

**MONEY 6**  
FY19 GST RETURNS FILING  
DEADLINE EXTENDED TILL DEC 31

**WORLD 7**  
'I VOTED FOR A GUY NAMED  
TRUMP,' PRESIDENT SAYS

**SPORT 8**  
KKR BEAT DELHI  
BY 59 RUNS

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# sunday pioneer

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**USUALSUSPECTS**  
SWAPAN DASGUPTA

## Can Modi's appeal do wonders for Nitish?

Opinion polls in India may well be indicative but they are rarely accurate — as opposed to exit polls which tend to be nearer the mark. Part of the reason for unending inaccuracies lie in the flawed methodologies of the polls. Random sampling costs a lot of money, not to mention sampling rigour, and the limited budgets of media organisations often rule out a statistically robust survey. On top of that is the bizarre — but nevertheless real — inclination of some pollsters to produce results that appear good news to their clients. The importance of accurate predictions over make-believe good news has never been fully appreciated by either media organisations or political parties.

The real shortcoming of opinion polls in Indian elections can be located in the restrictions imposed by the Election Commission on the publication of the polls. Since it has been deemed that the campaign should not be influenced in any way by polls that predict winners and losers, the surveys are conducted before the battle lines in the constituencies are clear. The polls published so far contain a significantly large number of undecided voters — or voters who refuse to indicate their voting intentions. This means that small shifts can change the outcome. Accurate polls have to track the popular mood as the campaign progresses. Since this isn't possible owing to the restrictions imposed by the EC, speculation based on anecdotal evidence by politicians and media professionals abound.

Notwithstanding these obvious limitations, it is possible to make a few observations on the state of play in the Bihar Assembly elections.

First, there is a huge question mark surrounding the final turnout at a time of pandemic. The crowds at rallies may well be impressive and passionate about their preferences. However, while the mood of the rallies may well turn out to be infectious, it is pertinent to bear in mind the fact that those attending rallies constitute a small percentage of the electorate. Most voters make up their mind on the strength of accumulated experiences built up over the years, traditional affiliations and, finally, community choices. Rallies and smaller campaign meetings do help to disseminate messages, but they are never all-important inputs in the final vote.

This election may be further complicated by the underlying fear of being part of a crowd on voting day. Although the fear of the Covid-19 pandemic is more pronounced in the urban areas, there is still a significant proportion of rural voters who are loath to step out of their safe zones and go into polling stations. I personally feel that the Bihar election may see a dip in the turnout of voters in the 50+ age bracket. If this happens, it is conceivable that some of the advantages Nitish Kumar has gained on the strength of his governance record and a corresponding fear of the return of "jungle raj" may be neutralised.

Second, as a leader and administrator, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar is understated. He is a quiet worker and is not inclined to be theatrical in his style. The prolonged disruption of normal life since March has meant that his presence on the ground has become more fleeting. This reclusiveness hasn't affected the administrative reach of the State Government and its work during the migrant worker influx from other States has been quite exemplary. However, quiet work is often peripheral to a loud narrative which exaggerates hardships and underplays administrative depth. It is difficult to know if this can shape the final outcome. The past record is mixed. In Odisha, for example, Naveen Patnaik's low-key approach hasn't affected his party's election outcome. In a similar vein, the Left Front in neighbouring West Bengal prevailed for three decades on the strength of the CPI(M)'s formidable network — this despite the fact that in terms of campaigning in the three weeks prior to voting day, the Opposition was more visible.

In Bihar, there is no doubt that in the past week Tejashwi Yadav has generated excitement on the strength of his aggressive campaigning and promise of 10 lakh new Government jobs. The BJP has responded with a promise of 19 lakh additional jobs, a promise which may either be regarded as a copy-cat assurance or have the effect of diluting both assurances. However, the fact remains that the Janata Dal (U)-BJP alliance has been reduced to banking disproportionately on the appeal of the Prime Minister. Now, although Narendra Modi's appeal and popularity is intact, can it offset the impression that Nitish is well past his prime? Here the record is mixed. Modi couldn't offset the anti-incumbency against Raghuraj Das in Jharkhand; he and Amit Shah couldn't prevent the AAP victory in Delhi because Kejriwal had a higher leadership rating than local BJP faces.

Finally, there is electoral arithmetic to consider. The Opposition in Bihar seems terribly fractured and the anti-Nitish Kumar vote may well be horribly fractured. This may give the incumbent the advantage in a first-past-the-post system. But there is also the uncertainty over the JD(U)'s organisational weakness and its ability to harvest votes in the constituencies it is fighting. What are likely to be the consequences if the BJP's strike rate is significantly higher than that of the JD(U)? This possibility has opened the doors to speculation and many conspiracy theories.

Every election in India is bitterly fought and clouded in uncertainty till the counting of votes. However, when the votes are counted, the results often reveal a clear pattern. Bihar may well be no different.

# KITCHEN BUDGET GOES FOR A TOSS

Soaring prices of veggie, pulse, other essential items dampen festive spirits

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Already suffering from the Covid-19-induced miseries, the "aam aadmi" is finding it tough to manage his household affairs with his kitchen budget having doubled or tripled due to soaring prices of vegetables, pulses and even wheat flour (atta). As if the wiping out of the annual festivities due to coronavirus wasn't enough, the price rise has only added to the dampening of the festive spirits.

The kitchen staples are burning a hole in the common man's pocket. Prices of vegetables are already high as onions cost ₹80-100 a kg, potatoes ₹50-60 a kg and tomatoes ₹60-70 a kg while the retail prices of pulses have recently registered a steep hike. There has been a sharp increase in prices of most pulses including tur (arhar), moong, masoor and urad that have crossed the ₹100 per kg mark in most cities

across India. Interestingly, a significant population avoids consuming onions during the "navratra" period (for nine days) but despite the lower consumption the prices continue to be very high due to shortage of supply. Officials of the Agriculture Ministry said potato prices too have surged more than 62 per cent since May as production fell in key growing States and demand soared amid the Covid-19 pandemic. Traders in Uttar Pradesh, the largest potato producer in the country, said prices will remain on these lines at least till March.

As for onions, according to Rajendra Sharma, a wholesale supplier of the bulb at Asia's biggest vegetable and fruits market Azadpur, the supply has reduced from Maharashtra and Karnataka due to its shortage. "Of the 28 lakh tonnes stored in Maharashtra, around 10-11 lakh tonnes remain now. The yearly consumption of onions

	MAXIMUM PRICE (RS) PER KG	CITIES
Onion	95	Mumbai
Potato	60	Port Blair
Tomato	80	Raiganj
Moong (dal)	138	Mumbai
Tur/Arhar	130	Varanasi
Urad	130	Thiruchirappalli
Masoor	120	Siliguri
Wheat	48	Nashik
Atta	55	Port Blair

\*PRICES AS PER MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS FOR OCT 24

in India is slated to be 160 lakh tonnes with Maharashtra alone consuming around 4,000-6,000 tonnes per day," he said. "The heavy rain in September not only destroyed the new crop in Karnataka but also took a toll on stored onions in States like Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. Farmers in Maharashtra alone had marketable onions, having stored the 28 lakh tonnes at the start

of summer," he added. The Ministry of Consumer Affairs has imposed a stock limit of two tonnes on retailers and 25 tonnes for wholesalers till December 31. The Ministry has also supplied 35,000 metric tonnes of onion to States and Union Territories to maintain certain stability in prices. The national acreage for rabi onions last season was 10

lakh hectares as against 7 lakh hectares of 2018-19. But the additional wastage has constrained supply. There are three main onion crops — kharif (June-July sowing, post-October harvest), late kharif (September sowing, post-December harvest), and rabi (December-January sowing, post-March harvest). The rabi crop has the least moisture content, making it amenable to

storage. Given the steep hike in the onion price, the Telangana Government on Saturday decided to sell the edible bulb at ₹35 per kilo at the Government-run "Rythu Bazaars". Two kilos of onions would be sold per person and the consumers have to show any identity card. According to Suresh Agarwal, All India Dal Miller Association, there is a shortage of pulses in the country as farmers have switched over from pulses to wheat and soybean since 2018. Besides, the Government policies also led to this situation. Most pulses come to India from South African countries, Canada and Myanmar. India had imported 3.17 MT of pulses in 2014. This rose to 5.8 MT in 2016. It further rose to 6.6 MT in 2017, followed by 5.6 MT in 2018. In 2018-19 though, the imports reduced to 2.527 MT.

## Cashback of extra interest on loans up to ₹2 cr soon: Centre

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In line with the Supreme Court's directions in view of the festive season and the Covid-19 pandemic, the Centre has finalised a scheme for grant of ex-gratia payment of the difference between compound interest and simple interest for six months of loans up to ₹2 crore. The move will cost the State exchequer ₹6,500 crore. The Supreme Court had directed the Centre to implement such a scheme "as soon as possible". As per the operational guidelines issued by Department of Financial Services, the scheme can be

availed by borrowers in specified loan accounts for a period from March 1 to August 31, 2020. "Borrowers who have loan accounts having sanctioned limits and outstanding amount of not exceeding ₹2 crore (aggregate of all facilities with lending institutions) as on February 29 shall be eligible for the scheme," it said. Housing loan, education loans, credit card dues, auto loans, MSME loans, consumer durable loans and consumption loans are covered under the scheme. As per the scheme, the lending institutions shall credit the difference between compound interest and simple interest with regard to the eli-

gible borrowers in respective accounts for the said period irrespective of whether the borrower fully or partially availed the moratorium on repayment of loan announced by the RBI on March 27, 2020. The scheme is applicable on those who have not availed the moratorium scheme and continued with the repayment of loans. The lending institutions after crediting the amount will claim the reimbursement from the Central Government. According to sources, the Government will have to shell out ₹6,500 crore for the implementation of the scheme.

## Income tax returns' deadline extended till December 31

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Aiming to provide relief to taxpayers facing constraints due to Covid-19, the Income Tax Department on Saturday yet again extended the deadline for individual taxpayers for filing their returns for Financial Year 2019-20 (assessment year 2020-21) by a month till December 31. For those taxpayers whose accounts need to be audited, the Income-Tax Return filing deadline has been extended by two months till January 31, 2021. The Government had in May extended the date for filing ITR for FY2019-20 from July 31 to November 30, to give



compliance relief to taxpayers. In a statement, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said, "The due date for furnishing of Income Tax Returns for the taxpayers [for whom the due date (i.e. before the extension by the said notification) as per the Act was July 31, 2020] has been extended to December 31, 2020." The due date for furnishing

of ITR for the taxpayers, who are required to get their accounts audited (for whom the due date as per the I-T Act is October 31, 2020), has been extended to January 31, 2021, it added. The CBDT said the deadlines have been extended in order to "provide more time to taxpayers for furnishing of Income Tax Returns".

## Breather for choking Delhi likely tomorrow

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi's air quality remained in the 'very poor' category on Saturday with the Air Quality Index recorded at 347. The Ministry of Earth Sciences' air quality monitor, System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR), said that some locations entered 'severe' zone but that will be short lived as winds are expected to increase slightly. Some areas like Mundka, Wazirpur and Alipur recorded 'severe' levels of air pollution, authorities said. It said the air quality could improve on October 26. "The overall Delhi's Air Quality Index (AQI) is in the very poor category with few Delhi locations entering at higher zone but that will be short lived," it said.

## Corona attack on BJP Bihar election drive

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Coronavirus continues to hit the BJP in Bihar, the latest being the party's election campaign incharge and former Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis. Making it public, Fadnavis tweeted on Saturday, "I have been working every single day since the lockdown but now it seems that God wants me to stop for a while and take a break! I have tested #COVID19 positive and in isolation. Taking all medication & treatment as per the advice of the doctors." "Those who have come in contact with me are advised to get Covid-19 tests done. Take care, everyone!" another tweet read. Fadnavis, who is also the leader of Opposition in the Maharashtra Assembly, was appointed as the BJP incharge for Bihar elections last month. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had on Friday during his rallies

## Now campaign incharge Fadnavis tests +ve

in the State termed it as the first major election in the world amid the corona pandemic". Before Fadnavis, Bihar's Deputy Chief Minister Sushil

Kumar Modi and former Union Minister and star campaigner Shah Nawaz Hussain had on Thursday announced about having tested positive.

The instances of BJP leaders testing positive coincidentally continue to come when their party in its poll manifesto has promised to provide free vaccination to the State's residents triggering a major row.

**Covid-19 IN INDIA**

**TOTAL**

**CASES: 78,60,149**

**DEATHS: 1,18,477**

**RECOVERED: 70,68,241**

**ACTIVE: 6,72,121**

STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	16,38,961	43,152	14,55,107
Andhra Pradesh	8,04,026	6,566	7,65,991
Karnataka	7,98,378	10,873	7,00,737
Tamil Nadu	7,06,136	10,893	6,63,456
Uttar Pradesh	4,68,238	6,854	4,33,703
Kerala	3,86,088	1,307	2,87,261
Delhi	3,52,520	6,225	3,19,828
West Bengal	3,45,574	6,427	3,02,340
Odisha	2,79,582	1,282	2,62,031
Telangana	2,30,274	1,303	2,09,034
Bihar	2,11,443	1,042	1,99,521
Assam	2,03,709	900	1,79,843
Rajasthan	1,84,422	1,826	1,65,496
Chhattisgarh	1,72,580	1,738	1,46,222
Madhya Pradesh	1,66,298	2,875	1,51,946
Gujarat	1,66,254	3,685	1,48,685

## State reports further fall in Covid cases

■15 more deaths; toll rises to 1,229;  
■1695 new +ves; total 2,79,582;  
■Day's highest 182 cases in Khorhda again  
■2,613 recover; total recoveries 2,62,031

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

While two each succumbed to virus in Khorhda, Mayurbhanj and Sundargarh districts, one each died in Angul, Boudh, Bargarh, Jharsuguda, Kandhamal, Puri, Sundargarh, Sambalpur, Gajapati and Baleswar. The deceased in Khorhda were a 64-year-old man and a 39-year-old man. The casualties in Mayurbhanj were a 62-year-old man and a 42-year-old man. The deaths in Sundargarh were of a 78-year-old man and a 73-year-old man. The other deceased were a 60-year-old man in Angul, a 51-year-old man in Boudh, a 53-year-old man in Bargarh, a

60-year-old man of Jharsuguda, a 62-year-old woman of Kandhamal, a 48-year-old man of Puri, a 60-year-old man of Sambalpur, a 69-year-old man of Gajapati and a 52-year-old woman of Baleswar. Meanwhile, State's total positive cases rose to 2,79,582 on day with 1,695 fresh cases being recorded from all 30 districts and State pool on day. Of new cases, 98 were detected from quarantine and 709 were local contacts. Khorhda recorded day's highest 183 cases followed by Baeswar 128, Sundargarh 110, Cuttack 103, Nuapada 92, Angul 83, Jagatsinghpur 77,

Keonjhar 73, Balangir 65, Jajpur 57, Bargarh 56, Nabarangpur 51, Puri 51, Ganjam 45, Jharsuguda 45, Koraput 45, Mayurbhanj 45, Kendrapada 42, Sambalpur 42, Malkangiri 37, Kalahandi 36, Bhadrak 35, Kandhamal 34, Nayagarh 32, Subarnapur 24, Dhenkanal 23, Rayagada 17, Boudh 11, Deogarh 11 and Gajapati 7. Besides, 35 cases were reported from State pool. With 40,033 Covid tests done during period, State's cumulative tests rose to 42,80,274. However, another 2,613 patients recovered on day, taking total recoveries to 2,62,031.

