil Nadu Assembly elections, the Left and the DMK, are a worried lot about its vote-cutting rather than vote-harvesting capacity. Particularly in Bengal, it would end up being spoiler, assuming it does perform, or boost the BJP's polarisation agenda. And if Rahul Gandhi is again foisted as party president come January, then dynastic stubbornness would cost the party dear. For there's no guarantee that the rank and file would unanimously elect him as one.

# Civil disobedience

Thanks to the weak application of rules, breaking the law is a way of life for most of us. So the cracker ban failed



On Sunday evening, after a day when the dirt and pollution from thousands of spent firecrackers filled the air in the National Capital Region (NCR), the gods smiled down and made it rain. It wasn't much but still enough to drive the dust away and make the air breathable again. There was a firecracker ban in place seeing how the air quality had been over the past month but many denizens ignored it. Some called them "suicide bombers" for adding to the pollution but many dubbed them as heroes for defying the ban and blowing crackers anyway. The latter group argued that firecrackers would not significantly add to pollution since farmers burning rice stubble on their fields were the primary culprits. Many of these people also attributed the rains to divine intervention.

Yes, burning firecrackers is a traditional way of celebrating Diwali but tradition should not become a victim to common sense. Firecrackers add noxious nitrogen oxides, sulphur and potassium into the atmosphere. A complete ban in Delhi and its surrounding areas, however, was not worth its weight on the paper it was signed on because it was going to be disobeyed any which way. Many took gleeful joy at their law-breaking. This should not come as any surprise to those in India, where thanks to the weak application of rules, civil disobedience is a way of life for most of us. You see it in the way we drive on our roads where rules are deemed optional and common sense vanishes in many. Helmet usage, something that enhances safety, is considered optional even though there are large fines. The lack of any fear of punishment and pliable fines for the privileged mean that inconveniences are marginal. What else can explain the continuing instances of extreme sexual violence even though in some cases the offender ought to be punishable by death? It may be for sociologists to come up with theories as to why this almost brazen attitude towards the law is so prevalent in India and other nations in the neighbourhood. Some might even attribute it to the movement for Independence, where casual law-breaking was almost encouraged and the volume of cases overwhelmed the authorities. It is not just about firecrackers here, it is about making citizens realise the importance of law and order. We cannot celebrate one instance of blaze law-breaking and decry the helplessness of authorities in another instance. In normal times, this would be impossible but we now have a leader who commands a mandate and respect among the population and the Bihar elections proved that. It is time that Narendra Modi stepped up to the plate and asked that his fellow Indians become better citizens. And initiated judicial and police reforms.

# A biased viewpoint

## Western notions of democracy, where the authors propound theories convenient to them, need to be challenged



A SURYA PRAKASH

A Swedish Institute, which claims to study democracies around the world, has downgraded India and put it far below several nations, many of whom lack the essentials of democracy like secularism, separation of state and religion and equality before law, all of which are firmly embedded in our Constitution.

The *Democracy Report 2020* has been released by the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem), a research institute based in the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. It claims that "it has a nuanced approach to measuring democracy – historical, multi-dimensional and disaggregated, employing state-of-the-art methodology." Each of these claims needs to be tested.

The report makes a startling claim that India "is on the verge of losing its status as a democracy due to the severely shrinking space for the media, civil society and the Opposition under Prime Minister Modi's government." On the other hand, the best democracies are supposedly Denmark, Estonia, Sweden, Switzerland and Norway. India is at a lowly number 90. This report must be denounced lock, stock and barrel for the following reasons.

Let us examine the claim that the media space is "severely shrinking" in India after Mr Modi became Prime Minister. You will find this laughable in the light of the reports of the Registrar-General of Newspapers in India and other agencies which track media growth. India has witnessed a media boom over the last decade and the figures for the last six years should make anyone's jaw drop. The circulation of daily newspapers in India in 2014 was 150 million copies. By the year 2018, it had jumped to 240 million copies. There are about 250 million households in the country and of them as many as 160 million households had television sets in 2014. By the year 2018, this figure was closer to 200 million.

But this growth story extends beyond mainstream media. There has been an exponential growth in the social media in recent years and this is reflected in the number of internet connections, which has spiralled from 150 million in the year 2014 to over 500 million five years hence.

Further, just take a look at the shrill debates that are on in Indian news television programmes every



evening and the talking heads representing different political and social voices trying to out-shout each other and you will realise that our democracy has become too argumentative, somewhere even bordering on chaos. So, where is this decline of democracy?

Finally, let us look at the social media. Not a week passes without the anti-Modi lobby running hashtags like "#NarendraModiWorstPrimeMinister" on Twitter regularly and thousands of followers of political parties opposed to him endorsing this line or adding their own abusive comments or cartoons. Therefore, the charge that freedom of expression is under severe threat in the country is ridiculous and smacks of uninformed opinion. Also, in view of all this evidence, anyone who says that "media space is shrinking" in India and that civil society and the "Opposition" are stifled, needs to get his head examined.

The second defect in the report is that it attributes whatever deficiencies it has found vis-a-vis freedom of expression to Modi. This is downright irresponsible for the reasons that have been cited above and also from a constitutional point of view. Obviously, the report is written by individuals who are totally oblivious of India's constitutional scheme. India is a federal republic in the sense that the legislative and executive powers are shared between the Union and the governments in the States and the Constitution itself spells out the subjects that are allotted to both. Further, neither Modi nor his party and the coalition to which it belongs govern all the 28 States and eight Union Territories in the country. About

“THE CIRCULATION OF DAILY NEWSPAPERS IN INDIA IN 2014 WAS 150 MILLION COPIES. BY 2018, IT HAD JUMPED TO 240 MILLION COPIES. THERE ARE ABOUT 250 MILLION HOUSEHOLDS IN THE COUNTRY AND AS MANY AS 160 MILLION HOUSEHOLDS HAD TELEVISION SETS IN 2014. BY 2018, THIS FIGURE WAS CLOSER TO 200 MILLION. WOULD WE STILL SAY THE MEDIA SPACE HAS SHRUNK?”



## SOUND BITE

We just approved new measures that should allow us to face this new wave of infections, which is severely affecting not only Italy but the whole of Europe.

Italian Prime Minister  
—Giuseppe Conte



Dream the impossible and speak it into existence. You have to work for it, you have to chase it and never give up, and never doubt yourself.

F1 driver  
—Lewis Hamilton



Whatever happens in the future, who knows, which administration will be, I guess time will tell.

US President  
—Donald Trump



I want to do deep sea diving and see the corals. I have been hearing that corals are going to die soon and they are already considered extinct in many terrains.

Actor  
—Abhishek Banerjee



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Who is unformed?

Sir — Former US President Barack Obama's characterisation of Rahul Gandhi in his forthcoming memoir, *A Promised Land*, as a person who "has a nervous, unformed quality about him" was uncharitable and unfair to say the least. It was more reflective of Obama himself than Rahul. By his ill-judged portrayal of the Congress leader, Obama has proved that he is not a good judge of character. Perhaps for all his pretension to great endowment, he is less than sophisticated to understand other people.

Obama seems to have formed a wrong and unrealistic impression of Rahul from the courtesy shown to him during a brief encounter with him when he visited India. He seemed to have taken simplicity and humility exuded by the Indian political leader as an attempt to please him. He must have been over-weening to do that. He misconstrued Rahul's incapability to be bad or do evil things as a weakness. Obama outdid even Rahul's worst domestic detractors in the choice of words to depict him in a poor light. Wittingly or unwittingly, he gave a chance to the

### India must be wary of future intrusions

It is hoped that the agreement between India and China on the step-by-step process of disengagement of troops from all major friction points along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) happens in a time-bound manner. And helps resolve the protracted border standoff between the armies of the two countries. This development comes two months after the Moscow meeting during which the External Affairs Ministers of both the nations finalised a five-point roadmap for establishing peace in eastern Ladakh.

Despite China's brazen incursions, it has blamed India for abetting hostilities and tried to justify its actions by invoking the unilaterally defined 1959 LAC. New Delhi's stand on the issue helped it receive support from the US and the international community. However, given the harsh winters and the ongoing pandemic, the two countries must enter into a comprehensive peace pact that applies to the entire LAC, including the disputed Depsang plains. Given that China may devise crooked ways to make India believe that it is de-escalating, the



latter must not get caught in such a trap. And unless the troops and weaponry are completely removed and verified by both sides, de-escalation cannot be confirmed. Notwithstanding the strategies adopted for establishing peace along the LAC, India must always be alert about future incursions.

Venu GS  
Kollam

### Content monitoring

Sir — The digital and OTT platforms now fall under the jurisdiction and censorship of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. After 2016, with the ubiquitous availability of inexpensive data, the digital market boomed in India. Additionally, the lockdown was a heaven-sent opportunity for

the OTT platforms and they made the best out of it. However, digital content, which received overwhelming support from people, was also at the receiving end of severe criticism by zealots for delivering erotic, anti-establishment and provocative content in the guise of creativity. Many demanded a censor board so that creativity and harmony could be bal-

anced. Now, digital content creators will have to tread a tight rope while bearing the backlash in mind they might face. Sadly, this is yet another attempt to control one's freedom of expression.

Rahul Chouhan  
Ujjain

### Ceasefire violations

Sir — India has objected to the ceasefire violations by Pakistan. The Charge d'Affaires of the High Commission of Pakistan was summoned by the Ministry of External Affairs and a strong protest was lodged over unprovoked ceasefire violations by Pakistani forces on multiple sectors along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir on November 13, resulting in the death of four innocent civilians and serious injuries to 19 others. Pakistan must respect the bilateral agreements between the two nations and not allow any territory under its control to be used for terrorism against India in any manner.

Amit Singh Kushwaha  
Satna

Send your feedback to:  
letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

## Bengal set for a clash of Titans

While a Modi versus Mamata battle may have worked well for the BJP at the Lok Sabha level, it may not be that easy at the State level



KALYANI SHANKAR

West Bengal is moving towards a personality clash between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in the forthcoming Assembly elections. Both have evolved as cult figures over the years. With no tall State leaders in Bengal, the BJP is following its pet formula of a battle between a regional heavyweight and the BJP mascot Modi. It has tried this formula out in some States like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Delhi, Maharashtra and Haryana, with mixed success. On the face of it, next year's Assembly polls to five States — West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry will be a litmus test for the BJP's expansion plans. But the saffron party's main focus is on West Bengal where the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) is well-entrenched since 2011, when Mamata ousted the CPI(M) which had ruled the State for three decades. Mamata will be seeking a third term in power now.

While a Modi versus Mamata battle may have worked well for the BJP at the Lok Sabha level, it may not be that easy at the State level. For instance, Mamata or "Didi" as she is fondly called, is not like other regional leaders. She is a firebrand leader and there is a method to her madness. She has reduced other Opposition parties like the CPI(M) and the Congress to "zero" in the past decade and is a fierce street fighter. Besides, for more than 45 years, the State has been anti-Centre, which might help Mamata.

On its part, the BJP is upbeat since its performance in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections in Bengal was impressive. It won 18 of the 42 seats, just four less than the ruling TMC. Significantly, the BJP's vote share in the State increased to over 40 per cent in 2019 from a mere two per cent in the 2011 Assembly polls, emerging as the number two party in the State.

The Congress and the CPI(M) had fought the 2016 Assembly elections together, managing to win 76 of the 294 seats and accounting for almost 39 per cent of the vote share. They had, however, split ahead of the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. This time around, the CPI(M) central committee has given the go ahead for a poll tie-up with all secular parties, including the Congress.