2 more die; total toll 150  
**182 new +ves in BBSR; total 28,481**  
276 covid patients recover; total recoveries 25,895

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

For the second consecutive day in capital city Bhubaneswar, Covid-19 tally dipped below 200-mark as 182 new positive cases were detected on Saturday. With this, positive case tally surged to 28,481 in city, including 2,415 active cases

## CAPSULE

**FREE VACCINE PROMISE IN PERFECTLY IN ORDER: FM**  
New Delhi: Amid Opposition's criticism of the BJP's Bihar poll promise of free Covid vaccines, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman asserted that the announcement was perfectly in order and a party can announce what it wants to do when it comes to power.

**FAROOQ TO LEAD GUPKAR ALLIANCE**  
Srinagar: Seven mainstream parties of Jammu & Kashmir on Saturday gave a formal shape to their cobbled Gupkar alliance for the restoration of Article 370, electing National Conference's Farooq Abdullah as its chairman and PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti as vice-chairperson.

**RISHI SUNAK 'BARRED FOR LIFE' FROM UK PUB**  
London: UK Chancellor Rishi Sunak and three fellow ruling Conservative Party members of Parliament from northern England have been "barred for life" by a local pub and restaurant in their constituency region after they voted against free school meals for children during the holidays.

## The Pioneer

wishes its readers **HAPPY DUSSEHRA**  
The offices of the Pioneer will remain closed on October 25, 26 and 27 on occasion of Durga Puja. The next issue of the edition will appear on October 29.



Continued on Page 4



**FORMAT C-2**

**Declaration about criminal antecedents of candidates set up by the party**  
 (As per the judgement dated 25th September, 2018, of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No. 536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union of India & Anr.)  
 Name of political party: BIJU JANATADAL  
 Name of Election: Bye - Election to 102- Tirtol (SC) Assembly Constituency-2020  
 Name of State / UT: Odisha

1	2	3	4		5		
Sl. No	Name of Constituency	Name of Candidate	(A) Pending criminal cases		(B) Details about cases of conviction for criminal offences		
			Name of Court case No. & Status of the Case	Sections of the Acts concerned & brief description of offence(s)	Name of court & date(s) of order(s)	Description of offence (s) & Punishment imposed	Maximum Punishment Imposed
	102-TIRTOL (SC) A.C.	BIJAYA SHANKAR DAS	JJB, Cuttack ..... JGR/JJC 34/2011 P.S. Case No. 28/2007  Status: Under Trial	U/s 465/466/468/474/IPC ..... r/w U/s 9 of the Orissa conduct of Examination Act. C.I.D CB Odisha Cuttack Charge U/s 420 IPC on dtd. 05.02.2015	Not Applicable	Does not arise	Does not arise

\* In the case of election to Council of States or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, mention the election concerned in place of name of constituency.

**FORMAT C-7**

**Information regarding individuals with pending criminal cases, who have been selected as candidates, along with the reasons for such selection, as also as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates.**  
 (As per the Commission's directions issued in pursuance of the Order dated 13.02.2020 of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in contempt petition no, 2192 of 2018 in WP(C) no. 536 of 2011)  
 Name of political party: BIJU JANATADAL  
 \*Name of the Election: Bye - Election to 102- Tirtol (SC) Assembly Constituency-2020  
 Name of State / UT: Odisha  
 (1) Name of the Constituency- 102-Tirtol (SC) Assembly Constituency  
 Name of the candidate- Bijaya Shankar Das

Sl. No	Criminal antecedent's	
1	a. Nature of the offences	Juvenile Offence
	b. Case no.	JGR/JJC 34/2011 P.S. Case No. 28/2007
	c. Name of the Court	J.J.B, Cuttack
	d. Whether charges have been framed or not (Yes / No)	Yes
	e. Date of conviction, if any	Not Applicable
	f. Details of punishment undergone, if any	Not Applicable
	g. Any other information required to be given	Under trial
2	The reasons for the selection of the candidate. Selection shall be with reference to the qualifications, achievements and merit of the candidate, and not mere "winnability" at the polls (not more than 100 words)	The candidate, a B.Tech. Mechanical engineer, is a young and dynamic leader of the masses. who is entirely devoted to the cause of Dalits and the marginalised in his constituency. As a student leader he led many social movements, and has done enviable social services during covid 19 by way of organizing free kitchen for the poor and migrant labours, orphan and even for the stray animals. He took active part in empowering women by organizing self help groups. His dedication to public welfare and his outstanding leadership in times of crisis are clear reasons for his selection as a candidate.
3	Reasons as to why either individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates (not more than 100 words)	Considering his above merits along with his dedication to the cause of the marginalized, women and the minority, he has an edge over others as a contesting candidate. He is deeply involved in sensitizing people on Covid guidelines, taking care of the patients and their families during the unprecedented pandemic, providing gainful employment to the labourers of his area have endeared him with the people. His head and heart and commitment to the service of the people are obvious reasons for selecting him as a candidate.

(2) Name of the Constituency: 102-Tirtol (SC) Assembly Constituency  
 Name of the candidate- Bijaya Shankar Das  
 ..... and so on

\* In the case of selection to Council of States or States or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, mention the election concerned in place of name of Constituency.

**Signature of Officer bearer of the Political Party**  
**Name: Priyadarshi Mishra**  
**Designation: General Secretary**  
**Biju Janata Dal, Odisha**

**HOME THEATRE**

**Mirzapur 2 as good or bad as 1**



**MIRZAPUR 2**  
**Amazon Prime Video**  
 \*ing: Pankaj Tripathi, Divyenndu Sharma, Ali Fazal, Shweta Tripathi, Harshita Gaur, Rasika Dugal, Rajesh Tailang, Sheeba Chadha, Anjum Sharma, Vijay Varma and others  
**Rated: 6/10**

First things first. *Mirzapur* has not reformed itself from being perhaps one of the most violent, sleazy, abusive and yet unashamedly luring. Season 2 is even more so, at least in the first three mentioned traits.  
 The disclaimer at the beginning attempts to assuage your alarm by saying totally fictitious and the like. However, the knowledge of this sort of a scenario being a reality in the cow belt of the nation, the unabated goondaism, the police criminal nexus, the impunity and violence with which criminals conduct their business keeps you on the hook all through the 10 episodes of Season 2, which, by the way, has set itself up for a third season.  
 Personally, I eschew and cringe at pronounced screen violence and in this one the bloodbaths are what makes for the story.

*Mirzapur* is India's *Game of Thrones* with just a tad less history to it. The man who will be King of *Mirzapur* has to be powerful, with no chinks of vulnerability in his demeanour. He should be able to kill at will even if it is his favourite and loyal servant for decades or his own father! Corruption of the system matches up with the corruption of the mind, boy and soul of all its main characters who have, come to think of it, done a pretty good job if you hate them all in equal measure.  
 Will not be able to call *Mirzapur* riveting but yes it draws your blood to your temples, makes you curdle in fear and cringe in disgust with such pointed venom and force that it automatically qualifies for a binge watch.  
 The end is predictable and similar to the first season, the characters have matured and the violence here prevails only to push the story into a state of no repair and the climax sets up the window for the next season with the polish of a veteran.  
*Mirzapur* will be watched in the third season too. How watch-worthy is such content can be a topic for debate on another platform.  
 Meanwhile waiting avidly for the sequel of *The Family Man*.

**Retelling a classical tale**

**REBECCA**  
**Netflix**  
 \*ing: Lily James, Armie Hammer, Kristin Scott Thomas, Sam Riley  
**Rated: 5.5/10**

Many of us have either seen or read *Rebecca* by Daphne du Maurier. Hence, there are no surprises when it comes to the climax or what is to come next. What is different here than the 1940 psychological thriller directed by Alfred Hitchcock is of course the way the two films have dealt with the same story. Then there is the whole black and white as opposed to colour. The chilliness and the cold reserve that played out so brilliantly in the Hitchcock version is totally missing here. There is Laurence Olivier and Joan Fontaine as opposed to Lily James and Armie Hammer.

This *Rebecca* leaves you cold, unmoved and somewhat disconnected. Though it is never right nor fair to compare two movies with the same story as a viewer it is difficult to look at this film without doing the unfor-givable. However, for those who have not seen the Hitchcock version, it will be a treat to watch the book come alive.  
 While there is no way one can even compare Laurence Olivier and Joan Fontaine characters to Lily James and Armie Hammer's, the latter manage to hold their ground well. James, who has done movies like *Mama Mia, Here We Go Again!* and *Cinderella*, plays Mrs de Winter well. But instead of coming off as somebody who is naïve and innocent, she comes across as a person who is more curious and we know where that leads. Still one can't ignore her performance here which is delivered well. One however, finds it difficult to understand what her motive is especially when she realises that her husband did kill albein an accident and covered it up — is it because she realises that she is the only woman her husband loved or it is something entirely different? This *Rebecca* leaves the viewer to interpret the last look of the second Mrs de Winter. A movie to watch if not seen Hitchcock's version.  
 — Shalini Sakesna

**Short & sweet**

**LAGHUSHANKA**  
**SonyLiv**  
**Short film, 14 minutes**  
 \*ing: Sanjay Mishra, Raghav Juyal, Abhishek Chauhan  
**Rated: 8/10**

The thing about short films is that they are fully loaded second to second to tell a story. In this format the story has to be short but have the potential of leaving a long term impact. Stunning climax, an ending you may not have fathomed, and every frame meant to tell the story, or should one say race to finish the story because the director has just 14 minutes to leave a mark on you.

*Laghushanka* is of that potent, telling and interesting category. It deals with the issue of bed-wetting by an adult girl who has a marriage starting down her face, a hysterical family and the prospect of it coming out in the open in her *sasural*.  
 The film has been treated with a lot of acumen, tender loving care and slick production which keeps you hooked from the beginning to the end.  
 It also delivers a powerful message on human weakness and ailments that are often treated with insensitivity and indifference. This head turner film is neither insensitive nor indifferent to the issue it has at and must watch.

**Of magic and life lessons**

**OVER THE MOON**  
**Netflix**  
 \*ing: Cathy Ang, John Cho, Ruthie Ann Miles, Sandra Oh, Phillipa Soo, Robert G Chiu  
**Rated: 6.5/10**

There is something so sweet and cute about watching animation especially if it is a fairy tale. There is a reason why even adults love watching them. The whole idea of seeing a kid believe in fairy tales and living it, makes us relive the same and take us back to times when we were kids and believed in Santa Claus and the idea of an old lady who lives on the Moon and keeps herself busy by spinning. But as adults, we do know that the dark patches on this natural satellite are actually deep craters on its surface.

**Wishing all the people of Sundargarh, happy Durga puja**

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Campaign gains steam for Baleswar, Tirtol by-polls

Naveen's field visits still uncertain

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The campaign by the State's major political parties BJD, BJP and Congress for the Baleswar Sadar and Tirtol constituencies has gained momentum ahead of the polling scheduled on November 3.

In view of the Covid-19 guidelines, leaders are trying to woo the voters through various mediums, including door-to-door campaign and virtual rallies.

However, it is yet uncertain if and when Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik would go for campaigning for the by-polls.

Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan campaigned in Tirtol and Baleswar Sadar on Friday and Saturday, respectively, and slammed the ruling BJD and sought the voters' support for the BJP

candidates. He accused the State Government of Covid mismanagement and held it responsible for the growing unemployment, chit fund scam and poor healthcare infrastructure.

Claiming that the Central Government released to the State Rs 22,267 crore, including Rs 922.48 crore for Baleswar, for the Covid-19 battle, he said the health service in the State is in a precarious condition. He also alleged that the funds provided by the Centre to the State are not properly utilised.

Odisha Congress in-charge A Chella Kumar and PCC president Niranjan Patnaik and working president Pradeep Majhi campaigned for the party candidate in Baleswar Sadar and Tirtol on Thursday and Friday, respectively.

While stating that the BJP Government at the Centre and the BJD Government in the State have failed to carry out development works, they asserted that whatever tangible

development has taken place in the State, it was only when the Congress was in power.

They pointed out that the spinning mills at Tirtol and elsewhere in the State set up during the Congress rule have been shut down after the BJD came to power.

Had these spinning mills been revived, migrant workers who returned from other States during the Covid pandemic could have been employed there without being forced to return to their former workplaces in search of their livelihood, they said.

The BJD, on its part, has deployed several Ministers and senior leaders in the two constituencies to retain the Tirtol seat and wrest Baleswar Sadar from the BJP.

The BJD leaders say that they are confident of winning both by-polls due to the popularity of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik as the State Government has ushered in several development works in the constituencies.

Observes Orissa HC

'NRIS category an affront to meritorious candidates'

PNS ■ CUTTACK

Observing that the Non-Resident Indian Sponsored (NRIS) category reservation is an affront to meritorious candidates, the Orissa High Court has called upon the Bar Council of India (BCI) and other stakeholders to revisit the process of admissions into the National Law Universities (NLUs).

Worthy students toil day and night to secure a seat in the NLUs by cracking the Common Law Admission Test (CLAT). But NRIS students, by paying hefty donations, grab the seats of meritorious students, the court observed.

A Division Bench of Justice Sanju Panda and Justice SK Panigrahi said NRI sponsored candidates, who are very low-ranked in the merit list often get seats in the NLUs whereas the general candidates having secured better marks and placed higher in the merit list are denied admissions. "This is

like reservation for the elite class; and this dubious category of reservation is unconstitutional," the court said. The court further observed that the eligibility and selection under the NRIS category are "unregulated, illegal and arbitrary". Quoting the Supreme Court judgement in the PA Inamdar case, the HC said admission under the NRIS category is given to less meritorious students just because they could afford to pay higher fees demanded by the universities.

"The consortium of NLU, the BCI and all stakeholders involved in the process of (admission) should revisit the so-called NRIS quota and prepare a proper regulation and system.

Several studies reveal that the selection process under NRIS is quite vague, undefined and is based on inconsistent parameters," the court said while disposing of a petition in this regard filed by one Ishika Patnaik.

Covid norms flouted

Vishal, V2 among 22 shops sealed in Brahmapur

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

The Ganjam district administration on Friday sealed 22 shops, including two large malls, and collected over a lakh of rupees from them for violating Covid-19 guidelines and 5T rules in the BeMC and the Gopalpur NAC areas.

Teams of officers comprising Brahmapur Sub-Collector Kirti Vashan, Tehasildar S Patra and SDM Sweta Kumar Dash conducted raids at different locations and took the action.

During raids it was found that there was a huge rush of customers at the V2 shopping mall at Old Bus Stand but social distancing and mask wearing norms were not maintained by them. Similar was the situation at the Vishal Mega Mart at the Church Road. Dr Das sealed the two malls in the interest of public.

As per the directives of the district Collector Vijaya Amrut Kulunge, such raids are being conducted in the city on a regular basis.

INBRIEF

LT GEN SAHOO TAKES OVER AS DG, DENTAL SERVICES

Bhubaneswar: Lieutenant General Nanda Kishore Sahoo, VSM, has taken over as Director General Dental Services & Colonel Commandant of Army Dental Corps. He is the first Odia officer to assume this office. Sahoo, an alumnus of the King George's Medical University and the Mumbai University, has held multiple offices during 37 years of his military career. He is also an internationally-acclaimed author, teacher, and winner of the KS Master silver medal.



JSPUR DOC WHO TREATED COVID PATIENTS DIES

Jagatsinghpur: Dr Deba Prasad Satpathy from Jagatsinghpur district, who was working in Santaldih under Purulia district in West Bengal, succumbed to his illness on October 16. He was 72. Dr Satpathy on October 14 felt breathing syndrome and suffered from acute respiratory problem. He was coming to Bhubaneswar by an ambulance for treatment but sadly breathed his last on the way. His body was cremated at the Satya Nagar crematorium. A pall of gloom descended on his native village Rambhadeipur here when the sad news reached. He is survived by wife Chinmayee, two sons Mantosh and Santosh and daughter Mrunmayee.



YOUTH STABBED TO DEATH IN GANJAM

Brahmapur: A heated altercation between two persons took a violent turn when one of them was stabbed to death at Banthapalli village under the Digapahandi police station in Ganjam district on Saturday morning. The deceased was identified as Bachan Swain, who was attacked with a knife by his rival. The victim succumbed to the injuries while being shifted to the MKCG Medical College Hospital here. Police reached the spot and initiated a probe. The accused was absconding following the incident.

MAN KILLED IN BOMB ATTACK IN BANKI

Cuttack: A man was killed on the spot after unidentified miscreants hurled a bomb at Gholapur village under the Banki police station in Cuttack district on Saturday. The deceased was identified as Gobinda Behera. Though the exact motive behind the attack was yet to be ascertained, it was suspected that the incident was fallout of past enmity. Tension prevailed at the village following the bombing. Police reached the spot and started an investigation.

CHHATAR YATRA HELD WITHOUT DEVOTEES

Bhawanipatna: The famous Chhatar Yatra of Goddess Manikeswari was conducted amid Covid-19 restrictions and tight security without participation of devotees here on Saturday. The festival began at around 5.25 am when the procession of Chhatar of Manikeswari was taken out to Jenakhol on outskirts of Bhawanipatna from the Manikeswari Temple. It also returned to the temple in a procession. The district administration had clamped Section-144 around the area to prevent congregation and animal slaughter during the festival.

INTUC urges workers to elect Cong in by-polls

PNS ■ BALESWAR

The Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) has urged all its cadres and all central trade unions and industrial, bank and railway federations to defeat the 'anti-worker' and 'anti-farmer' BJP and BJD candidates in the ensuing Baleswar and Tirtol by-polls and instead elect Congress candidates Mamata Kundu and Himansu Mallick in the two respective Assembly seats.

The INTUC passed a resolution in this regard at its zonal conference held at Baleswar.

The BJP-led Government at the Centre, by passing 4 labour codes, two anti-farmer



Bills, and the BJD Government in the State, by enhancing working hours from eight to 12 hours, have exposed their nexuses with industrialists and multinational companies,

alleged INTUC Odisha Branch president Dr Rama Chandra Khuntia. AICC Odisha in-charge Dr A Chellakumar inaugurating the conference said the INTUC has always

fought for the workers' interest.

Though the INTUC supports the Congress, yet it doesn't hesitate to oppose the wrong policies of the Congress Governments against workers and farmers. He appealed INTUC workers to support the Congress candidates. PCC president Niranjan Patnaik said all development works in Odisha and Baleswar had been done during Congress Governments.

Congress Chief Whip in Assembly Tara Prasad Bahinipati, MP Saptagiri Ulaka, former MP Pradeep Majhi and Sudarsan Das also urged voters to support Congress candidate Kundu.

In Ganjam

14 gambling dens busted; 68 held

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

In a crackdown launched during the festive season, police busted a number of gambling dens and arrested a large number of in Ganjam district on Friday night. As many as 14 gambling dens were raided and 68 gamblers were arrested in the last 24 hours across the district.

Gambling would not be allowed in any part of the district and such raids would be conducted on regular basis,

Ganjam SP Brijesh Ray said. The cops also seized cash of Rs 1,53,050, four mobile phones and four motorcycles from the accused.

Illegal betting activities to make quick bucks are rampant during festival season like Durga Puja and Kali Puja. Although the police carry out crackdown at regular intervals, gambling activities regain their root within no time. Due to the menace many families are being financially ruined, opine the intellectuals.

Swargadwar makeover to be completed by Mar

PNS ■ PURI

The Chief Minister's ST Secretary VK Pandian on Saturday visited Puri and reviewed the progress of development of the Swargadwar and also the Gosalas for stray cattle and rehabilitation of beggars.

Redevelopment of the Swargadwar constitutes an important part of the ST initiative.

An official said the work has started with funding from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund and would be completed by March next.

As an interim measure, a shed and other facilities are being provided to people visiting the Swargadwar for cremation of their relatives.

To make the Badadanada (Grand Road) clean, as many as about 700 stray cattle have also been shifted to the Gosalas from the Badadanada



and another 400 would be relocated in next one month. Steps have also been taken for rehabilitation of beggars so that they can lead a respectful life.

Meanwhile, about 500 beggars have been rescued from the Badadanada and rehabilitated in various institutions. Of those rescued, 150 have been traced and reunited with their families.

During the review, the Puri Collector and the Commissioners of BMC and Cuttack Municipal Corporation were present.

The BMC and the CMC would also undertake shifting of stray cattle and rehabilitation in the Gosalas of their respective areas.

They would also undertake rehabilitation of beggars in their areas.

Few devotees visit pandals

Durga Puja underway in Jharsuguda

PNS ■ JHARSUGUDA

Mahashtami of Goddess Durga was celebrated in Jharsuguda district amid tight Covid-19 norms and strict health guidelines on Saturday.

The coronavirus has evidently dampened the festive spirits as very few devotees could be seen thronging to Puja Pandals. In normal years, people perform religious rituals at their homes and visit various shrines throughout the district, including famous Ramchandi Shaktipeeth in the Brajrajnagar area.

On Friday, very few devotees offered Pushpanjali to the goddess at different pandals on Mahasaptami, obeying Covid protocol.

Everyone was given entry following a thermal screening. Social distancing was main-



tained strictly. On Saptami the 'Main Karta' of Om Sri Puja Committee of Sarbahal area, Pintu Padhi participated in Kalas Yatra with his wife, while priest Krishna Chandra Panigrahi, assistant priest Ajay Mishra and three committee members were present.

Prana Pratistha was done on the Saptami Puja. Durga Puja is being celebrated at many other places in the town.

Puri Goshani Jata to be held on Tuesday

PNS ■ PURI

The most fascinating Dussehra of Puri, acclaimed as Sriksheeta Goshani Jata, would be held at the holy Lions Gate of the Jagannath Temple on Tuesday amid the Covid-19 guidelines.

Nearly a hundred of Devi idols would be installed in multiple rows on the Badadanda in front of the Jagannath Temple. Maximum of seven persons with face masks will attend each idol at a time. The deities would come in carts. Immersion procession would be held in the same night.

Only seven people would accompany each cart carrying the idols to a site near the Atharnala river. After a talk with Puja committees, the district administration has allowed idols' exhibition at the Lions Gate.

Exam to promote constables to be held after 18 yrs

PNS ■ CUTTACK

The DGP on Saturday issued an order inviting eligible constables in the general category to appear in an examination after a gap of 18 years for their promotion as ASIs.

As per the prevailing Odisha Police Manual Rules (PMR)-660, the Constables belonging to the general category who have completed seven years of service after passing Constable basic course of training as on January 1, 2017, are eligible to attend the written examination for the vacant ASI posts.

The last examination for promotion of Constables to ASIs in the general category was held in the year 2002. "It was noticed that the provisions stipulated in PMR-660 governing procedure of appointment of Assistant Sub-Inspector of Police was not

comprehensive and having lot of ambiguity regarding the date from which the eligibility criteria shall be counted, regarding selection procedure, validity of select list of candidates who have passed the examination etc.

These shortcomings in the PMR-660 were leading to lot of litigation and causing administrative inconvenience in holding written examination for promotion to the rank of officiating ASI," the order stated.

A proposal suggesting amendment of PMR-660 was submitted to the Home Department in February 2018 to have a comprehensive recruitment rule for selection of eligible Constables for promotion to as ASIs.

The Government has enumerated the selection process removing the previous ambiguities.

In Sundargarh

Minor rape victim flees from rehab home

Kidnap case registered

MALAY RAY ■ SUNDARGARH

A minor girl of Sundargarh district, who had been impregnated and whose pregnancy had been aborted, and who was sheltered in a rehab house, ran away from the house and was found missing.

The SOS Children's village, Rourkela, where she was staying has lodged a FIR and the police are now searching her.

"On knowing her absence on Friday evening, we immediately informed the relevant authorities like the Child Line, CWC Chairperson, DCPO

and the police. We hope she is found safe and sound and returns to our care as soon as possible.

We are committed to fully cooperating with the authorities regarding the incident," said Director, SOS Children's village, Rourkela Tapan Kumar Suna.

"Based on the FIR, since she is a minor girl, we have registered a kidnapping case. We are searching her," said Chhend police station IIC Rasmita Patel.

Notably, on the alleged sexual exploitation of the victim girl, the IIC of Birmitrapur police station and a doctor of the CHC, Birmitrapur had been arrested by the Crime Branch more than three months ago and had been sent to jail.

Speaker Patro meets Ganjam farmers



PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

Farmers of Fasiguda Gram Panchayat under Digapahandi Block met Assembly Speaker Surjya Narayan Patro on Thursday and discussed threadbare about the progress of various development works of Fasiguda Gram Panchayat initiated by Patro. They brought to his attention various problems and difficulties of the people in the GP.

Patro assured the farmers that the ongoing development works of Fasiguda GP will be expedited and all their problems will be sorted out soon. Soon after discussion, the Speaker issued necessary directives to officials. Notably, Patro is the Digapahandi MLA.

Biraja Rath Yatra concludes amid Covid restrictions



PNS ■ JAJPUR

The nine-day-long famous Biraja Rath Yatra concluded here with the Bahuda Yatra (return journey) held amid Covid-19 restrictions and without devotees on Saturday.

Priests conducted Chhera Panhara (sweeping) rituals on the floor the Rath. Subsequently, the chariot was pulled by selected servitors and priests. Devotees were not allowed to come to the main road near the temple. All

entry points to Jajpur town were sealed. Police personnel and temple officials had undergone Covid-19 tests and those who tested negative for the virus were allowed to participate in all rituals of Rath Yatra.

All Covid norms such as social distancing and mask wearing were implemented strictly.

Notably, the Orissa High Court had allowed holding of Biraja Rath Yatra after hearing public interest litigations on October 8.

Bike lifter gang busted in Cuttack

Five arrested; 35 vehicles seized

PNS ■ CUTTACK

The Commissionerate police busted a five-member motorcycle lifters' gang in Cuttack city on Saturday and seized 35 motorcycles and a Tata Magic vehicle. City DCP Prateek Singh said on basis of

a complaint lodged at Jagatpur police station on September 14, 2020 alleging loot of a Tata Magic vehicle, the police registered a case and launched a probe.

During investigations, one Papu Charan Roul alias Papu and Jagabandhu Roul alias Jagan were detained.

While checking their antecedents, it was found that the duo was veteran looters. Papu and Jagan accepted that they looted motorcycles from different districts. Based on the

statement of the duo, the Jagatpur cops went to Binjhar and recovered 35 bikes from different places.

Also, three more persons Ratikant Pradhan, Prashant Samal, Munna alias Pratap Sethi were arrested.

The five looters used to keep the vehicles at one place in Binjhar and sell them to suitable customers at Rs 4,000-5,000 each.

Investigations are on to find the complicity of others in the case, he added.

Temporary ponds for immersion

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In order to prevent pollution of water bodies in the city, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has been constructing four temporary ponds for immersion of idols after Durga Puja.

A BMC official said two temporary ponds would be set up on banks of Kuakhai river while another one would come up on bank of Daya river.

E-gurukul edu office to open today

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The India Office and international headquarters of the Essar Systems and e-gurukul education would be inaugurated at N 1/115, IRC Village, Nayapalli, here on Sunday at 11 am. State Assembly Speaker Surjya Narayan Patro and Electronics and IT and Sports and Youth Services Minister

Tusharkanti Behera have consented to grace occasion as guests. Gurukul online education intends to provide free learning of Odia language and curriculum to students across the globe, opined CMD Er Meenaketan Biswal. Inauguration ceremony co-host and founder of Vande Utkal Foundation Kishore Dwivedi sought cooperation from all concerned.

# War of words intensifies between Capt, Sukhbir over farm bills

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh on Saturday said the strange and senseless recent remarks of Sukhbir Singh Badal showed that the Akali leader had completely lost the political narrative, causing him to fumble for words and desperate to find a way out of the pathetic situation in which his party finds itself over the farmers' issue.

The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) chief seemed to have been jolted into desperation by the entire Farm Laws saga, which had completely exposed the double standards of the Akalis, said the Chief Minister, adding that Sukhbir clearly had no idea what he was talking about.