The 2021 election, however, will be difficult for the ruling TMC. The BJP has the advantage of being an "untested challenger." As a strategy, the BJP is trying to mobilise the anti-incumbency factor against Didi and consolidating Hindu votes. Mamata's "*Paribartan* (change)" of 2011 is BJP's slogan today. It is focussing on issues like graft, commissions and the syndicate raj. The TMC's alleged corruption seems to be the main poll plank of the BJP. "*Aamaar Poribar*, BJP *Poribar* (My family, BJP family)," is the saffron party's current slogan. It aims to capture the youth through a social media campaign called "Reboot Kolkata" referring to the city's glorious past. The party is using its army of WhatsApp workers to consolidate the Hindu vote as there are two more major parties in the race as well — the Congress and the CPI(M). However, Mamata's biggest strength lies in her image as a developmental Chief Minister, which she had created post-Singur and Nandigram with schemes ranging from 'Kanyashree' or distribution of cycles to girls of underprivileged families, distribution of rice at a low price, development of roads and so on. During the lockdown, she launched the campaign "*Banglar Gorbo* Mamata (Bengal's pride Mamata)", which involves various meetings with voters, workers and prominent Bengali personalities. The development schemes and her populist image might stand her in good stead.

Mamata has a ready-made issue after Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced that the controversial Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) would be implemented in Bengal ahead of the Assembly polls. The TMC is planning multiple protests against the CAA and the National Register of Citizens (NRC). The TMC, Left and the Congress are also expected to come together and pass a resolution against the NRC in the West Bengal Legislative Assembly.

Mamata's advantage is her formidable minority base that forms 28 per cent of the population. They matter in 70 to 80 seats. As the BJP plans to polarise the electorate on a communal basis, Mamata will have to guard against the splitting of the minority votes. The AIMIM (All-India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen), which won five seats in Bihar, is planning to contest in Bengal too, which could cut into the Muslim votes. It is too early to predict the West Bengal election scene as clarity will emerge nearer the polls but violence could be expected. An important issue would be how the public perceives the performance of the Mamata Government on containing the pandemic, as it is a burning issue.

The BJP has not won any State since the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. It lost Maharashtra even after emerging as the single-largest party because of the ego clash with its long-time partner, the Shiv Sena. In the end, the Sena, NCP and the Congress coalition formed the Government. A little ray of sunshine was the fall of the Congress Government in Madhya Pradesh as the BJP installed its Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan after pulling down the Kamal Nath Government. Therefore, winning big in Bihar elections was important for the party and winning Bengal will mean the BJP will continue its eastward expansion.

(The writer is a senior journalist)

HE (JOE BIDEN) WON BECAUSE THE ELECTION WAS RIGGED. I CONCEDE NOTHING! WE HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO. THIS WAS A RIGGED ELECTION.  
—US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP



IT WAS GOOD ACTUALLY TO SEE PRESIDENT TRUMP TWEET OUT THAT (BIDEN) WON. I THINK THAT'S THE START OF AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT.  
— REPUBLICAN GOVERNOR OF ARKANSAS ASA HUTCHINSON

# Nix priority sector lending

The policy — a legacy of the socialist era — has led to blatant misuse and misappropriation of funds and is far from helping those for whom it is intended



UTTAM GUPTA

On September 4, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) introduced changes in the norms for priority sector lending (PSL) with the stated objective of "enabling better credit penetration to credit-deficient areas, increase in lending to small and marginal farmers and boosting credit to renewable energy and health infrastructure." Under PSL, the RBI mandates a certain percentage of a bank's lendable resources to specified areas.

The policy — a legacy of the socialist era — has led to blatant misuse and misappropriation of funds and is far from helping the most vulnerable groups and sectors for whom it is intended. It needs to go as today the banking network is capable of meeting credit needs of all, provided the sector is left to itself. However, faced with contraction in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth by a whopping 23.9 per cent and credit growth at a low of 6.7 per cent during the first quarter (Q1) of the current financial year (FY), the RBI introduced changes in the norms for PSL. But what is the connection between PSL and growth?

For several decades, successive governments followed a policy of directing banking credit to specified sectors, which had remained neglected for long and needed the required push to catch up with the country's growing economy. The RBI mandates that a certain percentage of a bank's Adjusted Net Bank Credit (ANBC) or lendable resources be given for PSL. For commercial banks, including foreign banks, this is 40 per cent, while regional rural banks (RRBs) and small finance banks (SFBs) are required to allocate a whopping 75 per cent for PSL. Within the over 40 per cent limit, there are sub-limits; for instance, agriculture gets 18 per cent of the ANBC. Although the guidelines do not lay down any preferential rate of interest for PSLs per se, generally such loans are "cheaper" and "more accessible." The chargeable rate of interest is as per the RBI's directives and varies from sector to sector.

As per the RBI's directive, a short-term crop loan of up to ₹3,00,000 (for animal husbandry, dairy and fisheries farmers, this limit is ₹2,00,000) is available at a subsidised interest rate of seven per cent; an additional incentive of three per cent is provided for prompt payment. The effective interest cost works out to only four per cent. To make it happen, the Union Government offers to banks interest subvention of two per cent per annum and prompt repayment incentive (PRI) of three per cent. This comes at a huge cost to the exchequer (during 2019-20, the Government spent ₹18,000 crore). The banks, too, share a good portion of the cost as reimbursement given by the Centre does not fully cover the interest subsidy extended by them to farmers (on a total farm loan of about ₹13,00,000 crore given during 2019-20, interest subvention at the rate of two per cent alone works out to about ₹26,000 crore against a budgetary support of only ₹18,000 crore. If we include PRI, the shortfall would be even higher). It is, therefore, natural to ask whether farmers are actually deriving the intended benefit?

According to a study by the RBI's internal working group, in several States, the quantum of crop loan was found to be higher than the value of all agricultural inputs (in Andhra Pradesh, during 2015-2017, this was 7.5 times the value of agri-inputs). Considering that crop loans are taken mostly for buying agricultural inputs, when the value of the former exceeds the latter, it clearly points towards diver-

PSL NEEDS TO GO. OUR BANKS SHOULD ENJOY THE FREEDOM TO LEND AND FOCUS MORE ON CONDUCTING DUE DILIGENCE, CREDIT APPRAISAL, HAND-HOLDING OF BORROWERS AND MONITORING FUND USE. FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE, THE GOVERNMENT MAY GIVE INTEREST SUBSIDY BUT THAT SHOULD BE DIRECTLY CREDITED TO THEIR BANK ACCOUNTS



sion of funds to non-farm uses. Even out of credit that flows to agriculture, a disproportionately high share is cornered by large farmers viz. those with farms over 10 hectares. During 2016-17, large farmers, who account for 0.6 per cent of the total number, got away with 41 per cent of the agri-credit. Semi-medium and medium farmers, owning between two-10 hectares (they are 13.2 per cent of all farmers) get bulk of the balance 59 per cent agri-credit. Small and marginal farmers with holdings up to two hectares (they are 86.2 per cent) get very little; in fact, nearly 41 per cent of them don't even have access to banks.

Asset creation in agriculture holds the key to sustainable increase in the farmers' income. Yet, the share of investment credit in total farm credit is only 25 per cent (down from 50 per cent in 2000). A big chunk of this also goes to medium and large farmers. According to the committee on "Status of Farmers' Income: Strategies for Accelerated Growth," that was set up to identify ways to double farmers' income, small and marginal farmers finance 30.8 per cent and 52.1 per cent of their investment in assets through informal sources viz. moneylenders, traders and input dealers (albeit at high interest rate) and so on, as they don't have access to banks.

The irony is that large, medium and semi-medium farmers, having borrowed from banks at such low rates (four per cent), further lend this money to small and marginal farmers at a much higher rate, thereby making a huge profit. This is clearly a case of better off farmers and even non-farmers profiteering from the State largesse, riding piggyback on the most vulnerable for whom it is meant.

The misuse is rampant even in other areas of PSL, say the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) sector, which gets 7.5 per cent of bank

lending. Yet, our policy-makers continue with PSL and keep adding more and more sectors under its ambit and shuffling the limit under each. Thus, there are a host of other categories such as export, education, housing, health, social infrastructure, renewable energy and now, start-ups.

In September, the RBI increased the targets for small and marginal farmers from the existing eight per cent of the ANBC to 12 per cent, applicable from 2020-21 onward. It also increased credit limit for farmers producers organisations (FPOs) and farmers producers companies (FPCs) to ₹2 crore per borrowing entity. The moot point here is when already the subsidised credit is not reaching where it ought to be reaching, what is the use of pouring more in? From FY 2021-22, a higher weightage of 125 per cent would be assigned to incremental priority sector credit in the identified districts, where the per capita PSL is less than ₹6,000, and a lower weight of 90 per cent would be assigned for incremental priority sector credit in the identified districts, where the per capita PSL is more than ₹25,000. This is intended to help 184 districts with low per capita PSL credit flow. Will things improve merely by assigning higher weightage?

To give a boost to renewable energy, the RBI has increased the limits for priority sector lending. Thus, loans up to ₹30 crore per borrower for solar-based and biomass-based power generators, windmills, micro-hydel plants and so on will now be eligible for PSL (up from ₹15 crore). Likewise, the limit for loan for building healthcare facilities, including those under Ayushman Bharat in Tier-II to Tier-VI centres, has been increased from ₹5 crore per borrower to ₹10 crore. Start-ups, which conform to the definition laid down by the Ministry of Commerce and are engaged in activities other than agri-

culture and MSMEs, can avail loans up to ₹50 crore under the PSL. What is the sanctity of these limits? Is it the case that an entity which needs ₹31 crore for setting up a solar-based plant won't be eligible for PSL? Or, the application of a start-up needing a loan of ₹51 crore will be rejected. This is bizarre.

Putting in place such a system brings in a lot of discretion and gives the bank manager or officials a lot of room to manoeuvre. From the perspective of the borrower, every aspirant — irrespective of his/her scale of operation — will play with numbers to keep his/her borrowing proposal within the threshold. This is the surest invitation to nepotism and corruption.

To conclude, the extant highly convoluted system of "directed lending," specifying targets for sectors in a typical top-down approach that keeps bank officials busy with target fulfillment and compliances, is pregnant with blatant misuse and misappropriation of funds. It is unlikely to serve the desired objective of helping the most vulnerable groups for whom it is intended. At the same time, it imposes a huge collateral damage.

For instance, of the outstanding bank credit of about ₹100,00,000 crore, when 40 per cent or ₹40,00,000 crore is PSL given at a subsidised interest rate, banks are bound to charge more on the remaining 60 per cent to remain viable. This raises the cost of capital to all those enterprises.

PSL needs to go. Banks should enjoy the freedom to lend and focus more on conducting due diligence, credit appraisal, hand-holding of borrowers, and monitoring fund use. For the most vulnerable, the Government may give interest subsidy but that should be directly credited to their bank accounts.

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

## Tollywood must blend business with craft

Bollywood in Mumbai would have been neither as rich nor gifted without the many bounties of Bengal, like the late Soumitra Chatterjee



PRAFULL GORADIA

Having seen a few of Soumitra Chatterjee-led films, I cannot forget him, or conceptually, Tollywood as a whole. The only film studio I have seen was at Tollygunge in the days when the actor had to wear a light blue *dhoti* so that it showed up as white on the screen. Bollywood in Mumbai would have been neither as rich nor gifted without the many bounties of Bengal, like the late Soumitra Chatterjee.

There was Anil Biswas, who discovered Talat Mahmood, the silken voice; even Talat was first discovered singing Bengali songs as Tapan Kumar

on All India Radio, Kolkata (called Calcutta in those days). There were the unforgettable Hemant Kumar, the versatile Manna Dey and many other artists, musicians and directors. The wonderment is that these men and women, born, bred and having turned artistes in Kolkata, came to what was then called Bombay (the Mumbai of today) to blossom. Arguably, the proudest name of Indian filmdom has been the late Satyajit Ray, India's only Oscar-winning film-maker. Yet, it is Bollywood that has flourished whereas Tollywood has merely survived. What makes this paradox viable?

Tollywood is art plus art, while Bollywood is craft plus business. In some ways, Tollywood reflects the essence of what has been the Bengali elite for the best part of two centuries. To begin with, it was presumed that theatre and cinema were for the masses, while for the masses, the answer was the *jatra* (a popular folk-theatre). A simple song from a popular movie called *Harano Sur* appealed

to most listeners. I tried it once with the servants, and their response was cool. The song was sung on screen by Suchitra Sen: "*Aykbaar bolo, tumi je aamar*."