Capt Amarinder was reacting to Sukhbir's remarks on the easing of 'Rail Roko' by the

Kisan Unions and his suggestion that the state government should have taken SAD's advice before coming out with the amendment Bills in the Vidhan Sabha.

Sukhbir has accused the Chief Minister of colluding with the Centre to get the blockade of the farmers lifted.

Ridiculing Sukhbir's suggestion on going to Akalis for advice, the Chief Minister quipped that "it seems the NDA government at the Centre had taken the advice of their then allies, the Akalis, in the matter of the anti-farmer, anti-federal and anti-Constitutional farm laws."

That would explain why they messed it up so badly and took the unilateral decision to impose laws that are clearly designed to ruin the farmers, he added.

Terming the Akali presi-

dent's allegation of collusion between him and the BJP as ludicrous, Capt Amarinder said Sukhbir appears to be in a state of mental despair and denial, which is leading him to make such nonsensical remarks. "Does Sukhbir really believe that I would lead my party to political suicide with such an act?" asked the Chief Minister.

The only rational explanation for such preposterous comments would be that the SAD leader had lost all sense of proportion out of sheer desperation at his and his party's political oblivion, which was no longer a distant possibility but a concrete fact, he added.

The Chief Minister also mocked Sukhbir over the latter's demand for him to "come clean" on the subject of the state amendment Bills, aimed at negating the devastating effect of the central laws on the

farming community. "On the one hand you complain when I tell the legislators frankly in the House that the Governor/President may or may not give consent to the Bills, and on the other you say I'm not being honest," he remarked, asking the SAD chief to make up his mind on where he and his party stand.

"The farmers are sick and tired of your games," Capt Amarinder told Sukhbir, adding that it was SAD which was feeling the heat of the farming community - the reason why they are running around in circles on the Centre's laws and the State's Bills. He reiterated his demand for the Akalis to explain to the people why they backed the central legislations if these were anti-farmer and why they backed the state's Bills in the Vidhan Sabha if they found

them useless.

What his government had done with these Bills despite the risks and dangers involved was many times more than what the SAD had done as part of NDA's Union Government in six years, quipped the Chief Minister. He added that this was probably the reason for Sukhbir getting so frustrated and flustered, and causing the Akali leader to lie even more brazenly and shamelessly than he usually does.

## SUKHBIR BADAL POSES FOUR QUESTIONS TO CM

Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) President Sukhbir Singh Badal on Saturday put four questions to chief minister Capt Amarinder Singh including a challenge to tell if he had annulled the central agrimarketing laws and when the new Bills passed in the Vidhan

Sabha would come into being.

These two queries, which are part of the four question set, also ask the chief minister to tell farmers if the Bills moved by him in the Vidhan Sabha had made msp a statutory right of farmers. The fourth and final question asks the chief minister to tell if he had guaranteed government purchase of all 24 crops falling under the MSP regime.

Stating that these four questions were being asked by everyone, Badal asked the chief minister not to play games with people of Punjab in league with the centre. "You know your Bills will not be approved by the central government. You have not even annulled the amended APMC Act of 2017 which is a copy of the central Agri Acts. We know you have no straight answers but still we give you fifteen days to tell

Punjabis why you defrauded them in this manner and why you are hand in glove with the centre in destroying their future".

Asserting that Capt Amarinder Singh was pushing Punjab into turmoil, the SAD President said "the only solution was declaring the entire State as one Mandi (principal market yard) which would have automatically negated implementation of the central Agri Acts in Punjab. But you did not take this suggestion because you did not have any intention of securing the rights of Punjabis. You chose to enter into a deal with Delhi and passed wishy-washy Bills with the sole intention of sabotaging the ongoing farmer agitation and getting the 'rail roko' agitation lifted".

Badal also requested farmer organizations to ask

the chief minister why he had refused to guarantee government procurement and why he did not take them into confidence before moving Bills which concerned their future. He said the chief minister's lie that he had consulted farmer organizations had been caught out already. "It is also known that Capt Amarinder Singh was forced to call the special assembly session under pressure after having rejected the demand earlier.

Now Punjabis want the chief minister to come clean. Give us straight answers to the straight questions we have put on behalf of the people. Don't try to obfuscate and confuse the issue with foul mouthed evasive replies. Give answers to the people or else it will be proven beyond doubt that you backstabbed the annadaata", Badal added.

## Punjab CM launches Phase-II of Urban Environment Improvement Programme

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh on Saturday virtually launched phase two of the ₹11,000 crore Urban Environment Improvement Programme (UEIP) and expressed confidence that the scheme, of which ₹3,000 crore worth had been completed in the first phase, would help the state make significant improvement in the infrastructure of the cities and lives of people.

The programme would enable the development of state-of-the-art urban infrastructure and efficient service delivery systems to the urban population of Punjab, thus making urbanisation impactful, he said.

Connected digitally to over 45,000 people at 940 locations, the chief minister pointed out that the state government had succeeded in securing finances for these projects, amid the Covid-19 pandemic, despite the acute financial crunch.

Among the key projects, the CM cited canal-based water supply in the four big cities of Amritsar, Jalandhar, Ludhiana and Patiala, with work in Jalandhar being launched on



Saturday and the foundation stone for Patiala to be laid on Sunday.

The government was also close to allocating work for cleaning of "Budha Nullah" in Ludhiana, with the operations expected to commence in a month's time, he added. Noting that around 40 percent of Punjab's population lives in cities, which are generally regarded as engines of growth, Singh said the projects were in line with the various steps being taken by his government for the welfare of people residing in the cities.

Pointing out that water supply and sewerage works are already in progress, at a total cost of ₹4,000 crore, in many towns of Punjab, he said that of 103 towns, water supply

works had been completed in 49 towns and works in remaining towns would be completed by next year.

For sewerage facilities, of 116 towns, works had been completed in 51 towns, and would be completed next year in the remaining.

The chief minister also announced a one-time settlement (OTS) scheme for pending VAT (value added tax) assessments to promote economic activity in urban areas.

He said the department of excise and taxation would soon notify the scheme, which his government had decided to initiate in view of the concern of businesses that issues related to their VAT assessments and grievances had not been redressed speedily.

## 'Complete projects in time to prevent cost escalation'

### Himachal CM tells officials

PNS ■ SHIMLA

Himachal Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur on Saturday directed the officers of the Public Works Department to ensure time bound completion of all ongoing projects to avoid price escalation.

Presiding over the review meeting of the Department held here, Thakur said the Department must give top priority to the Chief Ministers' announcements and those projects the foundation stones of which have been laid. He said that top priority must be laid on those projects which were nearing completion.

The Chief Minister said that roads were a mirror of development of any state as people gauge the development by the condition of the roads. He said that stress must be laid on construction of quality roads, as compromise in quality would be viewed seriously.

He said that strict action would be taken against the erring officers and contractors, responsible for poor quality of roads and bridges, besides

unnecessary delay in the works.

While congratulating the Public Works Department for securing second position at National level for successful implementation of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna (PMGSY) in the State, Chief Minister said that this programme funded by Centre government had proved a boon to connect habitations having population of more than 250 in the state.

He said that Mandi district has bagged top position in the country among all 30 top districts of the country, as many as seven districts of the State were amongst the top thirty districts in achieving maximum length under PMGSY during the year 2020-21. He said that this has been possible due to the hard work of the department and their focused approach.

Thakur expressed concern over the delay in allocation of various projects for execution and directed the officers of the department to evolve mechanisms to reduce time for awarding of works. He said that works must be awarded immediately and in case of any problem the issue must be brought to the knowledge of the higher authorities. He said



that greater focus must be laid on optimum use of IT and modern technology in execution of the projects. He directed the NHAI authorities for ensuring proper maintenance of various NHAI projects in the State and said that the National Highways should be maintained properly and any laxity in this regard would be viewed seriously. He said that all the potholes along all the National Highways must be filled by 3rd of next month. He said that as many as 219 projects have been sanctioned under NABARD from 1st

January, 2018 till date worth Rs 894.38 crore. Similarly 28 road projects worth Rs 747.08 crore have been sanctioned under CRIF in the State during the tenure of the present State Government.

The CM said that HP State Road Transformation Project was also being implemented in the State which was worth Rs 799.68 crore, adding that the project was being implemented under three components, which includes re-establishing and operationalizing HPRIDC and building resilience, improving selected roads stim-

ulating States horticulture and overall economic growth and enhancing road safety. Thakur said that for the first time assessment has been done to identify division wise roads, on which snow clearance activities need to be undertaken as and when required.

He said that a dedicated human resource deployment roster was being formulated which would coordinate with disaster management authorities of respective districts at divisional, district and sub divisional level in event of such requirement

## HOSHIYARPUR RAPE-MURDER CASE — Union Ministers' criticism a political puffery: Capt

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Trashing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) senior leadership's attack on his Government as well as the Gandhis over the Hoshiarpur rape-murder case, Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh on Saturday termed the remarks of Union Ministers Nirmla Sitharaman and Prakash Javadekar as political puffery, with no substance or basis to support their criticism.

The BJP attacked the Congress on Saturday over alleged rape and killing of a six-year-old girl in Hoshiarpur, as it asked opposition party leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra why had they not paid a visit to the family of the victim yet. Capt Amarinder said contrary to what these leaders were claiming, there was no comparison between the Hoshiarpur and the Hathras case.

He pointed out that in the Hathras case, the Uttar Pradesh government and police not only failed to initiate stern

action but in fact was seemingly trying to cover up the matter to benefit the upper-caste accused. This, he said, was in sharp contrast to the prompt action taken by the Punjab Police, who immediately arrested the accused and is now preparing to file the challan within a week.

In a statement, the CM said he himself had directed the director general of police to ensure that the case is fast-tracked by the courts to ensure strict and exemplary action for the accused.

He ridiculed the BJP leaders' criticism of the so-called silence of the Congress leadership on the Hoshiarpur case. The CM said his party had been forced to speak up and protest in the Hathras case because the state had failed to get justice for the Dalit girl there.

"Had the BJP government in UP responded as effectively and speedily as we did in Punjab, neither the Congress and the Gandhis, nor scores of NGOs, lawyers, human rights

activists would have been forced to take to the streets to fight for the victim," he added.

The selective politics and selective outrage charge, which Sitharaman made against Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, was, in fact, completely apt for the BJP, Capt Amarinder said.

No BJP leader had uttered a word in protest against the acts of omission and commission of the UP government and police in the Hathras case, when the entire nation was in angry uproar, he said, slamming the party over its "politically motivated" reaction to the Hoshiarpur incident.

The Chief Minister expressed shock at Sitharaman's and Javadekar's remark of "picnic tour" by the Gandhis and other Congress MPs in Hathras, saying it reflected the grossness of the BJP's anti-Dalit and anti-woman mindset.

The Gandhis faced lathis at the hands of the brutal UP Police in Hathras, they walked miles in their attempts to reach

out to the victim's family, who cried on the shoulders of the brother-sister duo, he pointed out. If the BJP had made even an iota of this effort to pressurise the UP government into ensuring justice for the family in Hathras, the Congress would not have been forced to take on the responsibility of doing so, he added.

Capt Amarinder further pointed out that unlike the Hoshiarpur incident, the Hathras case, and the subsequent developments including the middle-of-the-night burning of the victim's body, were a part of the chain of atrocities being committed against Dalits in UP under the BJP rule.

Independent data endorses that crimes against Dalits/SCs in UP are continuously rising, with nobody to offer succour to the victims, who are living under a blanket of fear, he said. Dalits are fleeing UP, while in Punjab, which accounts for the country's largest SC population, they feel safe and cared for, he added.

## J'khand Govt to raise quota for ST, SC OBCs in State: CM

PNS ■ Ranchi

Chief Minister Hemant Soren today said in Dumka that the State government has decided to change the reservation percentage of ST, SC and OBC communities in the State.

The JMM executive president, who was on a two-day election campaigning tour to Dumka for the upcoming bypoll said that his government has decided to give 27 per cent reservation to OBCs in the State, to 28 per cent to SC community and 12 per cent to SC community in the State. The Chief Minister holding a press conference in Dumka on Saturday said that today thousands of daughters of Jharkhand are working forcibly in other states as bonded labourers.

"The situation of the girl child victims of human trafficking is quite bad. In this way, his government pioneered their return home. Recently, such girls working in Tamil Nadu were brought back home. Where they used to get

a salary of 7000 rupees, today they are given jobs with salary of Rs10,000 in their own State. A work plan to provide jobs to about 8000 to 10,000 girls has been prepared and within the next one month they will get the jobs. Girls from Santhal Pargana region are also among such girls," he said.

Targeting the BJP Soren said that there should be a limit to telling lies. "People change parties, election symbols, colour of flags etc but by changing all these a person's though process also changes.

Our principal opposition party BJP has fielded its candidates and some independent candidates are also contesting the polls in a planned manner so that they could distribute the votes by any means," he said. Hemant sharply reacted to former CM Babul Marandi's statement in which he said why only a Santhali tribals contest from Santhal region.

He asked Marandi, "Does the BJP want a Chhattisgarh resident should contest elections from Santhal region?"

People of the state have seen that when a person of Chhattisgarh got power and looted Jharkhand."

Hemant said that in these bye-elections, the BJP has also kept some people as independents in a planned manner so that votes can be scattered. He said that when you ask such a candidate, he will tell that he has been raised in a planned manner.

Several Congress leaders, including Agriculture Minister Badal, Mahagama MLA Deepika Pandey Singh, Jantara MLA Irfan Ansari, Boriyo MLA Lobin Hebram among others were present.

The JMM executive president attacked State BJP leaders. Not taking anyone's name, the Chief Minister said that today many BJP veterans, middle and small leaders are roaming in the by-elections.

There are some Union ministers, some State level big leaders and some national level biggies leaders too. "Babul Marandi, who has contested elections from different regions of the State, is the star cam-



Chief Minister Hemant Soren alongwith JMM candidate of Dumka constituency Basant Soren during an election campaign in Dumka on Saturday

aigner of BJP in the bye-election. A few months ago, Babul, who used to put BJP government in the dock, is seeking votes for the BJP," he said. Hemant said Babul should tell what he thinks about the CNT-SPT Act.

"What does he think about the loot in the Momentum Jharkhand event? What does he think about the tribal-Dalits jailed in small cases? What does he think about those whom the previous government declared as Naxalites in the name of getting jobs in a fake way? What is his opinion on scams? What is his opinion on the arrest of Stan Swamy?" he asked.

## Covid plasma therapy controversy and first Nobel prize in medicine!



DR. RAJENDRA KUMAR JHA

The latest controversy in COVID 19 regarding the

usefulness of plasma therapy after ICMR - WHO disowned it and the government of Delhi insisted on its use, has brought the issue back into focus.

It is a little known fact that the knowledge that antibodies present in the plasma of an infected patient can be used as a useful drug to combat and cure the disease, had brought the very first Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in the year 1901.

This Nobel Prize went to Emil Von Behring who is regarded as the founder of Plasma Therapy.

Behring belonged to an era when modern scientific understanding of microbiology and immunology was nascent. He worked with all-time greats

such as Louis Pasteur, Robert Koch, P. Ehrlich, Loeffler; the who's who amongst the founding fathers of modern medical science in late nineteenth century.

They together produced several research papers in the diverse field of Bacterial immunology. Behring specially worked towards curing the curse of Diphtheria, Tetanus and also controlling the menace of Tuberculosis in the later part of his life.

These problems together were responsible for millions of helpless deaths in those days. Behring was born on 15th March 1854 in Hansdorf (West Prussia), now Poland, in a large family of 13 siblings. His father was a school teacher

who had difficulty in supporting his family with meagre income.

After studying medicine with full scholarship in military medical school Behring joined the armed forces so that he could start supporting his family. He spent most part of his active life in Germany and France where later on he would get the chance to work at the famous 'Pasteur Institute' and subsequently at Marburg where he became professor of infectious diseases.

In the year 1898 - 99, he demonstrated that Diphtheria culture, when separated from bacilli completely, still contained pure toxins and that these toxins were lethal. Such toxins, when injected into

animals (initially guinea pigs and later on horses) produced copious antitoxins.

When plasma containing such antitoxins was transfused into diseased animals, and later on in human beings, it controlled and cured the certain fatal disease.

This instantly brought Behring huge fame and recognition and consequently the very inaugural Nobel Prize was awarded to him in the year 1901 by Nobel Foundation.

Later on, with F. Wernicke, he established that lasting immunity to diphtheria could be produced for prophylaxis by injecting the toxin-anti-toxin mixture producing antibodies which could neutralise the lethal bacterial toxins and anti-

gens, eventually leading to final banishment of diphtheria from the scourges of mankind.

I don't think the last word on the usefulness of plasma therapy has been pronounced as yet. The fact that monoclonal antibodies based on the same basic principle, made of specific clones against COVID antigens recently produced by REGENERON and used for American President Trump's successful treatment vindicates its basic premise!

The Author is Currently Professor of medicine at Manipal Tata Medical College and Formerly Professor and Head, Department of Medicine at Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences, Ranchi, Jharkhand.

## 182 new +ves in BBSR; total 28,481

From Page 1 Interestingly, Bhubaneswar reported 182 cases while the rest of just one was from Khordha district.

Of the city's new cases, 138 were local contacts and 44 quarantine cases, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) said. On Friday, 189 positive cases had been reported in the city.

The Saturday's local contacts included 11 cases in Nayapalli, nine in Patia, seven each in Patrapada, Unit-8 and

Niladri Vihar, six each in Dumduma and Jharpada and four each in Acharya Vihar, Shyampur, Tankapani Road, Jayadev Vihar and Chandrasekharpur.

The quarantine cases included four each from Pahala and Unit-1 and three from Old Town. Meanwhile, two more persons succumbed to the disease on the day, increasing the death toll to 150.

However, 276 persons recovered on the day, taking the total recoveries to 25,895.



China's aggression on LAC, South China Sea to figure in 2+2 talks

Defence, Foreign Ministers of US, India to have extensive discussions on strategic, defence ties

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

China's aggressive moves in theatres across the world, including the South China Sea and the ongoing stand-off at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh, will figure prominently during the 2+2 dialogue here next week.

Given the growing profile of the 2+2 grouping and seriousness of the situation at the LAC, the foreign and defence ministers of the two countries will hold intense talks during the two-day conference beginning Monday.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will have extensive discussions on the entire range of strategic and defence ties with their counterparts Mark Esper and Mike Pompeo.

The visiting ministers will also call on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval. Incidentally, the dialogue takes place days before Presidential elections in the US in early November. This will be the third edition of the annual dialogue. The last one was held in the US.



While the two sides will review the whole range of bilateral ties, the ministers will also discuss the growing aggressive stance and expansionist behaviour of China on the LAC and the South China Sea.

Beijing is also against the Quad formation and not in favour of Australian Navy joining the Malabar series of exercises. India, last week, however, brushed aside China's objection and invited Australia to take part in the annual exercise in late November in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea.

The two countries are likely to ink the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA). It will facilitate sharing of classified satellite and sensor data. Officials from both the sides are now fine tuning the final format of the proposed pact.

Meanwhile, a senior Trump administration official said in Washington on Friday the US is closely monitoring the border row between India

and China and does not want the situation to escalate.

The official told the reporters during a conference call on Friday, ahead of the next week's 2+2 India-US Ministerial in New Delhi, that the Trump administration was providing support to India through defence sales, joint military exercises and information sharing.

"We as a Government are covering the situation in the Himalayas closely, and understandably. We certainly want to ensure that the situation doesn't escalate," the official said. "These are all areas where we cooperate with the Indians on, and not just as it relates to the tensions in the Himalayas," the official said.

In response to a question, the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said the US was having an ongoing dialogue with India about increased cooperation in Southeast Asia, and not simply about the South China Sea.

"And we encourage their involvement. That cuts across development investments, it

ITBP has broken myth that some countries have powerful armies: Reddy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Junior Home Minister G Kishan Reddy on Saturday said the ITBP has broken the myth that some countries have powerful armies, in an oblique reference to China that is at the core of the ongoing standoff in eastern Ladakh.

The Minister of State for Home was addressing the troops of the mountain warfare-trained border force on its 59th Raising Day at the paramilitary's facility in neighbouring Greater Noida.

Without taking names, the minister said while India believes in the philosophy of "vasudhaiva kutumbakam" or the world is one family, the culture of the country teaches it to worship both "shastra and astra" (sacred scriptures and weapons at the same time).

"This has taught us that the enemy can raise its head anytime, anywhere and we should be fully prepared to face any possibility. The ITBP is an important pillar of that preparedness of the country,"

cuts across security cooperation, and then it also involves presence. So, we welcome greater Indian participation in Southeast Asia across all three of those areas," said the official.

The senior official's remarks came in the midst of a growing global concern over China's expansionist behav-



Junior Home Minister G Kishan Reddy addresses ITBP force on its 59th Raising Day at paramilitary's facility in Greater Noida

Reddy asserted. "The armies of some countries had a myth that they were among the powerful armies of the world, but during the developments in the past few months, the ITBP has broken that myth," he added.

The country and its citizens are proud of the ITBP's

valour and dedication, he said. The ITBP is the designated force to secure the 3,488-km Line of Actual Control (LAC) on the Indo-China frontier that runs from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh in the Northeast.

Earlier, the ITBP had said it "fought the whole night" and

gave a befitting reply to the Chinese PLA troops during a violent clash between the two sides on June 15-16.

"India is surrounded by a hostile neighbourhood and our enemy, time and again, puts obstacles to stop our economic development. When you defeat these designs of the

enemy, you ensure the country's economic development," he further said.

The minister asserted that the government is "determined" to strengthen and "modernise" the Force and announced certain sanctions given to it recently.

"I am happy to inform that the ITBP has been given the approval by the Ministry of Home Affairs to establish 47 border posts, uniform special clothing and mountaineering equipment for high-altitude locations, latest weapons are being provided and work is on to prepare priority border roads for the Force," he said.

The minister said the Centre had approved a budget of Rs 7,223 crore for the Force for financial year 2019-20.

"I assure you that there will be no dearth of funds for the ITBP," he added.

ITBP Director General (DG) SS Deswal also spoke at the event and lauded the bravery displayed by the troops recently in Ladakh under "very challenging circumstances".

the Philippines, Brunei and Taiwan have counterclaims. In the East China Sea, China has territorial disputes with Japan.

The South China Sea and the East China Sea are stated to be rich in minerals, oil, and other natural resources. They are also vital to global trade.

Although the US lays no claims to the disputed waters, it has challenged China's growing territorial claims in the South China Sea by deploying warships and fighter jets to assert freedom of navigation and overflight patrols in the strategically vital region.

Hoshiarpur rape-murder of minor: BJP flays Congress over silence



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Facing criticism over the Hathras rape and murder case, the BJP on Saturday returned fire by attacking the Congress and its leadership for its silence over the rape and murder of a 6-year-old child of a Dalit migrant labourer from Bihar at Hoshiarpur in Punjab.

Union Finance Minister and senior BJP leader Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday hit out at Congress's "double-standards" and the "silence" of the "brother-sister (Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi)" on the incident in their party-ruled State and asked why there was "no picnic on this".

She also sought to know why RJD's "Yadav-brothers (Tejashwi and Tej Pratap)" in the poll-bound Bihar were "chup" on the issue. Sitharaman herself went on to explain the "silence" of the Yadav brothers as she quoted media reports in 2008 saying the duo was themselves accused of "chhed-chhad" (molestation) in New Delhi.

The BJP leader condemned the Congress for suppressing "freedom of expression" by its Maharashtra government and imposing emergency-like situations and asked the left and

the extreme-left of "tukde-tukde-gang" to comment as to who was restricting the media in the country.

Addressing a press conference here in the BJP headquarters, the Union Finance Minister alleged that the Congress is silent when it is about voicing horrors from States ruled by them.

"A 6-year-old child of a Dalit migrant labourer from Bihar is raped, killed and body half-burnt in Hoshiarpur (Punjab) and it doesn't shake the conscience of the brother and sister who rush to every other place which can help them politically," she said.

She further attacked the Congress leadership saying, "Not a word from the tweet-friendly leader Shri Rahul Gandhi. No tweets on this (Hoshiarpur rape incident), no outrage on this, and no picnic on this. A woman (Sonia Gandhi) heads the party. Does this kind of selective outrage suit the stature of their party?"

She questioned why RJD leader Tejashwi and his brother were silent on the issue when their alliance partner Congress was running the state of Punjab.

"Are you not answerable to that family in Punjab," she asked the Yadavs, sons of former Bihar Chief Minister Lalu Prasad, currently in Jail.

Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar also attacked the Congress saying, "We demand strict action against the culprits."

Instead of going on political tours, Rahul Gandhi should visit Tanda (Punjab) and Rajasthan to take cognisance of incidents of crime against women."

In the same vein, he too targeted RJD leader Tejashwi and said: "Tejashwi Yadav is sharing the stage and campaigning with the people who are committing atrocities on Bihar's daughter. How will it go?"

Sitharaman condemned the Congress and the RJD while herself maintaining that rape "should not be politicised" and all political parties should do their best to mitigate the situation.

When asked about the promise to provide Covid-19 vaccines free in Bihar, she justified her party's manifesto and said health is a state subject and the party has every right to make such a statement in the manifesto.

Answering a question on cases filed by Maharashtra Government, the finance minister said freedom is in danger wherever Congress is in governance. She said the Prime Minister and Home Minister were abused regularly but no action was taken against them (by us) but now the liberal diaspora has refused to speak on what is happening in Maharashtra, she said.

31% adolescents battled extreme anxiety about finances in past few months due to Covid: Survey

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

About 31 per cent surveyed adolescents battled extreme anxiety in the past few months worrying about the impact of coronavirus pandemic on their family's financial status, according to a survey of over 7,300 adolescents from four states of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Bihar and Odisha.

The survey on 'What do the Adolescents have to say? COVID-19 and its Impact' by NGO Centre for Catalysing Change was conducted in two rounds in the months of April, July and August.

Out of the 7,324 adolescents surveyed, 31 per cent admitted to battling extreme anxiety worrying about the pandemic's impact on their family's financial status.

The survey also found that adolescent girls faced significant gender discrimination in these months due to the pandemic.

Only 12 per cent of surveyed adolescents girls had access to their own mobile phones to be able to attend online classes, while 35 per cent boys had access to their

own mobile phones," the survey found. "Further, 51 per cent of the adolescent girls surveyed lacked access to essential textbooks in comparison to boys, highlighting how the pandemic had jeopardized girls' access to education," it said.

About 39 per cent of the girls were found to be contributing to housework as opposed to the number of boys at 35 per cent, it said. Under the survey, the adolescent girls also stated how their mobility has been curbed, with only 39 per cent girls saying they were allowed to go out alone in comparison to 62 per cent boys of the same age who were allowed to go out alone.

"At the same time, only 36 per cent adolescents knew the correct helpline numbers, while awareness about the use of the helplines was even lower. Only 18 per cent was aware that the helplines could be used in reporting domestic violence and only 22-23 per cent knew that it could be used in reporting child labour and child trafficking cases," it added.

Govt taking steps to strengthen agri sector to help farmers: Modi

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said his Government is taking initiatives to strengthen the agriculture sector in the country so that farmers do not have to face any trouble.

His statement comes amid opposition to the new farm laws by farmers' groups and political parties.

Modi was speaking after inaugurating three projects in Gujarat - one each related to agriculture, healthcare and tourism development - via video conference from New Delhi.

"In order to double the farmers' income and to reduce the production cost and their troubles, we will have to increase our efforts with the changing times," he said.

"Whether granting freedom to farmers to sell their produce anywhere in the country or creating thousands of

farmer producer organisations, whether completing stalled irrigation projects or improving crop insurance scheme or 100 per cent neem-coating of urea or soil health card... The aim is to strengthen the agriculture sector so that farmers do not have trouble in farming. Initiatives like these are being taken continuously for it," he said.

He launched the state government's Kisan Suryoday Yojana (KSY) aimed at providing day-time electricity to the farmers in the state for irrigation and farming purposes.

The PM also inaugurated Paediatric Heart Hospital at the U N Mehta Institute of Cardiology and Research Centre in Ahmedabad, developed at a cost of Rs 470 crore by the state's health and family welfare department.

Besides, he launched the recently-completed ropeway project on Mount Girnar, a major tourist and pilgrim site near Junagadh city in the state.

The 2.3-km long ropeway is being touted as the longest temple ropeway in Asia.

Modi held the opposition responsible for the delay in completion of the Girnar ropeway project.

The project was proposed in 1983, and was delayed due to various reasons, most importantly due to the environmental concerns, before the UPA government granted it conditional approval in 2011.

"Had they not created hurdles in the Girnar ropeway project, it would not have got stalled for so many years. People and tourists should have got its benefit a long back," he said.