For the Bengali ethos, the businessman was a "*byabshadar*" and the "*bank*" was an OBC, unlike northern and western India, where he is a twice born and permitted to wear the sacred thread. My belief is that Tollywood film-making has been influenced by this ethos.

Once, when the Rajya Sabha proceedings were awaited to begin, I got a chance to have a 15-minute chat with Mrinal Sen, who has been rated second only to the distinguished Satyajit Ray. Among the two or three questions I happened to pose, one was on why Bengali film themes seldom cater to the masses, although they are often about poor people. His reply was that, "When we began, it was presumed that our market was not large enough like the Hindi cinema." When I pointed out that West Bengal plus



Bangladesh would be 20 crore people, he was slightly taken aback and merely said, "We must think about it." My impression is that many a film was a reflection of the director's choice without sufficient consideration for what the audience would love to watch. When the director and the audience happened to coalesce, the film would be a hit. The Bengali language is melody when spoken and

probably poetry when written. So far, wonderful; but it has in the past discouraged even prime ministerial aspirants from learning Hindi with any degree of accuracy.

The late Jyoti Basu, Siddharth Shankar Ray and Pranab Mukherjee could not speak Hindi spontaneously. Priya Ranjan Dasgupta was the first Bengali I heard speaking in Hindi. Any educated person among the elite spoke English. The second emotional preference was for French. Now, no doubt things are changing as we have heard Babul Supriyo, Minister Of State in the Narendra Modi Government, speaking fluent Hindi.

The West Bengal economy does need a boost and the film industry could well be the one to bring in much investment by the State and Bengalis generally are naturally artistic, be it in acting, music and what not. The only real requirement is that of attitude and priority. Bengali filmmakers must take into account that all

films are not media of artistic expression. Most of them must have a large dose of popular entertainment, too. The market extends from West Bengal to Bangladesh and several districts of Assam. Suitable movies in Bengali could be dubbed in Hindi and other languages, which could extend the market considerably.

Remember, the film industry in India began with Kolkata at its centre, with New Theatres founded by Birendranath Sircar and the great Kundan Lal Saigal as its outstanding star. Incidentally, Saigal had come to Kolkata from Punjab. He picked up Bengali quite well and acted in seven Bengali films, produced by New Theatres. Rabindranath Tagore first heard Saigal before giving consent for the first time to a non-Bengali singing his songs. Saigal endeared himself to the whole of Bengal through his 30 Bengali songs.

(The writer is a well-known columnist and an author. Views expressed are personal)



### FOREIGN EYE



### SCIENCE LOSES TO PROFIT MARGINS

The technology behind the COVID-19 vaccine was not of interest to big pharma until huge sums could be made from it. That is not a way to advance science. It has been stifled by the unwillingness of governments and companies to fund technology that doesn't lead to commercial advantage. (The Guardian editorial)



## GST TURNOVER DISPLAYED IN FORM 26AS

# No extra compliance burden on taxpayers: DoR

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The revenue department on Monday said data analytics has detected persons showing turnover of crores of rupees in GST but not paying a single rupee in income tax, and announced there would be no change in the reporting requirement with the display of GST turnover data in Form 26AS for honest taxpayers.

In a statement, the Department of Revenue (DoR) reiterated that there will be no extra compliance burden on the taxpayers for GST turnover displayed in the Form 26AS, which is an annual consolidated tax statement that can be accessed from the income-tax website by taxpayers using their Permanent Account Number (PAN).

“The GST turnover is being shown in 26AS just for the information of taxpayer. DoR acknowledged that there may be some differences in GSTR-3Bs filed and the GST shown in the Form 26AS but it

can't happen that a person shows turnover of crores of rupees in GST and doesn't pay a single rupee of income tax. There are quite a few such cases that have been detected in data analytics,” it said.

The DoR said that the notified Income Tax Return for the current AY 2020-21 already requires reporting of GST outward supplies in the Schedule GST.

Therefore, the information displayed in Form 26AS would provide ease of compliance to the taxpayers in filing Schedule GST.

“There would be no change in the reporting requirement with the display of information of GST turnover in Form 26AS because the honest taxpayers are already furnishing GST returns and Income Tax Return and reporting their turnover correctly,” it added.

Beginning June 1, 2020, Form 26AS has been revamped to an “Annual Information Statement” which apart from the TDS/ TCS details, shall now

contain comprehensive information relating specified financial transactions, payment of taxes, demand/refund and pending/completed proceedings undertaken by a taxpayer in a particular financial year that has to be mentioned in the income tax returns.

It would also show turnover reported in Goods and Services Tax (GST) return form GSTR-3B.

It would also contain various information reported by reporting entities in statement of financial transactions such as information of cash deposit/withdrawal from saving bank accounts, sale/purchase of immovable property, time deposits, credit card payments, etc.

The earlier Form 26AS used to give information regarding tax deducted at source and tax collected at source relating to a PAN, besides certain additional information including details of other taxes paid, refunds and TDS defaults.

## I-T profiling to help revenue dept nab fraudsters claiming fake GST credits

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

The Government proposes to match GST data mentioned in Form 26AS with the turnover numbers provided while filing income tax returns. The move is aimed at identifying unscrupulous persons who try to avail or pass on input tax credit fraudulently by generating fake invoices. In such cases, the revenue department had found that checking income tax profiles of suspected entities gave the right results on the extent of tax evasion, both on direct and indirect taxes.

Sources said that there is no reconciliation of whether a suspected entity's income

tax payment is commensurate with the expected profit margin on turnover reported by him in the GST returns or additional compliance burden on taxpayers. Only suspected fake invoice generators are being identified for serious action under GST and other laws including suspension of their GST registration based on the fact that whether their income tax payment is commensurate with the expected profit margin on turnover reported by them in the GST returns. The revenue department explained that recently, it was noticed that many unscrupulous persons are trying to avail or pass on input tax credit fraudulently by generating fake invoices.

## Govt's MSP paddy procurement rises 20.25% so far this kharif season

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government's paddy procurement has increased by 20.25 per cent to 281.28 lakh tonnes so far in this kharif season, Punjab contributing the most, the Union Agriculture Ministry said on Monday.

Paddy procurement commenced in Punjab and Haryana from September 26 due to early arrival of the crop, while in other states from October 1.

More than 80 per cent of the country's paddy crop is grown in the kharif season. The government through Food Corporation of India (FCI) and state agencies undertakes procurement of paddy at the minimum support price (MSP).

“Out of the total purchase of 281.28 lakh tonnes, Punjab alone has contributed 196.13 lakh tonnes which is 69.73 per cent of the total procurement,” the ministry statement said.

Total procurement



rose by 20.25 per cent till November 15 of the ongoing kharif season from 233.89 lakh tonnes in the year-ago period, it said. The government has procured paddy at the MSP value of Rs 53,105.70 crore so far, benefitting 24.14 lakh farmers. For the current year, the Centre has fixed the MSP of paddy (common grade) at Rs 1,868 per quintal, while that of A grade variety has been fixed at Rs 1,888 per quintal.

According to the ministry, MSP procurement of paddy in this kharif 2020-21 marketing season is “continuing smoothly” in Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Uttarakhand, Tamil Nadu,

Chandigarh, Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh. In case of cotton, state-run Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) has procured 14.65 lakh bales worth Rs 4,187.05 crore from 2,86,547 farmers till November 15. The buying is going on smoothly in cotton growing areas of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat. Besides, the government through nodal agencies is buying pulses and oilseeds at MSP under the Price Support Scheme (PSS), which gets operationalised when market rates fall below the support price.

## FinMin invites bids from actuarial firms for valuing LIC ahead of IPO

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Finance Ministry on Monday invited bids from actuarial firms for arriving at the embedded value of Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) ahead of its stake sale.

The government plans to sell minority stake in the insurance behemoth and list it on the bourses.

It has already appointed Deloitte and SBI Caps as pre-IPO transaction advisors. In the bid notice, the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) said LIC needs to develop an Indian Embedded Value (IEV) reporting framework for necessary disclosures for the proposed Initial Public Offering (IPO).

Embedded value is a common valuation measure used to estimate the consolidated value of shareholders' interest in an insurance company.

The Request for Proposal has been issued to seek proposals / bids from reputed and eligible actuarial firms to work with LIC to “develop IEV in line with the requirements of the relevant Acts and regulations, Actuarial Practice Standards and guidance notes issued by the Institute of Actuaries of India and LIC Act, 1956, and to provide support during the IPO process”, it said.

The last date for submission of bids is December 8.

The government has budgeted to collect Rs 2.10 lakh crore from stake sales this fiscal.

This include Rs 1.20 lakh crore from CPSE disinvestment and Rs 90,000 crore from selling stake in financial institutions. So far this fiscal, the government has been able to mop up Rs 6,138 crore from CPSE disinvestment.

## BPCL privatisation gets multiple bids; Reliance skips, no supermajor in race

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government on Monday received 'multiple' bids for buying out its stake in India's second-biggest fuel retailer BPCL but billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries as well as supermajors Saudi Aramco, BP and Total did not make a bid.

Tuhin Kanta Pandey, Secretary, Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM), which is handling the sale, tweeted that the transaction advisors for the sale of government's 52.98 per cent stake in Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL) have reported receiving “multiple expressions of interest.”

“The transaction will move to the second stage after scrutiny by TA,” he said.

TA stands for a transaction advisor.

“Strategic disinvestment of BPCL progresses: Now moves to the second stage after multiple expressions of interest have been received,” Finance

Minister Nirmala Sitharaman also tweeted.

Neither of them however gave the number of bids received or the names of the bidders.

Separately, four industry officials said Reliance Industries, which was considered a potential bidder as BPCL would have added 22 per cent fuel market share to its fledgling retail business and made it the nation's number one oil refiner, did not put in an expression of interest (EoI) at the close of the deadline on Monday. Saudi Arabian Oil Company (Saudi Aramco), which had been keen to enter the world's fastest-growing fuel market, too did not put in an EoI. UK's BP plc and Total of France - who have plans to foray into the Indian fuel market - had previously ruled themselves out of the BPCL race as they did not want to add oil refining assets when the world was moving away from liquid fuels.

A clutch of private equity

funds and/or pension funds are said to have put in an EoI.

Russian energy giant Rosneft-led Nayara Energy, which operates a 20 million tonnes oil refinery at Vadinar in Gujarat and also has 5,822 petrol pumps, was considered a potential bidder for BPCL but reports last month had indicated it was no longer keen.

Abu Dhabi National Oil Co (ADNOC), which has ambitions for Indian market, too was considered a potential bidder but it wasn't immediately known if it put in an EoI. Mining billionaire Anil Agarwal is considered another potential bidder given his interest in the oil and gas business with the USD 8.67 billion acquisition of Cairn India.

At Friday's closing price of Rs 412.70 on BSE, the government's 52.98 per cent stake in BPCL is worth Rs 47,430 crore. Also, the acquirer would have to make an open offer for buying another 26 per cent stake from the public, which would cost Rs 23,276 crore.

## WPI inflation at 8-month high of 1.48% in Oct on costlier manufactured items

**New Delhi:**The wholesale price-based inflation rose to an eight-month high of 1.48 per cent in October, as manufactured products turned costlier, with experts saying that the RBI will keep interest rates on hold in its policy review next month.

The WPI inflation was at 1.32 per cent in September and zero per cent in October last year.

This is the highest level of wholesale price index-based (WPI) inflation since February, when it was at 2.26 per cent.

While food article prices softened in October, manufactured items witnessed hardening of prices, according to the data released by the Commerce and Industry Ministry. Food inflation in October stood at 6.37 per cent, as against 8.17 per cent in the previous month.