"As a nation, we all should think of the loss caused to the people and the country when such projects (Girnar ropeway) of public importance are stalled for a long time," he said, adding that the new project will facilitate the pilgrims and tourists, and create job opportunities.

Stay vigilant in fight against polio amid pandemic: WHO

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As the world marks the World Polio Day on Saturday, the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF are urging nations to stay vigilant in the fight against poliomyelitis (polio) and bolster vaccination services amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

India was declared polio-free (wild polio virus) in March 2014. This was a huge accomplishment as India was considered one of the most challenging countries. Though polio still exists in neighbouring underdeveloped nations like Pakistan and Afghanistan, the instances have decreased by over 99% in comparison with the 1980s.

Polio is a crippling and sometimes fatal disease with no cure. However, there are safe and effective vaccines and infection of polio can be pre-



vented through immunization. Eradication of polio is based on preventing infection by immunizing every child until transmission stops and the country, region, and world is polio-free. Thanks to these vaccination efforts, cases of polio have been reduced by about 99% over the past decade.

However, since March 2020, the pandemic has disrupted life-saving immunisation endeavours around the

world, putting millions of children at risk of diseases like polio, diphtheria, and measles.

The disruption of such routine immunisation services may be unprecedented since the inception of the expanded programme on immunisation (EPI) in the 1970s, in both government and private sectors.

In order to successfully eradicate polio, experts said that parents should get their child immunised with OPV

and IPV and also continue to get the vaccine administered during government polio drives. Both vaccines are very safe and their use should be continued. The government should have campaigns to strengthen the immunisation drive.

The World Health Organization and UNICEF in July 2020 had warned of an alarming decline in the number of children receiving life-saving vaccines around the world due to disruptions in the delivery and uptake of immunisation services caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to new data by the two UN bodies, these disruptions threaten to reverse hard-won progress to reach more children and adolescents with a wider range of vaccines, which has already been hampered by a decade of stalling coverage.

53,370 new cases take India's Covid tally to 78,14,682

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's COVID-19 tally climbed to 78.14 lakh with 53,370 fresh cases in a day, while 70,16,046 people have so far recuperated pushing the national recovery rate to 89.78 per cent on Saturday, the Union health ministry said.

The total number of coronavirus cases mounted to 78,14,682 and the death toll to 1,17,956, with the novel coronavirus virus claiming 650 lives in a span of 24 hours in the country, the ministry data updated at 8 am on Saturday showed.

The COVID-19 case fatality rate has further declined to



1.51 per cent.

There are 6,80,680 active cases of coronavirus infection in the country which comprises 8.71 per cent of the total caseload, the ministry data said.

According to ICMR, a cumulative total of 10,13,82,564 samples have been tested up to October 23, with 12,69,479 samples tested on Friday.

Govt sets up high-level committee to commemorate 400th birth anniversary of Shri Guru Tegh Bahadur

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Saturday set up a high-level committee headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to commemorate the 400th birth anniversary of Shri Guru Tegh Bahadur.

The mandate of the 70-member committee includes approval of policies, plans, programmes and supervision and guiding the commemoration, besides deciding broad dates for detailed programmes of celebration.

The members of the committee include former prime minister Manmohan Singh, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Union ministers Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah, Nitin Gadkari, Nirmala Sitharaman, Hardeep

Singh Puri, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, chief ministers of Haryana, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha and Rajasthan.

Other members include Congress leader Gulam Nabi Azad, Akali Dal leaders Parkash Singh Badal, Sukhbir Singh Badal, SGPC president Gobind Singh Longowal, former chief of Indian Army J J Singh, former chief of Indian Air Force Birender Singh Dhanoa, and sportspersons Milkha Singh and Harbhajan Singh.

Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla will be the member secretary of the high-level committee.

# FY19 GST returns filing deadline extended till Dec 31

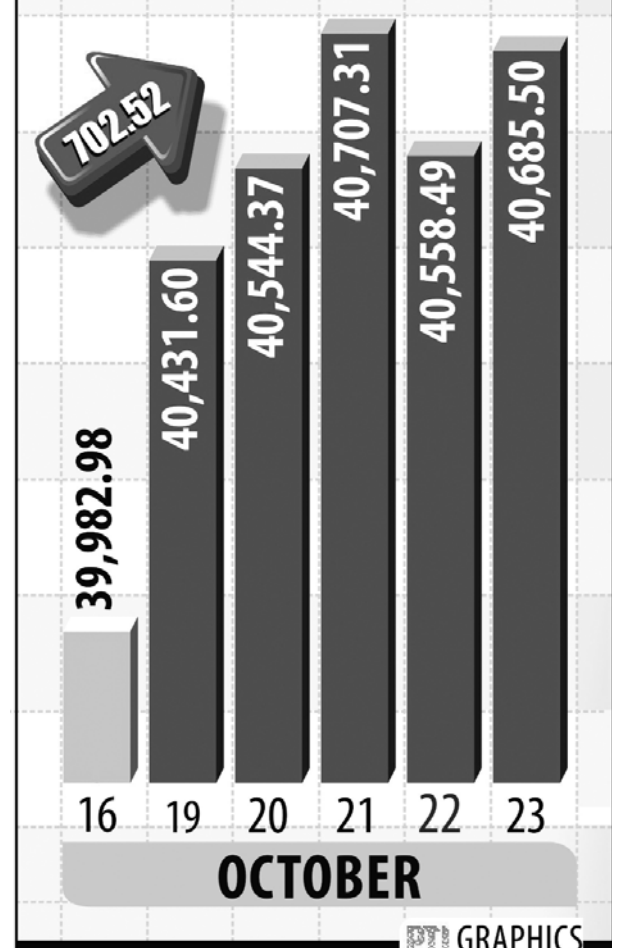
**New Delhi:** The government on Saturday extended the deadline for furnishing GST annual returns for FY 2018-19 by two months till December 31. The government had last month extended the last date for filing GST annual return and audit report for the 2018-19 fiscal by a month till October 31, 2020. In a statement, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) said the government has been receiving a number of representations regarding need to extend due date for filing Annual Return (Form GSTR-9) and Reconciliation Statement (Form GSTR-9C) for FY 2018-19. The representations have been made on the grounds that due to the COVID-19 pandemic related lockdown and restrictions, normal business operations have still not been possible in several parts of the country, it said. The statement said it has been requested that the due dates for the same be extended beyond October 31, 2020 to enable the businesses and auditors to comply in this regard.



"In view of the same, on the recommendations of the GST Council, it has been decided to extend the due date for filing an annual return to be filed yearly by taxpayers registered under the Goods and Services Tax (GST). It consists of details regarding the outward and inward supplies made or received under different tax heads. GSTR-9C is a statement of reconciliation between GSTR-9 and the audited annual financial statement. Furnishing of the annual return is mandatory only for taxpayers with aggregate annual turnover of above Rs 2 crore while reconciliation statement is to be furnished only by the registered persons having aggregate turnover above Rs 5 crore." - PTI

**New Delhi:** The All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) on Saturday said the labour ministry's move to revise base year for consumer price index for industrial workers (CPI-IW) is "suspicious". The AITUC further said that it is of the view that the move will lead to "depression" in dearness allowance (DA) paid to workers. The labour ministry has recently revised the base year for CPI-IW to 2016 from 2001. The retail inflation measured in terms of CPI-IW is the single most important price statistics with financial implications. The CPI-IW is primarily used to regulate the dearness allowance of government employees and the workers in the industrial sectors. It is also used in the fixation and revision of minimum wages in scheduled employments besides measuring the inflation in retail prices. In a statement issued on Saturday, the AITUC said that "the Centre's move to shift base year for calculating DA is suspicious". The Labour Bureau of the Ministry of Labour sent out emails announcing revision of base year for calculating CPI-IW from 2001 to 2016, on October 22, 2020, it claimed. This decision follows the earlier pattern practiced by the labour ministry: making a show of consulting stakeholders at the eleventh hour and then completely ignoring the responses received, it alleged. The entire lot of central trade unions had opposed through a written, signed communication, the recommendations of the Labour Bureau point by point, only to discover that they have simply been brushed aside, the AITUC said. The so-called consultations on labour codes, including recommendations of the Parliamentary Committee on Labour, met the same fate, it added. "Since the present decision of shifting the base year to 2016, linking factor of 2.88, proportions of items of household expenditures, points of data collections, all are going to result in depression of dearness allowance payable to industrial workers, the employers stand to gain that much as their profits," it opined. - PTI

## SENSEX in a Week



## E-tailers begin 2nd festive sale round after 7-day fiesta

**New Delhi:** After registering record sales in the seven-day period to kick off the festive season after pandemic-induced lockdowns, ecommerce marketplaces like Amazon and Flipkart have announced the second round of online sales to keep up the momentum. Amazon on Saturday announced its 1/2 Happiness Upgrade Days' where customers will get special offers on a wide range of products across categories from top brands till October 28. The e-commerce platform is offering up to 40 per cent off on latest smartphones from top brands, 65 per cent off on large appliances and TVs and up to 80 per cent off on Amazon fashion and home and kitchen products. The sale brings over 6,000 deals on consumer electronics and accessories, up to Rs 30,000 off on laptops, up to 75 per cent off on headphones and up to 60 per cent off on camera devices, the company said in a statement. "The customers can save big with a 10 per cent instant bank discount on Axis Bank, Citibank and ICICI Bank credit and debit cards and EMI transactions. They can get 5 per cent instant discount plus up to 5 per cent reward points with Amazon Pay ICICI Bank credit card. Flipkart has also started Dussehra sale from October 22 till October 28 and after that, the ecommerce platform will begin the 1/2 Big Diwali Sale". According to industry reports, the seven-day sales likely witnessed over \$4.8 billion (nearly Rs 35,273 crore) in sales. According to Bengaluru-based market research firm RedSeer, \$3.1 billion (about Rs 22,000 crore) of goods were sold online from brands and sellers in the first four-and-a-half days of the online sales event that started from October 15. Online retailers are expected to generate approximately \$6.5 billion (Rs 47,751 crore) in sales during the festive month (October 15-November 15), with around 5.5-6 crore online buyers participating, according to a Forrester report. - IANS

## 'IBC raised confidence of all investors in Indian economy'

**New Delhi:** The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) has not only strengthened the banking system by helping them resolve outstanding debt piled over years but has also come as a big booster of confidence of national and foreign investors in the Indian economy, a senior SBI official said on Saturday. In his address as the Guest of Honour in the inaugural session of the international conference (online) on "Insolvency Resolution Paradigm: Global Headwinds and Responses", State Bank of India's Managing Director, Commercial Clients Groups, Arijit Basu, said that earlier banks only had "loan restructuring" option which used to take five to six years. "Now, the IBC has provided equal opportunity to corporate sector and banks. It has changed the relationship between borrowers and creditors and provided a mechanism of insolvency. "Unsustainable debt is a symptom of fundamental issues in the 'business model' of the concerned company. In case if you don't have a viable resolution plan, we (banks) have a viable resolution plan under IBC," he said. However, Basu expressed satisfaction that the big corporate houses in India have efficiently managed their cash flow during Covid-19. The event was organised by the Indian Institute of Insolvency Professionals of ICAI (IIIP). In his address, Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) President Atul Kumar Gupta highlighted the role of CAS being played in IBC ecosystem as insolvency professionals (IPs). "About 62 per cent of insolvency professionals are CAS. Besides, IBC has opened several new opportunities for CAS in the form of valuer, liquidator, technical experts in the NCLT, the NCLAT, high courts, and also the Supreme Court, and also various kinds of advisory services," he said. Gupta also appreciated the initiatives of the Central government in helping businesses to wade through the economic crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. In the session titled "Perspective on Global Insolvency Regime", Joint Secretary, Corporate Affairs, Gyaneshwar Kumar Singh said: "IBC has not only served corporates but livelihoods also. As per estimates, the total value of insolvency cases amount to about Rs 5.63 lakh crore. If it had undergone through liquidation, only about 7 per cent of the money would have been recovered. This would have adversely impacted the Indian economy." "With IBC in place, there will be no sick companies and sick banks in the future". In the same session, Paul Bannister, Head (Policy), Insolvency Service, UK, appreciated the response of India in handling the economic crisis caused by Covid-19. "These are very difficult times. We already have a world-class insolvency regime but we are developing further against the context of crisis and changing international context including Covid and UK's exit from the European Union," he said. - IANS

**IBC has changed the relationship between borrowers and creditors and provided a mechanism of insolvency**

## Steady oil prices holds up any reversion in petrol-diesel prices

**New Delhi:** The pump prices of auto fuels petrol and diesel remained unchanged on Saturday as softer global crude and product prices prevented oil marketing companies from carrying out any revision in prices. With this, Petrol prices have now been unchanged for 32 days at a stretch while diesel prices were the same for the 22 consecutive days. Price of petrol in the national capital stood at Rs 81.06 per litre. In Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata, the fuel was sold for Rs 87.74, Rs 84.14 and Rs 82.59 per litre, respectively. Diesel prices in Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata continues to be at Rs 70.46, Rs 76.86, Rs 75.95 and Rs 73.99, respectively. Oil sector experts said that with global oil prices under pressure from slowing demand

**Petrol prices have now been unchanged for 32 days at a stretch while diesel prices were the same for the 22 consecutive days**

auto fuel consumers in India by way of a fall in retail price of petrol and diesel. Global crude prices are holding close to \$42 a barrel now. It has been hovering between \$40-42 a barrel for over a month now. But with lower oil demand and rising inventory, there is fear among oil producing companies that crude prices may start falling again. - IANS

### SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED BOY

General public is hereby informed that this boy namely Ankit Kumar S/o Jitender Pathak R/o RZF-82, Nihal Vihar, Nangloi, Delhi Age : 14 years, Complexion : Wheatish, Height : 5'2", Face : Round, Identification: An old scar mark on left side of face, wearing white colour T-shirt, black colour trouser and white colour sports shoes in feet, has been missing/kidnapped since 25.05.2019 from the area of P.S. Nihal Vihar, Delhi. In this regard FIR No. 352/19 dated 25.05.2019 u/s 363 IPC has been lodged at P.S. Nihal Vihar, Delhi. Any person having any information or clue about this missing/kidnapped boy may kindly inform to the following. E-mail: [cbi@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cbi@cbi.gov.in) Website: <http://cbi.nic.in> Fax: 24368639, Tel.: 24368638/24368641 SHO : P.S. Nihal Vihar, Delhi. Ph. : 011-25946700, 25946710