The rate of price rise in vegetables and potato remained high at 25.23 per cent and 107.70 per cent, respectively, during the month. Inflation in

manufactured products category stood at 2.12 per cent in October, as against 1.61 per cent in September. Fuel and power basket witnessed softening to (-)10.95% in October. The retail inflation, based on consumer price index, was at a six-year high of 7.61 per cent in October, data released last week showed. ICRA Principal Economist Aditi Nayar said core inflation spiked to 1.7 per cent in October 2020 from 1 per cent in Sept, and the core index has been hardening since Aug. “In our view, the core inflation will continue to record a steady uptick in month-on-month terms over the next few months, with the strengthening of the economic recovery, while food prices will remain dominated by the trend displayed by vegetables. The MPC (Monetary Policy Committee) is likely to stay on hold in at least December 2020, if not in February 2021 as well,” Nayar said.

## CIL floats tenders for 35 mining projects

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Coal India Ltd (CIL) on Monday said it has issued tenders for all 35 mining projects identified for mechanised transportation of dry fuel and setting up coal handling plants and silos for rapid loading at an estimated cost of Rs 12,500 crore.

Under mechanised transportation, coal would be moved through piped conveyor or belt mode promoting cleaner environment. With reduced movement of coal-laden trucks on roads, it brings down dust pollution to the comfort of people residing in the proximity of the mines. “Coal India's pitch for efficient and environment friendly mechanised coal transportation in its first-mile connectivity, replacing the road movement, gained pace with the company successfully issuing tenders for all the 35 projects, of phase-1, by September 2020 as planned,” the PSU said in a statement.

## Power consumption grows 7.8% in first half of Nov

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's power consumption grew 7.8 per cent to 50.15 billion units (BU) in the first half of November this year, showing rise in economic activities, as per government data.

Power consumption in the country was recorded at 46.52 BU during November 1-15 last year, according to the power ministry data.

For a full month in November last year, power consumption was 93.94 BU. Thus, the extrapolation of half-month data clearly indicates that power consumption may witness year-on-year growth for the third month in a row, according to experts.

After a gap of six months, power consumption recorded a growth of 4.4 per cent in September this year at 112.24 BU compared to 107.51 BU in the same month last year.

## Saudi Aramco to issue bonds as it seeks cash amid oil slump

AP ■ DUBAI

Saudi Arabia's oil giant Aramco announced Monday it will issue international bonds as it seeks a cash infusion to help pay for billions of dollars in dividends the company promised shareholders before the global coronavirus pandemic sent oil prices plummeting.

In a statement posted on the Saudi Tadawul stock exchange, the company said it plans to issue US Dollar denominated bonds but did not specify the size of the issuance. The bonds, which range from three to 50 years, are targeted to institutional investors with a minimum subscription of USD 200,000. The amount issued and the returns are subject to market conditions, the company said.

Aramco floated a sliver of

the company last year as part of an ambitious plan by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to divert those earnings toward investments that can help fuel the kingdom's growth as he tries to steer the economy away from its dependence on oil revenue for survival. Prince Mohammed sought to encourage Saudi citizens and investors to buy Aramco shares and push up the company's valuation for its stock market debut by promising an annual payout of at least USD 75 billion. Even so, almost all of this dividend money goes to the company's majority owner, the Saudi government, to help cover state spending. Monday's announcement to issue bonds is aimed at raising capital needed to pay the promised dividends, which at USD 18.75 billion a quarter exceeds Aramco's current cash flow.

## Amazon India launches ‘STEP’ to accelerate growth of 7 lakh sellers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Amazon India on Monday launched ‘STEP’, a performance-based benefits programme to help the seven lakh sellers on its platform accelerate their growth.

With the launch of STEP, Amazon is introducing its revised fee structure that was earlier deferred to after Diwali. STEP simplifies the seller experience by providing customised and actionable recommendations which help sellers improve key customer experience metrics and in turn their growth, a statement said.

By improving performance, sellers can unlock benefits across multiple levels like ‘Basic’, ‘Standard’, ‘Advanced’, ‘Premium’ and more.

These benefits include fee waivers, faster disbursement cycles, priority seller support and world-class free account

management, the statement added. “Using customised and actionable recommendations, STEP enables sellers to improve key seller controllable metrics like cancellation rate, late dispatch rate, return rate, among others. Based on their performance, sellers can access benefits like online and offline training, fee waivers, faster disbursement cycles, and free account management,” it said.

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

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

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

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

“Not readily realisable asset”

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

If the liquidator fails to transfer the assets to anyone, he would have to distribute the assets amongst stakeholders, with the approval of the adjudicating authority.

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

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

## NMDC celebrates foundation day

**Hyderabad:** NMDC celebrated its 63rd formation day at its head office Hyderabad and at all locations of its major projects and units with great enthusiasm. NMDC, the largest iron ore producer in the country was incorporated on this day in 1958 and has completed 62 years of excellence. Sumit Deb, CMD, NMDC inaugurated the programme in the presence of functional directors of NMDC PK Satpathy, Director – Production, Amitava Mukharjee, Director Finance, Alok Kumar Mehta, Director Commercial.

Congratulating the employees on this prestigious occasion Sumit Deb, CMD, NMDC said, “Everyone associated with NMDC should take pride in its achievements and also be aware of the increased responsibilities it



brings in terms of working towards the betterment of the society and nation as a whole. I am grateful to all of the NMDC family for the endless support and dedication you have towards your work”. Shri Deb added, “NMDC always encourages wholesome development and sports activities in

and around its projects which are located in very remote areas in Chhattisgarh, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh. PSEs like NMDC play an important role to encourage sports and games in the country. He made a special note on major milestones of NMDC in its 62 years of existence”.

### Equitas Small Finance Bank launches women savings account offering 7% interest

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Equitas Small Finance Bank (ESFB) on Monday announced launch of ‘Eva’ savings account for women offering 7 per cent interest.

Eva, a unique savings account, tries to address the well-being of Indian women in every aspect such as health, wealth and prosperity, ESFB said in a release.

“Along with 7 per cent interest in savings account, it also offers free health check-up and unlimited tele-consultation with women doctors, gynaecologists and mental health experts,” the bank said.

### NCLT approves ₹103 cr resolution plan for NIIL Infrastructures

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

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

In March 2018, NCLT Delhi had admitted the application seeking resolution for NIIL Infrastructures under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code and appointed Nisha

Malpani as the Resolution Professional (RP).

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

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

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



# Trump again refuses to concede

**Washington:** President Donald Trump on Monday again refused to acknowledge his defeat by Democrat challenger Joe Biden and insisted that he “won” the November 3 presidential election.

“I won the Election!” Trump tweeted on Monday. The tweet was flagged by the social networking site, which said, “Official sources called this election differently”. The tweet was not in the caps unlike earlier in the day wherein the same words were in caps.

“He won because the Election was Rigged,” the Republican president wrote on Twitter, repeating unsubstantiated claims of election fraud.

Last week, the mainstream media declared Biden as the winner of the presidential election after the 77-year-old former vice president crossed the mandatory 270 electoral votes out of the 538-member Electoral College.

Trump, however, has refused to concede the election, asserting that he has won.

Trump, who has 232 electoral college votes, has challenged the election results in various states including Pennsylvania, Nevada, Michigan, Georgia and Arizona. He had demanded a



recount in Wisconsin.

He has launched a slew of lawsuits in key states, but has not provided any evidence to back his claims of fraud.

All his lawsuits have so far been unsuccessful.

As Trump, 74, has refused to concede the election, the transition team of Biden and vice-president-elect Kamala Harris says that the Trump administration is not cooperating with them in transition. **PTI**

## Not just politicians, even voters are divided now: Obama

**Washington:** Former US president Barack Obama has said that not just politicians, even the voters are divided now as the priority is to “beat the other guy” rather than discussing issues, facts and policies, and the current media environment adds to that greatly.

Obama, in an interview to CBS News on Sunday, said that they have to work with the media and the tech companies to find ways to inform the public better about the issues and bolster the standards to ensure that they can separate truth from fiction.

“The media landscape has changed. And as a conse-



quence, voters’ perceptions have changed. So that I think Democratic and Republican voters have become much more partisan,” the 59-year-old former president from the Democratic Party said.

Responding to a question, Obama acknowledged that the country is very divided.

In the run up to the 2020 US presidential election, the political divide between the supporters of President Donald

## TRUMP’S NSA PROMISES ‘VERY PROFESSIONAL TRANSITION’ TO BIDEN

**Dubai:** President Donald Trump’s national security adviser promised a “very professional transition” to the administration of President-elect Joe Biden in an interview broadcast Monday, even as Trump continues to falsely claim he won the November election. Speaking to the

Global Security Forum hosted in part by Qatar, Robert O’Brien several times mentioned the transition and referred to recent peace deals that Bahrain, Sudan and the United Arab Emirates struck with Israel as “a great legacy for the president to have as he leaves office.” **AP**

## Two Jirga members arrested in Pak for sentencing woman to death by stoning

**Lahore:** Police in Pakistan have arrested two members of a Jirga, a council of elderly people, for sentencing a woman in Punjab province to death by stoning for allegedly eloping with a man and bearing his child out of wedlock.

According to the FIR, the council of elderly people comprising six persons held a meeting sometime back and sentenced the woman, a mother of nine, to death under the old custom of ‘karo kari’ in Muzaffargarh, some 400kms from Lahore.

Under this custom, a woman is stoned to death in the name of family honour. Police arrested two of the

members and are on a look out for the remaining.

Police official Mehar Riaz Hussain said that the woman had eloped with Noor Shah, a man of her locality, and bore a child out of wedlock.

He said Shah was captured by some elders of the village who brought him back in June last year. The council awarded him a death sentence and he was subsequently killed.

Later, the woman was captured and the council declared that she would be stoned to death after giving birth to the child, the police official said.

The FIR against the Jirga members is registered under sections 310-A, 506-B (pun-

ishment for criminal intimidation, if threat be to cause death or grievous hurt, etc), 148 (rioting, armed with deadly weapon) and 149 (every member of unlawful assembly guilty of offence committed in prosecution of common object) of the Pakistan Penal Code.

Hussain said the woman has been provided protection.

Honour killing, locally known as ‘karo kari’ is an act of murder due to the belief that the victim has brought dishonour upon the family. Often women are killed in the name of ‘karo kari’ which is believed to restore honour and reputation of a family. **PTI**

## Imran Khan’s party wins 8 seats in Gilgit-Baltistan polls, Opp says election ‘stolen’

**Islamabad:** Prime Minister Imran Khan’s Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) on Monday won eight of 23 constituencies and was leading in one seat in the legislative assembly polls in Gilgit-Baltistan, prompting Opposition parties to dub the election as “stolen.”

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

Elections were held on 23 seats of the third legislative assembly on Sunday amidst tight security due to the threat of militancy. Polling on one seat was postponed after the death of one of the contestants.

Unofficial results compiled by the various media outlets showed that PTI won at least 8 seats and was ahead in one, but

it was still well short of majority to form the government. However, it was in a position to form the government as 6-7 independent candidates also won.

Geo TV reported that PTI won 8 seats, independent candidates 7, Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) 3, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) 2, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JIU-F) and Majlis Wahdatul Muslimmeen (MWM) 1 seat each.

The official results were still not known as election authorities may take some time to announce the final outcome.

Both the Opposition parties PPP and PML-N have alleged poll rigging by the ruling PTI.

Commenting on the unofficial results, PPP chief Bilawal Bhutto Zardari alleged that the “election was stolen”. **PTI**

## Hundreds of activists of extremist religious group lay partial siege to Islamabad

**Islamabad:** Hundreds of activists of an extremist religious group on Monday laid partial siege to the national capital to denounce the publication of blasphemous cartoons in a French magazine and force the government to expel the French ambassador.

Tehreek-i-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) of firebrand cleric Khadim Hussain Rizvi organised the protest march on the Murree Road of the garrison city of Rawalpindi on Sunday.

Riot police had to resort to teargas shelling against the stone-pelting TLP protesters who succeeded to reach the Faizabad interchange connecting Rawalpindi and Islamabad, where they launched their sit-in.

Though Rizvi did not join them at the sit-in but his representatives were leading the protestors who refused to move away until the basic demand to send back the French envoy was fulfilled. **PTI**

## Turkey seeks approval to deploy peacekeepers in Azerbaijan

**Ankara:** Turkey’s government submitted a motion to parliament on Monday seeking its approval to deploy peacekeepers to monitor a cease-fire agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia, the state-run news agency reported.

Turkey, which threw its weight behind its ally Azerbaijan in the conflict, has been engaged in talks with Russia for a role in monitoring the cease-fire that ended six weeks of intense fighting between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Russian and Turkish defense ministers signed a memorandum Wednesday to create a joint monitoring center in Azerbaijan.

The bill submitted to parliament requests a one-year mandate to send Turkish peacekeepers, adding that President Recep Tayyip Erdogan would determine the number of troops to be sent.

The motion is expected to



Ethnic Armenians wait to board a bus returning to Stepanakert, the capital of the separatist region of Nagorno-Karabakh in Yerevan, Armenia on Monday **AP**

be debated in coming days. The motion states that civilian personnel could also be deployed as part of the peacekeeping mission.

“It has been assessed that for the Turkish Armed Forces personnel ... To take part in the joint Center which Turkey and Russia will form together, will be beneficial for the peace and welfare of the region’s people and is necessary from the point of our national interests,” the state-

run Anadolu Agency stated from the motion.

Russian officials have said that Ankara’s involvement will be limited to the work of the monitoring center on Azerbaijani soil, and Turkish peacekeepers would not go to Nagorno-Karabakh. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said the center will operate remotely, using drones and other technical means to monitor possible violations. **AP**

## South Africa’s ex-Prez Zuma testifies before commission

**Johannesburg:** Former South African president Jacob Zuma appeared on Monday before a state commission investigating serious allegations of corruption during his tenure as head of state from 2009 to 2018.

It is the first time that Zuma has appeared before the commission since he abandoned his testimony at the commission more than a year ago.

Zuma was forced to step down from his position as president in 2018 by his African National Congress party amid allegations of fraud and corruption.

The commission has no powers to prosecute, but other law enforcement agencies may follow up on information revealed at the commission and pursue criminal cases against those implicated.

On Monday, Zuma launched an application for the chairman of the commission, Deputy Chief Justice Raymond Zondo, to recuse himself from

the investigation, claiming that Zondo was biased against him.

His lawyer Muzi Sikhakhane told the commission that Zuma felt that the commission chairman was biased against him, and that the selection of witnesses at the commission showed it already had conclusions about his guilt.

According to Sikhakhane, Zondo treated some of the witnesses with courtesy but this was not extended to Zuma. Zuma has previously stated that he felt as though he was on trial, and complained that some of the allegations that he had made against witnesses had not been investigated.

The commission’s legal representative, Paul Pistorius, has dismissed Zuma’s claims of bias, saying the real reason he wanted the chairman to recuse himself was because he was concerned that Judge Zondo would make adverse findings against him. **AP**

## France radio ‘mistakenly’ publishes obituaries of Queen, Pele, apologises

**Paris:** France’s RFI public radio apologised Monday for mistakenly publishing obituaries for a number of celebrities still very much alive, including Britain’s Queen Elizabeth and Brazilian football hero Pele.

Citing a “technical problem” that caused the death notices to be released on its website Monday, the broadcaster said: “We offer our apologies to the people concerned and to you who follow and trust us.

“We are mobilising to rectify this major bug,” said the Twitter account of RFI, which saw itself the target of much online derision for the error.

Others RFI declared dead included Iran’s supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, for-



mer US President Jimmy Carter, Cuban leader Raul Castro, actors Clint Eastwood, Sophia Loren and Brigitte Bardot — all in their 80s and 90s.

French business mogul Bernard Tapie, 77, whose obituary had been prematurely published by other news outlets at least twice before, was also on the RFI list. **AFP**

## 65 WHO staffers have virus, 1 cluster

**Geneva:** The World Health Organisation has recorded 65 cases of the coronavirus among staff based at its headquarters, including at least one cluster of infections, an internal email obtained by The Associated Press shows, despite the agency’s public assertions that there has been no transmission at the Geneva site.

The revelation comes amid a surge of cases in Europe, host country Switzerland, and the city of Geneva, in particular, and the email said about half of the infections were in people who had been working from home.

But 32 were in staff who had been working on premises at the headquarters building, indicating that the health agency’s strict hygiene, screen-

ing and other prevention measures were not sufficient to spare it from the pandemic.

Raul Thomas, who heads business operations at WHO, emailed staff on Friday noting that five people — four on the same team and one who had contact with them — had tested positive for COVID-19. While the email did not use the term “cluster,” one is generally defined as two or more cases in the same area and the five cases indicate basic infection control and social distancing procedures were likely being broken.

A previous email he sent on Oct 16 indicated that no clusters had been found at the site.

“As per standard protocols, these colleagues are receiving the necessary medical

attention and are recovering at home,” the email Friday said.

“These last five cases bring the total reported number of affected members of the Geneva based workforce to 65 since the beginning of the pandemic.” Farah Dakhallah, a WHO spokeswoman, confirmed the accuracy of the information about the case count in an email to the AP.

Thomas’ email did not specify who was infected, but a WHO staffer with direct knowledge of the situation who spoke on condition of anonymity because she was not authorized to speak to the press said the cluster included a member of the WHO director-general’s leadership team who is also an infection control specialist. **AP**

## EU, UK enter tension-filled week seeking post-Brexit deal

**Brussels (AP):** European Union and British negotiators on Monday entered yet another tension-filled week as they sought a belated post-Brexit trade deal that needs to be vetted and get legislative approval before a Jan 1 cutoff date.

With both sides refusing to blink on any of the three key outstanding issues, time is increasingly in short supply, especially since the EU approval process would need to take around four weeks.

The UK already left the EU on Jan. 31, but a transition period when EU rules apply to trade and other issues runs until the end of next month. Both sides had hoped to get a trade deal by then to save hundreds of thousands of jobs that

**We are working very hard to get a deal, but there is quite a lot to do, said UK chief negotiator David Frost as he entered EU headquarters for more talks**

could be at stake if Brexit amounts to a brutal cliff edge divorce.

As top negotiators resumed meetings in Brussels on Monday, neither side was ready to cede any ground just yet.

We are working very hard to get a deal, but there is quite a lot to do, said UK chief negotiator David Frost as he entered EU headquarters for more talks.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s office, meanwhile,

again set out the strict conditions.

“If we are to make progress in the coming days, we need to see more realism from the EU on what it means for the UK to be an independent state,” said Johnson’s spokesman, James Slack.

There will be no change in our approach. If there is no change, however, the 27-nation EU insisted it wasn’t up to the bloc to do all the compromising. And the EU insisted that

it wouldn’t be forced into any deal because of time pressure.

“Conditions will have to be right,” European Commission spokesman Eric Mamer said, adding that the EU had long-standing red lines where it wouldn’t budge.

The bloc accuses Britain of wanting retreat access to the EU’s lucrative markets, much like any member, without agreeing to follow its rules. The EU fears Britain will slash social and environmental standards, and pump state money into UK industries, becoming a low-regulation economic rival on the bloc’s doorstep.

Britain says the EU is making unreasonable demands and is failing to treat it as an independent, sovereign state.

## As schools reopen in Africa, relief is matched by anxiety

**Kampala:** One cash-strapped parent asked to pay her child’s school tuition fees with bags of the rice she grows, leading headmaster Mike Ssekaggo to request a sample before he would agree. Eventually he did.

Many other parents in African countries, unable to pay in cash or kind, say their children will have to miss the new term as classes resume after months of delay caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Ssekaggo, headmaster of Wampepo Ntakke Secondary School on the outskirts of Uganda’s capital, Kampala, has fielded complaints from parents scrambling to have their children enrolled for the first time since March.

Relief over the gradual reopening of schools is matched by anxiety over the financial

strain caused by the pandemic and over how to protect students in often crowded classrooms from the coronavirus.

Only about half of 430 students had reported the day after he began admitting students for the new term, Ssekaggo told The Associated Press. School officials worry some children might not return to class because their parents have not been working, Ssekaggo said.

In Uganda, authorities have set standards that schools must meet before they can admit students, most of whom could remain at home until as late as next year. Schools must have enough handwashing stations and enough room in classrooms and dorms for social distancing.

Although the pandemic has disrupted education around the

world, the crisis is more acute in Africa, where up to 80% of students don’t have access to the internet and distance learning is out of reach for many.

Sub-Saharan Africa already had the highest rates of children out of school anywhere in the world, with nearly one-fifth of children between 6 and 11 and more than one-third of youths between 12 and 14 not in school, according to the U.N. Culture and education agency.

Although schools now have reopened in many African countries that had imposed anti-COVID-19 lockdowns, the pandemic’s full impact on education in the world’s most youthful continent of over 1.3 billion people remains to be seen.

In some cases, the decision to reopen remains problematic,

especially as the level of testing remains low.

“One of the things that we have been discussing is how do we monitor the situation in schools where we have large numbers of students,” said Dr. Rashid Aman, Kenya’s chief administrative secretary of health.


“I think definitely we will require to be doing some level of testing in those populations to see whether there is transmission of asymptomatic cases.” As in Uganda, Kenya is implementing a phased reopening of schools. Students taking exams to move to upper grade school, high school and college reported in October. The rest will return in January, but there is widespread concern that schools were reopened too early as some have reported outbreaks. **AP**



Supporters of Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan, a religious political party, block a main road during an anti-France rally in Islamabad, Pakistan on Monday **AP**



**DOCYARD**  
DR ARCHANA DHAWAN BAJAJ



Gynecologist,  
Obstetrician and IVF  
Expert

NURTURE IVF CENTRE

## Take extra care of newborns



With the winters settling in most parts of the country, the weather around us is soothing as it relaxes our mind and body. The cool morning breeze brings with it a new found freshness and energizes us in a way like no other. However, the pleasant winters are known to be one of the leading cause of pollution related deaths in adults and infants. Children are more prone to greater health problems due to their fetal development and in their earliest years and that's because children breathe faster than adults.

The initial lockdown period saw a steep decline in air pollution, however the levels are rising again and air quality has already dipped to very poor category in several cities. Our national capital is facing the brunt of poor air quality and the smoggy mornings and evenings that we are exposed to is a proof. People are facing the harmful effects of air pollution on a daily basis right from irritation in the eyes to breathing problems. According to a report — *State of Global Air 2020* — on air pollution exposures and their impacts on human health, pollution contributed to the deaths of more than 1, 16,000 Indian infants in their first month of life in 2019. Solid fuels such as charcoal, wood, and animal dung used for cooking have been related to more than half of these deaths. While the government claims a decline in the average pollution levels in India over the last three years, the decline has been marginal particularly in the Indo-Gangetic plains, which normally see extremely high particulate matter pollution exposure particularly during winter.

**Early morning hours are the worst for babies as it has highest levels of air pollution. Therefore, limit their sunlight exposure to afternoon as it is a relatively safer period for them**

**Protective measures**  
Parents need to be alert and take immediate measures to protect their children, especially babies from the harmful effects of air pollution. Here are some tips for parents:

**Avoid toxic air exposure:** It's most important to avoid exposure to outside environment and thankfully in our country, babies are not taken out in public before they are at least a month old.

**Avoid early morning sunlight for babies:** Early morning hours are the worst as it has highest levels of air pollution. Therefore, limit the exposure to afternoon as it is a relatively safer period for babies.

**Make use of air purifier:** It is a myth that air purifiers can reduce a child's immunity, however it tends to make the air dry, therefore one must also use a humidifier along with air purifier. Alternatively, make use of indoor plants or vertical gardens in the house.

**Avoid exposure to dust and use organic repellents:** Parents need to protect their babies from the harmful effects of dust and indoor pollution as well. Avoid cleaning or dusting the room in presence of the baby and as far as possible makes use of organic mosquito repellents instead of chemical sprays.

**Breastfeeding:** Breastfeeding gives a lot of immunity to your baby, therefore, feed your child frequently so that they have immunity and also keep them hydrated at all times.

## WARMFOODS

**BRUSSELS SPROUTS:** Brussels sprouts are low in calories but high in fiber, vitamins and minerals. They are especially rich in vitamin K, which is necessary for blood clotting and bone health.