### SEARCH FOR MISSING

General public is hereby informed that one girl namely Yogita, D/o Mukesh, R/o C-1325, Jahangir Puri, Delhi, Age: 22 years, Height: 5', Complexion: Wheatish, Face: Round, Built: Strong, wearing Grey colour Frock and Black Leggie or Chappal in feet, has been missing from the area of P.S. Jahangir Puri, Delhi. In this regard a DD No. 111A, dated 13.10.2020 has been registered at P.S. Jahangir Puri, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out the girl but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information about her please inform undersigned. Website: <http://cbi.nic.in> E-mail: [cbi@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cbi@cbi.gov.in) Fax: 011-24368639 Ph. No. : 011-24368638, 24368641 P.S. Jahangir Puri, Delhi DP/454/NW/2020 Ph. No.: 011-27636000, 27631600

## JASCH INDUSTRIES LIMITED

Regd. Off. : 43/5, Bahalgarh Road, Sonipat - 131021 Tele : 0130 - 2216666, Fax : 011-66173923  
CIN : L24302HR1985PLC022758 Website : [www.jaschindustries.com](http://www.jaschindustries.com), Email : [accounts@jasch.biz](mailto:accounts@jasch.biz)

Extract of Standalone Reviewed Financial Results for the Quarter ended 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2020. (₹ in Lakh)

SI No	Particulars	Quarter Ended			Half Year Ended		Year Ended
		30.09.20	30.06.20	30.09.19	30.09.20	30.09.19	31.03.20
		Unaudited	Unaudited	Unaudited	Unaudited	Unaudited	Audited
1	Total Income from Operations.	2645.23	1488.66	3117.23	4133.89	6597.24	13077.64
2	Profit before Interest, Depreciation & Taxes (EBITDA)	331.08	181.40	59.79	512.48	446.05	1154.72
3	Net Profit for the Period (before Tax and Exceptional Items)	245.53	85.37	(74.25)	330.90	172.13	620.02
4	Net Profit for the Period before Tax (after Exceptional Items)	245.53	85.37	(74.25)	330.90	172.13	620.02
5	Net Profit for the period after Tax (after Exceptional Items)	183.73	63.88	(60.99)	247.61	123.80	453.72
6	Total Comprehensive Income for the period ((Comprising Profit) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax))	183.73	63.88	(60.99)	247.61	123.80	453.72
7	Equity Share Capital	1133.00	1133.00	1133.00	1133.00	1133.00	1133.00
8	Reserves	4904.18	4387.64	4326.65	4904.18	4326.65	4656.57
9	Earnings Per Share (of ₹10/- each) Basic & Diluted:	1.62	0.56	(0.54)	2.19	1.09	4.00

Notes:  
1. The above is an extract of the detailed format of Quarterly Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchange under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Quarterly Financial Results are available on the website of Stock Exchange at [www.bseindia.com](http://www.bseindia.com) and also on Company's website at [www.jaschindustries.com](http://www.jaschindustries.com).  
2. The Company has prepared these results in accordance with the Companies (Indian Accounting Standards) Rules, 2015 (Ind AS) prescribed under Section 133 of the Companies Act, 2013.  
3. Figures for the previous periods have been regrouped, wherever necessary, to conform to the current period's classification.

sd/- (J. K. GARG)  
MANAGING DIRECTOR

## Karnataka HC restrains Franklin Templeton to wind up schemes without investors' consent

**Bengaluru:** In a major victory for investors, the High Court of Karnataka on Saturday restrained Franklin Templeton (FT) India's decision from winding up its six debt schemes without obtaining the consent of unitholders. Pronouncing the verdict in petitions challenging the winding-up of six debt fund schemes of FT, a division bench of Chief Justice A.S. Oka and Justice Justice Ashok S. Kinagi directed that trustees should not take any action on the winding up of the six schemes till a simple majority consent of unit holders is obtained. "We hold that no interference is called for in the decision of trustees to winding up of the said schemes. We hold and declare that the decision of the trustees to winding up the six schemes cannot be implemented until consent from the unitholders is obtained in accordance with Sub Clause C of Regulation 15. Hence, we restrain the trustees to take any further steps based on the notice April 23, 2020 and May 28, 2020, issued till the consent of the unitholders is obtained. It will open for trustees to obtain the consent of unitholders and to take further steps," the division bench stated in its 330-page order. Market regulator SEBI should have played a more active role in the matter and it failed in its duty towards taking prompt actions, the court noted, adding that the forensic audit report in the case is tentative and doesn't include final findings. In view of the Supreme Court's vacation, the operation of the order has been stayed for six weeks to give time to FT India to appeal the order, the Karnataka High Court ruled, directing that status quo on refund and redemptions should be maintained till then. It also restricted the asset management company and trustees from taking on any fresh borrowings in the six debt schemes, which were shut in April. Reacting on the High Court order, Franklin Templeton said: "Court has upheld the authority and decision taken by the Trustees to wind-up the schemes under regulation 39(2)(a). As per the judgement, for operationalising such a decision, approval of the unitholders will be required under regulation 18(15)(c). "We are considering the order and will take appropriate steps in consultation with our legal experts in the best interest of the unitholders. Our focus remains on maximizing value for unitholders in these schemes and returning monies as soon as possible," said FT in a statement. Notably, on April 23 amid severe redemption pressure and illiquidity, Franklin Templeton had decided to shut down its suite of six debt schemes, affecting 3,00,000 investors adversely and assets under management of Rs 26,000 crore. - IANS

## PHD Chamber: Refuel demand to attract pvt investments

**New Delhi:** India's healthy debt to GDP ratio has created scope for raising investment funding for 'National Infrastructure Pipeline' through borrowings from overseas markets. According to Sanjay Aggarwal, President, PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, although, early signs of recovery are visible from the recent data on economic and business indicators, the need of the hour is to put the policy attention on refueling consumption demand in the country to regain the lost growth momentum. "Since the lockdown caused by Covid-19 in the month of March 2020, Government has very well addressed the investors' and the industry's sentiments, the focus should now be on fuelling consumption growth, which is one of the key engines of economic growth," Aggarwal was quoted as saying in a PHD Chamber statement. "At this juncture, the next stimulus package should prioritise demand creation measures to attain a positive growth trajectory in the later quarters (Q3 / Q4) of this financial year 2020-21." Besides, he said that demand creation will have multiplier effects on the other sectors of economy including enhanced production, increased investments and employment creation. "The increased spending on infrastructure will give a multiplier effect to rejuvenate the aggregate demand in the economy and to mitigate the daunting impact of Covid-19 on the economy," said Aggarwal. - IANS

### PUBLIC NOTICE

Information is given to general public at large that my client Mr. Manveer Parsad & Mrs. Pushpa Devi owner of Shop of land ad measuring 1200 sq.ys. out of 48.00 sq.ys., situated at Mohlia Govindpuri, Modinagar, Patna, Jharkhand, Tehsil Modinagar, Distt. Ghazabad, U.P. By virtue of Sale Deed dated 13.07.1998 Registered as Doc. No. 3980, Book No. 01, Volume No. 489, Page No. 447-454, on dated 13.07.1998-SRO-Modinagar-Ghazabad and as present at present property shop no. is 12/26 and same property to be loan financed by M/s Vastu Housing Finance Corporation Ltd. A-32, 2nd Floor, Industrial Area, Phase-1, Naraina New Delhi-110028. If any person(s) have any objection(s) or Claim(s) with respect to the right, title or interest in the said property then contact us within 7 days from the date of this notice on the number mentioned herein below failing which my client i.e. M/s Vastu Housing Finance Corporation Ltd. A-32, 2nd Floor, Industrial Area, Phase-1, Naraina New Delhi-110028 shall not be held responsible in any manner whatsoever. Naveen Kumar Verma, Advocate F-211, Sector-3 vaishali, Ghazilabad, Uttar Pradesh-201010

## CFMA hails HC verdict in FTMF case, to move SC for unit-holders' interests

**Chennai:** Hailing the Karnataka High Court's verdict that upheld the rights of unit-holders of the Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund (FTMF), the Chennai Financial Markets and Accountability (CFMA), an investor's protection organisation, said it would approach the Supreme Court to safeguard the entire interests of investors. The Karnataka High Court has directed Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund to not proceed with the winding-up of its debt schemes without obtaining the consent of its unit-holders. It clarified that the consent of unit-holders as per the regulations is to be obtained before going through the winding-up process. Stating that the half-battle was won wherein rights of unit-holders are upheld by the Karnataka High Court, Nithyaesh Natraj, the counsel for the CFMA, noted: "There are few areas which the court has not decided upon (which) may set a wrong precedent for the Mutual Fund Industry." He pointed out that it has been rightly observed by the court that the SEBI has failed to be proactive in this case and reiterated that the CFMA would challenge the order in the apex court so that the entire interests of unit-holders are protected further. "Leaving the fate of three lakh unit-holders at the mercy of trustees without knowing the content of forensic audit will set a bad precedent," he added. - IANS

### WESTERN RAILWAY (SURVEY & CONSTRUCTION)

**E-TENDER NOTICE**  
Deputy Chief Engineer (Construction), Western Railway, 8th floor, station building, Churchgate, Mumbai-400 020 invites offer through e-tender portal [www.reps.gov.in](http://www.reps.gov.in) under single packet system for the following tender: Tender No.: Dy CE (C)-775(R). Name of Work: Mahim-Bandra-Construction strengthening of cast iron screw piles (bridge No. 20) Placing of precast RCC box segments between south abutment and pier No. 1 and strengthening of piers and other Misc works, Mumbai Division W. Rly. NIT Cost (Rs.) : 5,14,46,942/- EMD (in Rs.) : 4,57,200/- Bid submission closing date: 17.11.2020 at 15.00 hrs. Instructions of tenderers: Only E-offers submitted online through e-tender portal will be considered. Please note that printed offers will not be entertained. The date of tender, terms & conditions and scope of work are uploaded and are available only in electronic format in our website [www.reps.gov.in](http://www.reps.gov.in) 0375 Like us on : [Facebook.com/WesternRly](https://www.facebook.com/WesternRly)



Quad interested in boosting rules-based order in Indo-Pacific: US

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Quad — comprising Japan, India, Australia and the United States — is not an alliance but a grouping of countries driven by shared interests and values and interested in strengthening a rules-based order in the strategically-important Indo-Pacific region, a senior Trump administration official has said.

“There’s nothing about the Quad that it is an alliance. It is not formalised. There’s no reciprocal obligation among the countries who are involved. It’s not an organisation that solicits membership,” a senior administration official said during a conference call with reporters ahead of the next week’s 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue between India and the US.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Defence Secretary Mark Esper are travelling to India to hold talks with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. The

visiting American officials would also be meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

To a query, the official said, the Quad ministerial meeting that they had in Tokyo in October just demonstrated the strong ties among the Indo-Pacific democracies.

“I would say it’s a grouping of countries who are interested in strengthening a rules-based order in which all nations are sovereign, strong, and prosperous. It’s an opportunity for us to carry out continued dialogue and to work towards mutually agreed-upon outcomes.

“It’s a grouping of countries

that’s driven by shared interests and values rather than binding obligations. That’s an example of effective multilateralism at its best,” the official said, requesting anonymity.

As the US, Japan, Australia, and India are getting together to cooperate on one issue or another, if there are other countries that want to participate in those discussions or those activities, the door is always open, the official said.

The cooperation of the US and India on the Quad along with Australia and Japan really reflect a convergence of common values and interests in the region, the official said.

“We’re the two largest democracies in the Indo-Pacific region, and we have shared values and interests with all four countries. It’s not an exclusive grouping by any means. All four countries are interested and eager in welcoming other countries to the table for individual elements of cooperation that we do, some of them under the Quad framework but not all of them. That’s for sure,” the official said.

“It is something that’s flexible and reflects our common values and interests, and I think is really for the long term,” the official said.

In November 2017, India,

Japan, the US and Australia gave shape to the long-pending proposal of setting up the “Quad” to develop a new strategy to keep the critical sea routes in the Indo-Pacific free of any influence.

In the midst of growing global concern over China’s expansionist behaviour, the foreign ministers of the Quad member nations met in Tokyo on October 6 and reaffirmed their collective vision for a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific.

The foreign minister of the four countries held their first meeting under the ‘Quad’ framework in New York in

September 2019.

The evolving situation in the Indo-Pacific region in the wake of China’s increasing military muscle flexing has become a major talking point among leading global powers. The US has been favouring making Quad a security architecture to check China’s growing assertiveness.

China is engaged in hotly contested territorial disputes in the South and East China Seas. Beijing has also made substantial progress in militarising its man-made islands in the past few years.

Beijing claims sovereignty over all of the South China Sea.

But Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, Brunei and Taiwan have counterclaims. In the East China Sea, China has territorial disputes with Japan.

The South China Sea and the East China Sea are stated to be rich in minerals, oil and other natural resources. They are also vital to global trade. Although the US lays no claims to the disputed waters, it has challenged China’s growing territorial claims in the South China Sea by deploying warships and fighter jets to assert freedom of navigation and overflight patrols in the strategically vital region.

I voted for a guy named Trump, says President

AP ■ WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump has casted his ballot Saturday morning in West Palm Beach, Florida, and he tells reporters afterward: “I voted for a guy named Trump.”

West Palm Beach is near his private Mar-a-Lago club. He used to vote in New York but changed his residency to Florida last year.

There were several hundred supporters gathered with flags and signs outside the library where he voted. And there were chants of “Four more years.”

The president wore a mask while voting but he took it off as he approached reporters afterward in the building.

He called it “a very secure vote. Much more secure than when you send in a ballot, I can tell you that.”

Democrat Joe Biden hasn’t voted yet and it likely to do so in person in Delaware on Election Day, Nov. 3. Delaware doesn’t offer early, in-person voting like Florida.

Trump said at a Florida rally



President Donald Trump walks with Wendy Sartory Link, Supervisor of Elections Palm Beach County, after casting his ballot for the presidential election, on Saturday

on Friday that he likes being able to vote in person. “I’m old fashioned, I guess,” he said. The President has a busy Saturday,

with rallies scheduled in North Carolina, Ohio and Wisconsin.

with rallies scheduled in North Carolina, Ohio and Wisconsin.

Oli’s office rejects claims of using Nepal’s old map in PM’s Dussehra greeting

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli has been criticised by netizens for deliberately not using the updated map of Nepal, showing three Indian areas as part of its territory, in his Dussehra greetings, a claim rejected by his office which said the revised map was not visible due to its tiny size.

In June, Nepal’s Parliament approved the new political map of the country featuring Kalapani, Lipulekh and Limpiyadhura which is part of Pithoragarh district of Uttarakhand.

Oli in a Twitter message on Friday conveyed his best wishes to the people of Nepal for Vijaydashami or Dussehra.