They're also high in Vitamin C, an antioxidant that helps promote iron absorption and is involved in tissue repair and immune function. What's more, their high fiber content helps support regularity and gut health.

Brussels sprouts contain small amounts of vitamin B6,

potassium, iron, thiamine, magnesium and phosphorus. Antioxidants are compounds that reduce oxidative stress in your cells and help lower your risk of chronic disease.

One study found that when participants ate about 2 cups (300 grams) of Brussels sprouts daily, damage to their cells from oxidative stress decreased by 28 per cent. They may also come with added health benefits, including the potential to reduce the risk of cancer, decrease inflammation and improve blood sugar control.



## THE THIRD COMING

With COVID-19 taking four lives an hour in the Capital, the third wave has emerged as the most fatal one. Doctors SANDEEP NAYAR and ROMMEL TICKOO tell MUSBA HASHMI that chances of cases ebbing in Delhi in the next few days look bleak

It was only yesterday that Delhiites woke up to a chilly and clear morning. All thanks to the rains and the cold breeze, that have swept away the smog at least for a day or two. But nonetheless, COVID-19 is here to haunt the Capital even more.

With an alarming rise in cases, there are speculations that if or not Delhi is witnessing the third wave of COVID-19. Unfortunately, according to many doctors and experts, the answer is yes.

"The third wave is going on in Delhi and I don't see a decline in cases any time soon. If at all, the numbers might increase owing to the pollution levels, arrival of winters and also the irresponsible behaviour of the people. In winters, people any way suffer from respiratory tract infections," Dr Rommel Tickoo, Associate Director, Internal Medicine, Max Healthcare, tells you.

He adds that there is already a shortage of ventilators and ICU beds and that the situation can become worse as the doctors and hospital staff is already over-loaded with work.

Dr Sandeep Nayar, Senior Director and Head, Centre of Chest and Respiratory Disease, BLK Super Speciality Hospital, tells you that every year pollution rises during this period but this time because of COVID, it is a double whammy.

"Despite seeing the situation for so many years, the Government has not done enough work to curb pollution. This is proving fatal today. The problem arises when a patient is coming to us with cough and

breathlessness. It has become a challenge to identify whether it is because of pollution only or it is COVID-19 or any other viral infection for that matter. The challenge grows even more when a patient returns to us with similar complaints and doing a RT-PCR test again and again is not a feasible option. And if someone is already suffering from COVID, the pollution is going to worsen his condition because both of them affects the lungs," he tells you.

If a person is infected with COVID and is sneezing or coughing due to pollution, he has more chances of spreading the virus. Hence, the situation is more difficult than ever, Nayar says.

Nayar agrees with Tickoo and says that time and again COVID has proved all of us wrong and one can only hope for a decline in cases. "During summers, we anticipated a decrease in cases, then in the monsoon we thought it will happen, but it didn't. It is difficult to analyse the case pattern, hence all one can do is take precautions until a vaccine or a definitive treatment comes. Because for now, doctors are relying on a cocktail of medicines. And if the patient gets late for treatment, it becomes all the more difficult to treat because by that time the virus has already multiplied itself in the body and the medicines work at a lesser rate," he explains.

According to him, the golden period to seek treatment is within a week of developing symptoms. "We advice that even if the patient is experiencing mild symptoms he should get himself tested without

“IN RARE CASES, WHEN A COVID POSITIVE PATIENT IS UNABLE TO CONTACT A DOCTOR, GIVEN THE HIGH CASELOAD, ONE CAN ALWAYS START THE TREATMENT. FIRST AND FOREMOST, ISOLATE YOURSELF. IN CASE OF MILD FEVER, START PARACETAMOL. IF IT DOES NOT WORK TAKE A HIGHER COMBINATION OF ACECLOFENAC AND COMBIFLAM. TAKE IMMUNITY BOOSTERS LIKE ZINC AND VITAMIN C — DR SANDEEP NAYAR



further delay. Even when we come across such patients whom we doubt are COVID infected, like if someone's family has tested positive and they are also experiencing similar symptoms, we start the treatment without waiting for the

final reports. In such cases we can't afford to waste any time, because if the virus starts affecting other organs, the situation can get out of control and it becomes hard to kill the virus. So it is a rule of thumb that the first week is important," he tells you.

Now that it has become a challenge to find beds for COVID patients in hospitals, it is advisable that patients with mild symptoms should home isolate themselves and continue to get treatment from their home.

"It is important to seek doctor's advice as soon as one tests positive. But in rare cases, when a patient is unable to contact a doctor, given the high caseload, one can always start the treatment. First and foremost, isolate yourself. In case of mild fever, start paracetamol. If it does not work take a higher combination of aceclofenac and combiflam, but only if the fever is in serious form. Take immunity boosters like zinc and Vitamin C. If due to some reason, you are still not able to consult a doctor, take these medicines and keep an eye on your oxygen levels. For COVID person, it should be 94 per cent. Even if it comes down to 93 per cent, one should see it as an alarm and get to the hospital and get the tests done," Nayar suggests.

He points out that in order to keep lungs healthy, one should opt for a healthy and balanced diet and avoid fast and junk food. "Eat a balanced diet. Include leafy vegetables and fresh fruits. A healthy diet works wonders. Don't eat junk. *Ghar ka khaana* is the best at all times," he opines.

## A CUP FULL OF IMMUNITY



Whether one is happy or sad, a cup of tea always comes in as your best partner. But today, teas can do much more than enhance your mood.

BALA SARADA lists teas that can boost immunity

Having a strong immune system is more important than ever. With the ongoing pandemic, while there is no proven cure as of now, enhancing the body's immunity plays a very crucial role in maintaining optimum health and keeping the disease at bay.

Here are five teas which can play a significant role in boosting and building your immunity the natural way.

### Turmeric Tea

Turmeric known as the Golden Son of Ayurveda has been known as one of the healthiest spices of India due to its multiple medicinal and adaptogenic benefits. The Ministry of Ayush has recommended Turmeric for boosting immunity. Make sure you're drinking turmeric tea coupled with black pepper.

The main active ingredient in Turmeric, 'Curcumin' is responsible for its multiple life enhancing properties. Combining black pepper with turmeric is proven to increase curcumin's absorption in the body significantly.

### Lemon Tea

There is nothing quite as healthy as a cup of lemon tea. Besides being packed with nutrients that can give your health a big boost, it is a great way to stay hydrated as well, and now with summers already here, this could be an elixir. Lemon tea is loaded with Vitamin C, which can act as a natural antioxidant in boosting the body's immunity.

### Pure Green Tea

Well-known for being an abundant source of antioxidants, drinking green tea on a regular basis flushes out the toxins from the body. Abundant in polyphenols and catechins, green tea helps boost immunity. Green tea has long been recognised as having powerful antiviral properties and can go a long way to keep you healthy and well.

### Moringa Tea

Moringa is just the superfood we need. The moringa leaves provide a significant amount of antioxidants. It is a treasure house of all essential nutrients including essential vitamins and minerals that are needed to improve the immunity. When consumed regularly, moringa can really strengthen your immunity.

### Ashwagandha Tea

Ashwagandha is an adaptogenic herb, which helps our body to deal with daily stress and balances our body functioning. It also promotes overall immunity, strength, energy and endurance. It's been used to prepare Ayurvedic medicine for a long time. Ashwagandha is not limited to the immune system but offers a lot of other health benefits.

To brew them right and well is also essential. It's very important to note that you should always use freshly drawn water. After it reaches boiling point (100 degrees C), allow it to rest for one minute. This will bring down the temperature to around 80 degrees C, which is an ideal temperature to brew these teas. Steep these teas for between three and five minutes.

Avoid adding milk. You can add honey, stevia or any other sweetener.

The writer is Founder, Vahdam Teas

## DadiKaKehna

*Bad breath can be extremely embarrassing for anyone and everyone. ROSHANI DEVI shares easy home remedies that can help you keep the smell away and feel all the more confident throughout the day*



Bad breath is common, more so if one likes to eat onions and garlic. However, there can be many underlying issues, but the most common reason is poor oral hygiene.

Here are a few tips that can help you fight it.

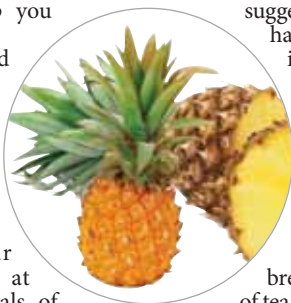
First and foremost, brush at least thrice a day or after eating. Use a good mouth wash. And replace your toothbrushes at regular intervals of time.

Second, pineapple is their to your rescue. Drink a glass of organic pineapple juice after every meal, or chew on a pineapple slice for

one to two minutes. It's also important to remember to rinse your mouth of the sugars in fruit and fruit juice afterward.

Third, parsley can help. Its fresh scent and high chlorophyll content suggest that it can have a deodorising effect. Chew on fresh parsley leaves and let them do all the work.

Fourth, brew two cups of tea before going to bed and refrigerate it overnight. Pour your cool tea into a water bottle and carry it with yourself all day. Slowly sip on it throughout the day.



## Say no to popping pills

Millennials worry that despite best of care, unknown nutritional deficiencies might plague their health. Hence, they take to popping pills. PULKIT SHARMA tells you that a balanced diet is all one needs

With a sharp increase in our life expectancies along with the growing burden of lifestyle and novel infectious diseases, most of us want to take no chances when it comes to our health. We try to follow special diets, exercise more, reduce our stress levels and aspire to keep agile and happy. Over the last few years, several vitamins and supplements have become an integral part of our diet. Many millennials worry that despite best of care, unknown nutritional deficiencies might plague their health.

Consequently, they are always on a lookout for a perfect health supplement-a pill that will magically fill in the various nutritional gaps in their diet and give them the best of health. With many multivitamins and health supplements easily available over the counter, an increasing number of people use them on a regular basis.

But these purported fountains of youth, health and

longevity come with a Pandora's box of maladies. For starters, many such products may contain vibrant artificial colours, synthetic derivatives, hydrogenated oils, heavy metals, and titanium dioxide and with all these unhealthy additives, the tiny pills and fine powders do more harm than good. The bigger problem is that people often use these pills as a substitute for healthy behaviours such as a balanced diet, physical exercise, and relaxation. They erroneously start believing that they can binge on junk food routinely, sprawl around freely and do whatever they fancy, as if the health supplements will miraculously fix everything.

Of course, vitamins, minerals and health supplements do have a range of health benefits. Vitamin D boosts our immune system, strengthens our bones and teeth, and regulates our mood. But does this mean that we need to swallow several pills a day to get these essential micronutrients into

our system? We seem to have forgotten that a varied and a balanced diet can provide most of these micronutrients to us in their most natural and potent form. Nature has designed our systems to extract nutrition from food and not from tablets, gummies or powders manufactured in a laboratory. When we get these essential nutrients from the food, there is no significant risk of overdosage or toxicity.

If you are feeling run-down, try to fix your diet and lifestyle first. If that does not help, schedule a visit to a health practitioner who can diagnose your condition and assess whether you need any supplement or not. Even if you need one, the emphasis should still be on eating right and cultivating healthy habits so that your body recovers from the deficiency and you can go off the supplements quickly.

The writer is a clinical psychologist & the author of When the Soul Speaks

## INBRIEF

The 3bO is India's first face mask that uses CeNSTech™ — a patented technology of CeNS, a Govt of India, Dept of Science & Technology Lab, which provides antiviral and antibacterial protection. Designed and developed by the scientists at The Centre for Nano and Soft Matter Sciences (CeNS), 3bO is the only mask based on triboelectricity. The mask is being manufactured and marketed by Camellia Clothing, a three decade old clothing company based in Bangalore, under an exclusive global license from CeNS.

3bO masks use the concept of Triboelectricity to give the masks enhanced Electrostatic Filtration, and aid Electrostatic Viral deactivation, over and above the mechanical filtration. Live viral filtration results have shown 90% live viral filtration in 3bO masks compared to 56% filtration in highly ranked chemically coated masks. The inner layers of 3bO mask, continuously generate a triboelectric charge, through the natural airflow of breath and speech. "At Camellia we were scanning Technologies that would bring both Science and comfort together for protecting us against this Covid-19 virus. This came true when we signed an exclusive licence to manufacture a technologically advanced, and awesomely comfortable mask developed by scientists at CeNS," says Harish Mittal, MD, Camellia Clothing Ltd.



## Trend Slazer

### Taapsee gives Rashmi Rocket twist

Actor **TAAPSEE PANNU** has a great sense of humour. She gave a hilarious *Rashmi Rocket* twist to her life, noting how she runs from one location to another.

Taapsee posted a picture on Instagram. In the image, she is seen running hurriedly dressed in athleisure.

"Running from one location to another. Pune > Lonavala > Mumbai

*#RashmiRocket*," she wrote alongside the image.

Directed by Akarsh Khurana, *Rashmi Rocket* is about a runner from the Rann of Kutch who fights for her identity and becomes an athlete. Actor Priyanshu Painyuli will be seen playing the role of Taapsee's husband in the project.



**'I want to do deep sea diving and see the corals before it's dead because I have been hearing that corals are going to die soon and they are already considered extinct in many terrains. So, that's something I really want to see. I want to see the beautiful deep water sea and the marines and plants.'**

—**Abhishek Banerjee**

Actor **ANIL KAPOOR** has started shooting for his forthcoming film, *Jug Jugg Jeeyo*, directed by Raj Mehta.



The film is backed by Karan Johar's Dharma Productions. The filmmaker took to Twitter and shared the film's clapboard.

"Nothing matches the happiness, nervousness and excitement like the first day of shoot! *#JugJuggJeeyo* We are ready! *#firstshot*," Anil wrote.

The film also stars Neetu Kapoor, Varun Dhawan and Kiara Advani.

### This year showed us what mattered: JLo

Singer-actress **JENNIFER LOPEZ** says 2020, which saw the world fighting against COVID-19, turned out to be one that showed people what mattered the most to them.

Lopez was named The People's Icon Of 2020 at People's Choice Awards.

"Man, 2020 was no joke right? I mean before 2020, we were obsessing about winning this award or getting nominated for that award or we were caught up in who sold the most records or box office opening or crazy stuff like did we get the latest drop before anybody else. But not this year. This year was the great leveller. It showed us what mattered, what didn't," Lopez said during her acceptance speech.



# A magician's travelogue

Travelling to the most vibrant corners of India, illusionist NEEL MADHAV unravels the cultural richness of India and explores magic in every element he stumbles upon in his new show, *You Got Magic*. By TEAM VIVA

One man, seven cities and an exhilarating journey to find magical elements across India. Neel Madhav, the illusionist, is back with a thousand new tricks up his sleeve in the new show — *You Got Magic With Neel Madhav*. This time, the series will witness Neel bring to life the cultural richness of the country and unravel folk secrets across places like Dehradun, Kerala, Uttarakhand, Ahmedabad, Agra, Deogarh and Chandigarh. Excerpts:

**Can you tell us about the series — *You Got Magic with Neel Madhav*?**

In the show, I travel to places in and around India to explore magic with locals and also, to feel the magic of each place. So, we are starting off with me going back to my roots, which is to Dehradun because I was in the boarding of Doon School there for almost six years. So I thought maybe lets give people a taste of the

kind of education I had. I have been going to a lot of schools lately for my book promotion and something I realised that was missing was a sense of pride towards their own country. So I thought it would be a great idea to start with the basics and then move forward to the kind of magic our country offers.

**Tell us some of the best memories while travelling for this series?**

One of the memories is from Dehradun itself. In my school, we had a thing called the Rose Gold, it's an auditorium which houses around 4,000 people and it was built by the students at the school. Any person who got a chance to perform at the auditorium was a huge deal. So, in the show, I got the entire school coming into the Rose Gold and

did a two-hour performance for them. It was very special for me. It was me reliving my old school life.

**How do the locals respond to your magic tricks?**

It's a give and take relationship. It's not one-sided and it can never be. They make me experience their culture, food, music and more. In return, I perform my magic.

**How does your interest in Neuro-Linguistic Programming and Criminal Psychology help you in your magic?**

Neuro-Linguistic Programming and Criminal Psychology are not used to do tricks. They are used to understand people. And once you do that, then you know what kind of tricks to do with them. The amount of mental health cases in India are growing and it's very important to understand where they come from. At the end of the day, when to study humans, it's important to understand why they do the things they do and why they are like that. Before performing magic, I think it's important to understand what kind of feeling they want to generate. And that's where Neuro-Linguistic

Programming helps me in doing the right kind of trick.

**What's so special about the cities covered in this series and why did you pick them?**

Dehradun is nostalgic. We had to go there. Then we went to Kerala because we had the boat race happening there, so we were intrigued to know how communities get together for this mega event. We went to the backwaters of Kerala as well and I got to experience the boat race firsthand. That was something magical about Kerala. After that we visited Ahmedabad, there we had the kite festival happening, an amalgamation of colours. It was truly aesthetic. Kite flying is an art form and it's about bringing humans together. We also went to Agra. It has a place called Sherone, which is a restaurant run by acid attack survivors. How they pulled themselves out from misery and torture is as magical as anything can be. It highlighted the darkside of our culture and humanity. But those who were inflicted by the darkness came out stronger, that was inspirational. So, we encountered such amazing stories from different parts of our country. I think everyone needs to cherish and celebrate them.

**How has the lockdown been for you? With restrictions on travel, what kept you busy?**

Oh, it was amazing. I had no problems in lockdown whatsoever. I actually wrote my second book this lockdown. I think it was a tremendous few months. As much as the world was suffering, as much as I'd like to physically help them, but the least I could do is make people understand the workings of the mind through my book. This pandemic has pretty much increased the amount of mental health patients. So, it was quite productive. I got time to spend time with myself and respect my work.

**What's the next adventure that's drawing your attention?**

Undoubtedly, my book. The first draft has been completed. Now it's going for checking. There's still a little way to go. But before that happens, I am really excited about my show going live. It's a huge platform and a lot of Indians love to watch shows that educate them about various things of our country. So I am kind of humbled to be able to show my journey on television. My show comes from a very non-judgmental perspective. I am looking forward to people taking back some magic as the show rightly says, *You Got Magic*.

(The show premieres on November 19 at 10 pm on Sony BBC Earth.)



## TALES OF COURAGE

The documentary, *India: The Forgotten Army*, discusses the crucial yet overlooked role played by the Indian soldiers during World War I



remain largely unknown once the war was over. They were neglected by the British, for whom they fought, and ignored by their own country, since they were fighting a colonial war. History had orphaned them. This film is a valuable contribution to their overdue rehabilitation"

Issac John, Business Head –

Digital (South Asia), Discovery said, "The brave feats by Indians during the First World War had so far gone unnoticed. We are humbled to be able to shine a light on their tales of courage and sacrifice with the release of India: The Forgotten Army on Discovery Plus. Our users have repeatedly expressed their interest in knowing more about the

storyed past of our brave soldiers and this release reaffirms our commitment to listen to our users."

The show brings together military and history experts and takes the viewers to the battle sites with animations and footages.

(The series is streaming on Discovery Plus.)

## A safe bet

Veteran producer ANAND PANDIT says that remakes of South-Indian films are here to stay



Recently, Akshay Kumar's *Laxmmi* released on an OTT platform. It is the much-awaited remake of Raghava Lawrence's 2011 film, *Kanchana*. Shahid Kapoor's next is the remake of Telugu hit *Jersey*, John Abraham is remaking Malayalam hit, *Ayyappanum Koshiyum* and Rajkumar Rao is going to star in the remake of Telugu film, *Hit*.

The veteran producer Anand Pandit says that the trend of remaking South-Indian films is not new. "It is much older than the films like *Simmba*, *Kabir Singh*, *Kick*, *Rowdy Rathore*, *Wanted*, *Bodyguard*, *R...Rajkumar*, *Bhool Bhulaiyaa*, *Garam Masala*, *Hera Pheri* and more," adds he.

All through the 40s and the 50s, regional studios like Gemini Pictures, AVM and Prasad Productions were remaking their films in Hindi.

Pandit observes, "South-Indian films were being adapted for the Hindi film audience as far back as the 50s. Films like *Azaad* that established Dilip Kumar Saab as a comic legend was made in 1955. It was a remake of a Tamil film *Malaikkallan*. In fact, Dilip Saab starred in many South-Indian

remakes like *Ram Our Shyam* and *Aadmi*."

In the 80s too, Pandit recalls that Jeetendra starred in many hit South-Indian remakes like *Himmatwala*, *Mawaali*, *Tohfa*, *Justice Chaudhury* and more.

"It is not tough to see why so many makers and actors are drawn to South-Indian films. Well-told stories that have already struck a chord with the audience are a safe bet and that is why you see so many remakes of *Arjun Reddy*. It makes sense commercially to bet on a film that has done well," Pandit feels.

He says that the audience wants stories that have a universal appeal and often, a South-Indian film offers something fresh. "I don't think, we would have had films like *Laxmmi*, *Ghajini* or *Sadma* amid us without their regional predecessors. As a maker, I too look forward to collaborating with directors from other industries and produce a really enthralling, entertaining remake," he shares.

Pandit is currently giving final touches to his forthcoming films, *The Big Bull* starring Abhishek Bachchan and *Chehre* starring Amitabh Bachchan and Emran Hashmi.



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

David Warner and Steve Smith's presence does make Australia stronger but Cheteshwar Pujara has full faith in India's "remarkable" bowlers, who, he feels, possess the wherewithal to script a repeat of the historic 2018-19 Test series victory.

Pujara's 500 plus runs with three top-notch hundreds formed the cornerstone of a 2-1 series win back then, India's first in Australia in 71 years. However, Smith and Warner didn't play in that series due to their ball-tampering bans.

"It (Australian batting line-up) will be a little stronger than what it was in 2018-19 but then victories don't come easy. If you want to win away from home, you need to work hard," India's dependable No.3 told PTI in an exclusive interview before he embarked on the tour of Australia.

Pujara believes that India's fast bowling troika of Jasprit Bumrah, Ishant Sharma and Mohammed Shami can again work up some magic like in 2018-19, posing a lot of discomfort for the home batting line-up. The upcoming Tests are scheduled to start on December 17.

"No doubt Smith, Warner and Marnus Labuschagne are great players. But the good part about our current crop of bowlers is that most of them play in the same series and our bowling unit will also not be very different to what it was in 2018-19."

For India's fast bowlers, it's like a "been there, done that" situation.

"They know how to be successful in Australia as they have enjoyed success there in the past. They have their game-plans in place and if we can execute them well, they are capable of getting Smith, Warner and Labuschagne out quickly.

"If we can do what we have done in the past, I am sure we have every chance of winning the series again."

The opening Test in Adelaide is a Day-Night game and batting against the pink kookaburra during the twilight session will pose its own set of challenges, said the man who

# SMITH, WARNER'S PRESENCE A CHALLENGE: PUJARA



Cheteshwar Pujara left, Virat Kohli right practice during training session

Cheteshwar Pujara/Twitter

is nearing 6000 Test runs (5840 in 77 games) with 18 hundreds in his kitty.

"It will be a different challenge altogether playing with pink ball as pace and bounce also changes. We will be playing with pink kookaburra in Australia (against Bangladesh, it was Pink SG Test). It will be slightly different."

He believes that overcoming the challenges of playing their first overseas Day/night Test will have to happen collectively.

"As a team and as individuals, one has to understand and accept and get used to it (pink ball and lights) as early as possible. There will be a bit of difference with pink ball.

"The twilight period is more challenging than other periods but as you play more and practice more, you get used to it. It does take a little while..."

An astute student of the game, Pujara is known to work on his with father Arvind Pujara, who is also his one and only coach.

**Pujara's 500 plus runs with three top-notch hundreds formed the cornerstone of a 2-1 series win back then, India's first in Australia in 71 years. However, Smith and Warner didn't play in that series due to their ball-tampering bans**

## KL hones his pull shot with tennis ball training

PTI ■ SYDNEY

After competing on the slow UAE tracks for nearly two months during the IPL, India's star-studded batting line-up is gearing up for the lively Australian pitches with the traditional tennis ball training on Monday.

In-form KL Rahul spent considerable time in perfecting his pull-shots with deliveries hurled from 18 yards during Monday's net session.

There was nothing unusual in such session as players train like this when they gear up to compete on tracks where there is steep bounce on offer.

In a video posted on twitter by the BCCI, Rahul's senior teammate Ravichandran Ashwin was seen using a tennis racquet and serving

the stand-in white ball vice-captain with tennis balls aimed at his rib cage.

Rahul was trying to keep the pull shot down, an art his skipper Viat Kohli has mastered over the years, rolling his wrists.

With training modules undergoing a sea change, now the tennis racquets are used to add more pace to the light tennis balls.

Team's senior speedster Mohammed Shami posted a video on his personal twitter handle, where he was seen bowling with the pink kookaburra ball.

"There is no better feeling than to play for your country. A long wait to bowl in the #TeamIndia nets finally ended today! Looking forward to our Australian tour," Shami tweeted.

preparation before this series also. I always try and add a few more things in my game, which will help me get better," he said.

The 32-year-old is confident that history will repeat itself in Australia this time.

"You can't win matches on your own. Yes, you can perform exceptionally well but you need support from other players to win. Even the bowling unit was remarkable during the last series.

"In the end, you need 20 wickets to win a Test and wasn't just my performance, even other batters supported at some stage or the other. It was the team's success. When the Indian team succeeds, it is always a moment of pride," he rec-

collected.

Pujara has practised for a good two months at his academy in Rajkot under the watchful eyes of his father.

Does it bother that before leaving for Australia, he didn't get enough match practice?

"Look, this is a situation that has impacted millions of lives and people have lost lives. In normal circumstances, we would have played domestic cricket and gone to Australia but everyone needs to think about safety and security.

"As far as I am concerned, I am happy if I am able to practice, do my fitness, running sessions and move my body well, which I did," he concluded.

## Cummins not sure about playing white ball series

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australia pace spearhead Pat Cummins on Monday said he is yet to take a call on whether to play in the limited-overs series against India beginning November 27 even though he is feeling fresh after spending three months inside bio-secure bubbles.

Cummins, who returned last week from the UAE where he turned up for Kolkata Knight Riders in the Indian Premier League, has been hopping between bio-secure bubbles since touching down in England in late August but he allayed fears of fatigue.

"(I) haven't made a final decision on that yet. (It's) unprecedented times with so many people spending a large portion of time in these bubbles so we're going to keep all the conversations open, chat about that a bit closer to when we all get together," Cummins said when asked about resting ahead of the Test summer.

"There's always cricket on, so we'll make sure we're all open about that, having those conversations," said the 27-year-old during a video conference as reported by 'cricket.Com.Au'.

Cummins has been named in both the white and red-ball squads as vice-captain. The limited-overs series is to be held in Sydney and Canberra ahead of the four-match Test series, beginning in Adelaide on December 17.

Australia's Test players in the white-ball squad, including Steve Smith and David



Pat Cummins celebrates after taking wicket during IPL

KKR/Twitter

Warner, will get only a week to prepare for the opening Test, a day-nighter in Adelaide.

"I wouldn't be surprised if there's times throughout the summer where some players might just need a little rest knowing not only how busy this next couple of months is but also a tour of South Africa (February-March) and a few away tours next year," said Cummins, who has taken 143 wickets from 30 Tests.

The right-arm was in bio-bubbles in Southampton

and Manchester on Australia's white-ball tour of the UK before flying to the UAE for the IPL, where he was with his franchise Kolkata Knight Riders.

He is now in Sydney spending 14 days quarantining and will join the squad on November 27, the day of the opening one-dayer at the SCG.

Despite enduring bio-bubbles for three months now, Cummins said he felt it is a "pretty good place."

"One of the benefits of being in a bubble in the UAE was we didn't spend much time travelling. A normal IPL we're on a flight every second day, different city, so I think sometimes that can be as draining as the playing part.

"No doubt as well, the six or seven months we had at home (during the winter) put us in a pretty good place leading into the England tour and IPL.

"Coming in fresh to those tours it doesn't feel like the end of the summer, it feels like I'm ready to start the tour and in a pretty good place."

Cummins also said he won't be going out there to intimidate the Indians but if he manages to have the effect, it would be a bonus.

"If it happens I'll be happy. Hopefully the (pitch) conditions will be what we as Aussies are accustomed to," he said.

"Hopefully they've got a bit more bounce and pace than you would a place like India so that home advantage might come into it."



## Paine wants Burns to open

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Promising Australia batsman Will Pucovski may have to wait for his much-anticipated Test debut with skipper Tim Paine showing keenness to persist with struggling Joe Burns when the high-stakes series against India begins next month.

Despite Pucovski scoring truckload of runs, including consecutive double centuries in the Marsh Sheffield Shield, Australia Test captain Paine hinted that Burns may continue his opening partnership with David Warner.

"Burns had a really good summer for us last year with David Warner, their partnership and relationship is a really important one for our team," Paine was quoted as saying by Australian Associated Press.

"They got us off to a number of good starts last year. Burny hasn't been in the form

that he would like or scored the runs he would like. But we know he does a good job.

"He averages close to 40 in Test cricket for Australia, which is a great effort opening the batting, and I expect him to start this summer," he added.

Many former players, including ex-captain Mark Taylor, Ian Chappell, Michael Clarke and Kim Hughes have called for Pucovski to debut at Adelaide Oval in light of his sparkling form and the struggles of Burns.

Chairman of selectors Trevor Hohns and coach Justin Langer have also indicated that Burns is unlikely to be left out of the Test team.

Burns averaged 11.4 with only one score above 20 but he was Australia's third highest run-scorer last summer (256 at 32.00).

The four-Test series will begin with day/night Test at Adelaide from December 17.

## Nadal, Thiem start with win

AP ■ LONDON

Dominic Thiem made sure this year's ATP Finals didn't begin the same way last year's ended.

Thiem outlasted Stefanos Tsitsipas in a rematch of the 2019 final, beating the defending champion 7-6 (5), 4-6, 6-3 Sunday in the opening singles match of the tournament inside a largely empty O2 Arena.

In the late match, Rafael Nadal had a much easier time against newcomer Andrey Rublev, beating the Russian 6-3, 6-4 in just 1 hour, 17 minutes.

Nadal is looking to cap a season in which he earned his record-equaling 20th Grand Slam title and 1,000th match win on tour by capturing his first trophy at the ATP Finals. He has qualified for the season-ending event for a record 16 straight years but lost in the final twice and missed six editions because of injuries.

"It's important to start well, of course, for the confidence, because winning in straight sets helps," Nadal said.

"I played solid with my serve. I didn't suffer much, and that helps to play more relaxed on the returns."

Thiem, who won his first major at this year's U.S. Open, broke Tsitsipas for a 2-0 lead in the third set with a drop shot at the net and converted his second match point when Tsitsipas sent a forehand wide.

Tsitsipas beat Thiem in a third-set tiebreaker in last year's final to clinch the biggest title of his career. But he let the first-set tiebreaker slip away this time, after leading 4-1 and 5-3.

Facing set point, the Greek failed to put away a fairly simple overhead at the net before sending a lob long to hand Thiem the lead.

"That was the silliest thing that ever happened to me," Tsitsipas said about his overhead shot.

"I had ball over the net, and I decided to play forehand instead of a smash. I don't know what kind of decision was that."

Tsitsipas broke for a 2-1 lead in the second set with a forehand passing shot before leveling the match. He had a

chance to break back at 3-1 in the third but netted a backhand, letting out a scream of frustration after the miss. Thiem eventually held serve after a game that went to six deuces, and was never troubled the rest of the way.

"That was crazy, I was pretty tight I must say in that game," Thiem said about his hold for 4-1.

"I think that was the last key moment where the match went finally in my direction."

Nadal steered the evening match in his direction from the start, losing just five points on his serve in the first set. He broke for a 4-2 lead when Rublev sent a shot long, and the Russian then slammed his racket into the ground in frustration.

Rublev entered the tournament as one of the hottest players on tour, having won five titles this season, but looked unsettled against Nadal and continuously gesticulated and shouted to himself between points.

This is the 12th and last year that the ATP Finals is played at the O2 Arena before moving to Turin, Italy, next year. Because of the coronavirus pandemic there are no fans inside the 20,000-capacity venue this time - meaning the normally raucous atmosphere has been replaced by an eerie silence interrupted only by muted applause from the players' boxes between points.

On Monday, Djokovic will face

debutant Diego Schwartzman before Daniil Medvedev takes on 2018 champion Alexander Zverev.



AP ■ ROME

Three years after an embarrassing failure to qualify for the World Cup, Italy is back in contention with the best in Europe.

England, meanwhile, is already out of contention for the Nations League finals with one round of matches still to play.

An Italy squad badly hit by the coronavirus still managed to beat Poland 2-0 on Sunday, putting the Azzurri in control of their group, while England was beaten 2-0 by top-ranked Belgium.

Another win at Bosnia-Herzegovina on Wednesday will see Italy hosting the four-team finals in October — just a few months after hosting the opening game of the European Championship in Rome.

Mancini is isolating at home with the coronavirus, as is striker Ciro Immobile, the winner of the European Golden Shoe last season. In all, more than 20 Italy players were unavailable due to the virus and injury.

Jorginho converted a penalty

for Italy midway through the first half after Andrea Belotti was brought down inside the area. Domenico Berardi added another goal late in the second half after collecting a pass from Lorenzo Insigne.

Italy leads Group 1 in League A with nine points. The Netherlands is next with eight points after beating Bosnia 3-1. Poland is still in contention with seven points, while Bosnia trails with two.

**BELGIUM NEARS FINALS**

Dries Mertens scored a superb free kick as Belgium ended England's hopes of reaching the finals.

Belgium took the lead 10 minutes in when Romelu Lukaku set up Youri Tielemans for a deflected shot.

Mertens made it 2-0 in the 24th by expertly curling his kick

**AN ITALY SQUAD BADLY HIT BY THE CORONAVIRUS STILL MANAGED TO BEAT POLAND 2-0 ON SUNDAY, PUTTING THE AZZURRI IN CONTROL OF THEIR GROUP, WHILE ENGLAND WAS BEATEN 2-0 BY TOP-RANKED BELGIUM**

over the English wall - which mostly failed to jump - after Kevin De Bruyne was fouled.

Belgium leads Group 2 in League A with 12 points. Denmark



Belgium's Youri Tielemans celebrates after scoring his team's first goal

AP

is next with 10 following a 2-1 win over Iceland. England has seven and Iceland none.

Belgium needs only a draw at home with Denmark on Wednesday to reach the finals.

**DE BOER FINALLY WINS**

Frank de Boer finally has his first win as Netherlands coach after Georginio Wijnaldum scored a swift brace to lead his team to a 3-1 victory over Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Wijnaldum, captain in the absence of his injured Liverpool teammate Virgil van Dijk, tapped in from close range in the sixth and 14th minutes to set up the win in the empty Johan Cruyff Arena.

Wijnaldum has now scored seven of his country's last 12 goals. Memphis Depay got the Netherlands' third goal.

The victory eases pressure on De Boer, who became the first Netherlands coach not to register

a win in his first four matches in charge when his team drew 1-1 with Spain on Wednesday, following a defeat and two more draws since taking over from Ronald Koeman.

**WINNING WALES**

Wales is the only unbeaten team in League B following a 1-0 win over Ireland, courtesy of David Brooks' second-half header.

Now Wales needs only to avoid defeat at home against second-place Finland to earn promotion to the top tier.

"We didn't play that well today, but we came out fighting in the second half. It's another three points and that's what matters and it sets up well for Wednesday," said Wales captain Gareth Bale.

"We have a great record at the moment and it's great to get the win. I love playing for Wales, but the most important thing is that this team keeps winning."

In Group 1, Austria beat Northern Ireland 2-1 to also stay on course for promotion with four wins in five games.