Many people on social media, including Facebook and Twitter, commented that the Prime Minister’s office deliberately removed the updated map after his meeting with India’s Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) chief Samant Kumar Goel.

“How can we consider using Nepal’s old map in the PM’s greeting without incorporating Limpiyadhura as a simple error?” asked main Opposition Nepali Congress spokesperson Bishwa Prakash Sharma.

Many people in their social media posts asked why did the prime minister’s office remove the government’s coat of arms from the map which includes Lipulekh, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura.

In response to the criticism, Prime Minister’s Press Advisor Surya Thapa in a statement claimed that the revised map was used in the prime minister’s message, but was not visible due to its tiny size.

“It is natural for the map to appear in such a manner due to its tiny size but the same map, if enlarged, may clearly show the updated areas,” he claimed.

He also asked the people not to be misled by such pre-planned efforts to spread rumours about the map included in the greetings.

“There should not be any confusion that the map used in the greetings is the updated version which was endorsed by Nepal’s Parliament,” Thapa said. The Press Advisor in his press note issued through social media also included an enlarged version of the map, which clearly shows the map which includes all the three territories. The ties between the two countries came under strain after Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated an 80-km-long strategically crucial road connecting the Lipulekh pass with Dharchula in Uttarakhand on May 8.

Nepal protested the inauguration of the road claiming that it passed through its territory. Days later, Nepal came out with the new map showing Lipulekh, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura as its territories.

India too had published a new map in November 2019, showing the areas as its territories. After Nepal released the map, India reacted sharply, calling it a “unilateral act” and

□ In June, Nepal’s Parliament approved the new political map of the country featuring Kalapani, Lipulekh and Limpiyadhura which is part of Pithoragarh district of Uttarakhand

□ Oli in a Twitter message on Friday conveyed his best wishes to the people of Nepal for Vijaydashami or Dussehra

□ Many people in their social media posts asked why did the prime minister’s office remove the government’s coat of arms from the map which includes Lipulekh, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura

cautioning Kathmandu that such “artificial enlargement” of territorial claims will not be acceptable to it.

In its reaction, after Nepal’s lower house of parliament approved the bill, India termed as untenable the “artificial enlargement” of territorial claims by the neighbouring country. India said Nepal’s action violates an understanding reached between the two countries to resolve the boundary issues through talks.

Prime Minister Oli has been asserting that Lipulekh, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura belong to his country and vowed to “reclaim” them from India.

Biden promises free Covid vaccine for everyone in US if elected as President

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden has pledged that if elected as president in the November 3 election, he will ensure free COVID-19 vaccination for all Americans, laying out his pandemic response plan just days before the US presidential polls.

In a major policy speech on the coronavirus in his home state of Delaware, Biden on Friday flayed US President Donald Trump for his policies to combat the coronavirus pandemic that has killed over 220,000 people and has had a devastating impact on the country’s economy.

“President Trump said we’re rounding the corner, it’s going away, we’re learning to live with it. They are quotes. But as I told him last night, we’re not learning to live with it. We’re learning to die with it. This is a dark winter ahead,” Biden, 77, said.

Already more than 220,000 people in the US have lost their lives to this virus. Worse yet, a new study from Columbia University suggests that anywhere between 130,000 and 210,000 of those deaths were avoidable, he said.

“Once we have a safe and effective vaccine, it has to be free to everyone, whether or not you’re insured,” the former vice president said.

He said that if elected, he would direct the federal government to “bulk-purchase as many doses as necessary of the COVID-19 vaccine so we can provide it free to those who are uninsured, under-insured or Medicaid-eligible.” “COVID-19 dwarfs anything we’ve faced in recent history and it isn’t showing any signs of slowing down. The virus is surging in almost every state. We passed 4.8 million cases. And when Trump was asked this week what he’d do differently to get the pan-

demetic response right from the start his answer was and I quote, “Not much. Not much,” he said. Alleging that Trump does not have a plan to fight the coronavirus, Biden said the longer he is the president, the “more reckless” he gets. “We don’t have to be held prisoner by this administration’s failures. We can choose a different path. We can do what Americans have always done: come together and meet the challenge with grit, compassion, and determination,” he said.

Teens behind latest art damage on Berlin’s Museum Island

AP ■ BERLIN

Several teenagers sprayed graffiti on a piece of art outside one of Berlin’s most famous museums and that the vandalism was unrelated to the damaging of more than 60 other art works on the city’s Museum Island that were smeared with an oily liquid early this month, police said on Saturday.

A huge granite bowl in front of the Altes Museum, which is part of the German capital’s museum complex and

houses antiquities, was defaced Friday night by some teenagers and adults, Berlin police said. Two of the suspects were temporarily detained.

Museum Island is a UNESCO world heritage site in the heart of Berlin and one of the city’s main tourist attractions.

Dozens of other exhibits at the Museum Island complex were vandalized Oct. 3. Investigators said they had watched hours of surveillance camera footage but not found

any obvious sign of anyone applying the liquid.

Museum experts have said the motive remains a mystery and there appeared to be no thematic link between the targeted works. They expressed optimism that the apparently random damage can be repaired.

Berlin police said the graffiti sprayed on the granite bowl did not have any political content or appear related to the damaging of the other art works.

Rishi Sunak ‘barred for life’ from UK pub

PTI ■ LONDON

UK Chancellor Rishi Sunak

and three fellow ruling Conservative Party members of Parliament from northern England have been “barred for life” by a local pub and restaurant in their constituency region after they voted against free school meals for children during the holidays.

The Mill pub and its connected Il Mulino restaurant at Stokesley in North Yorkshire, which falls within Sunak’s constituency of Richmond (Yorks), took to social media soon after a vote in the House of Commons earlier this week on extending the government’s temporary free meals for schoolchildren as part of a campaign led by England team footballer Marcus Rashford.

“The government voted against extending free school meals. This is disgusting,” Alex Cook, the owner of the eatery, posted on Facebook on Thursday. “What’s worse Matt

Vickers MP, Simon Clarke MP & Jacob Young MP, Rishi Sunak all voted against the scheme. DISGUSTING! All 4 are now barred from The Mill & Il Mulino for life. I don’t want their business,” he said.

His angry post, which has been shared over thousand times and signed off as “Team Mill”, begins by saying that while he does not usually “do politics”, the vote against free meals for children in need had forced him to. “I have never known a government which is consistently the wrong end of every argument. Forget the poor handling of Covid for a minute and concentrate on what happened yesterday [Wednesday],” he said, in reference to the Commons vote which the government won by 61 votes. The pub, meanwhile, has announced that it will deliver 100 freshly cooked healthy meals to three separate food banks in the Middlesbrough area next week to try and make up for the government decision.

Biden’s warning on oil tests voter resolve on climate change

AP ■ OKLAHOMA CITY

Joe Biden is confronting the harsh political realities of combating climate change.

The Democratic presidential nominee has spent months touting a \$2 trillion plan to boost investment in clean energy and stop all climate-damaging emissions from the U.S. economy by 2050. The plan implied that he would wean the U.S. off oil and gas, but Biden wasn’t so explicit about the industry’s fate — until Thursday night.

During the final moments of the presidential debate, Biden said he would “transition away from the oil industry.”

President Donald Trump,

trailing Biden in many national and battleground state polls, immediately sensed an opportunity to appeal to voters in competitive states like Texas and Pennsylvania that produce oil and gas.

“Basically what he is saying is he is going to destroy the oil industry,” Trump said. “Will you remember that, Texas? Will you remember that, Pennsylvania? Oklahoma? Ohio?” With less than two weeks until the election, Biden’s comment is prompting a sudden test of whether voters who increasingly say they are worried about the climate crisis will embrace steps to confront it. During a season of worsening wildfires, hurricanes and other

disasters, scientists are issuing urgent warnings that big cuts in burning oil, gas and coal are needed right away.

Republicans, eager to shift focus away from the president’s handling of the intensifying coronavirus pandemic, say Biden’s plan would cost jobs. Biden “just killed paycheck(s) earned by hardworking families in Texas,” Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, a Republican, tweeted after Thursday’s final presidential debate saw Trump and Biden spell out their worlds-apart stances on climate-damaging fossil fuels.

“Joe just wants to transition away from Texas. Remember that on election day,” Abbott

wrote.

Even some Democrats distanced themselves from Biden’s comment. Rep. Kendra Horn, a Democrat who flipped a Republican seat in Trump-loyal Oklahoma in 2018, tweeted: “We must stand up for our oil and gas industry.”

So did Rep. Xochitl Torres Small, a first-term Democratic congresswoman in a tossup race in New Mexico, in the oil- and gas-rich Permian Basin.

“We need to work together to promote responsible energy production and stop climate change, not demonize a particular industry,” she tweeted, adding that she was ready to “stand up to” the Democratic Party.

Poland’s President tests positive for coronavirus

Warsaw: Polish President Andrzej Duda said he feels well despite testing positive for the coronavirus, and he apologised Saturday to everyone who must quarantine because they had contact with him. Duda, 48, said in a recording published on Twitter that he was experiencing no COVID-19 symptoms “but unfortunately, the test result is absolutely unambiguous.” “I would like to apologise to all those who are exposed to quarantine procedures because of meeting me in recent days,” he said. “If I had had any symptoms of coronavirus, please believe me, all meetings would have been cancelled.” AP

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER MECHANICAL HOSPITAL AND CENTRAL HEATING DIVISION SRINAGAR. Gist of e-tender. NIT No: MHCHD/TS /2020-21/175/e-tendering Dated: 22.10.2020. For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, e-tenders, valid for 180 days, are invited from the Registered, reputed & experienced firms as detailed in the NIT for below mentioned works: Name of Work:- Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of 2-Post Hydraulic Lifts and Pneumatic guns along with allied fittings at Regional Workshop at State Motor Garages Department, Bemina, Srinagar. Est. Cost (Rs. in Lacs) :- 12.45. Cost of T/Doc. (In rupees) :- 1000/- Earnest Money (Rs) :- 25,000/- Time of completion (in Days) :- 30. Position of AAA/funds:- Available. 1. Downloading of Bids:- The NIT Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in from 22-10-2020 (18.00 hrs) and can be downloaded from 22.10.2020(18.00 hrs). 2. Uploading: The bidders shall deposit their bids in electronic format on the above web site from 23-10-2020(10.00 hrs) to 11-11-2020 (18.55 hrs) in two (02) covers. 3. Opening of Bids:- The bids received upto due date and time shall be opened on 12-11-2020at 14.00 hrs or any date convenient to the department in the office of Executive Engineer, MHCHD, Srinagar. Sd/- Executive Engineer, MHCHD, Srinagar. No. DIPP-7928/20 Dated:-23.10.2020

Big suicide bombing in Kabul kills 18 at education centre

AP ■ KABUL

The death toll from the suicide attack Saturday in Afghanistan’s capital has risen to at least 18 killed and 57 people wounded, including students, the interior ministry said.

The explosion struck outside an education center in a heavily Shiite neighborhood of western Kabul, Dasht-e-Barchi.

Interior Ministry spokesman Tariq Arian says that the attacker was trying to enter the centre when he was stopped by security guards.

According to Arian, the casualty toll may rise further as family members of victims of the suicide bombing are still searching the several different hospitals where the wounded have been taken.

No group claimed immediate responsibility for the bombing. The Taliban rejected any connection

with the attack.

An Islamic State affiliate claimed responsibility for a similar suicide attack at an education center in August 2018, in which 34 students were killed. Within Afghanistan, IS has launched large-scale attacks on minority Shias, Sikhs and Hindus, whom it views as apostates.

Hundreds of Sikhs and Hindus in Afghanistan fled the country in September after a gunman loyal to the militant group killed 25 members of the shrinking community in an attack on their share a place of worship in Kabul.

The U.S. signed a peace deal with the Taliban in February, opening up a path toward withdrawing American troops from the conflict. U.S. officials said the deal would also help refocus security efforts on fighting the Islamic State, which is a rival of the Taliban in Afghanistan.

There has been an upsurge in violence between Taliban and Afghan forces in the country recently, even as representatives from the two warring sides begin their own peace talks in Doha to end the decades-long war in Afghanistan.

Earlier Saturday a roadside bomb killed nine people in eastern Afghanistan after it struck a minivan full of civilians, a local official said.

Ghazni province police spokesman Ahmad Khan Sirat said that a second roadside bomb killed two policemen, after it struck their vehicle that was making its way to the victims of the first explosion.

Sirat added that the bombings had wounded several others, and that the attacks were under investigation.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attacks. The provincial police spokesman claimed the Taliban had placed the bomb.

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that one male was found dead at Subway, Near Hanuman Mandir, Kashmir Gate, Delhi on 20.10.2020. In this regard a DD No. 59-A u/s 174 CrPC, Dated 20.10.2020 has been lodged at P.S. Kashmir Gate, Delhi. The description of the dead body is given as under:


Name: Unknown, S/o: Unknown, R/o: Unknown, Age: about 30-35 years, Height: 5'8" Feet, Face: Round, Complexion: Shallow, Built: Thin, Wearing: Red Colour T-Shirt and Blue Colour Pant.

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

S.H.O P.S. Kashmir Gate, Delhi Ph.: 011-23967889, 23968730


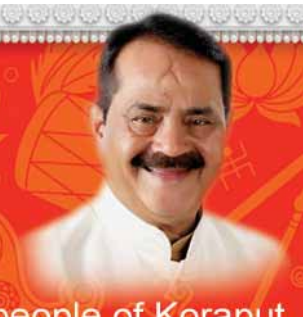
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Tara Prasad Bahinpti  
MLA, Jeypore; Chief Whip, Congress Legislature Party, Odisha

DC trapped in Varun's Chakravyuh

**ABU DHABI:** Leg-spinner Varun Chakravarthy dished out the best bowling performance of this IPL with a five-for after his batting colleagues stepped up in style as Kolkata Knight Riders beat Delhi Capitals by 59 runs here on Saturday.

Promoted to open the innings, Nitish Rana revelled in his new role as he overcame a personal tragedy to smash a whirlwind 81 and shared a game-changing 115-run stand with Sunil Narine (64) to lift KKR to an imposing 194/6 after being put in to bat.

Chasing a stiff target, Chakravarthy (5/20) and Pat Cummins (3/17) gave the Delhi Capitals batsmen a torrid time to restrict them to 135 for 9 in 20 overs.

Cummins gave a perfect start, dismissing both the openers Ajinkya Rahane (0) and in-form Shikhar Dhawan (6) in his first two overs.

Then Chakravarthy played the finisher's act in the back-end of the innings to choke the DC run chase.


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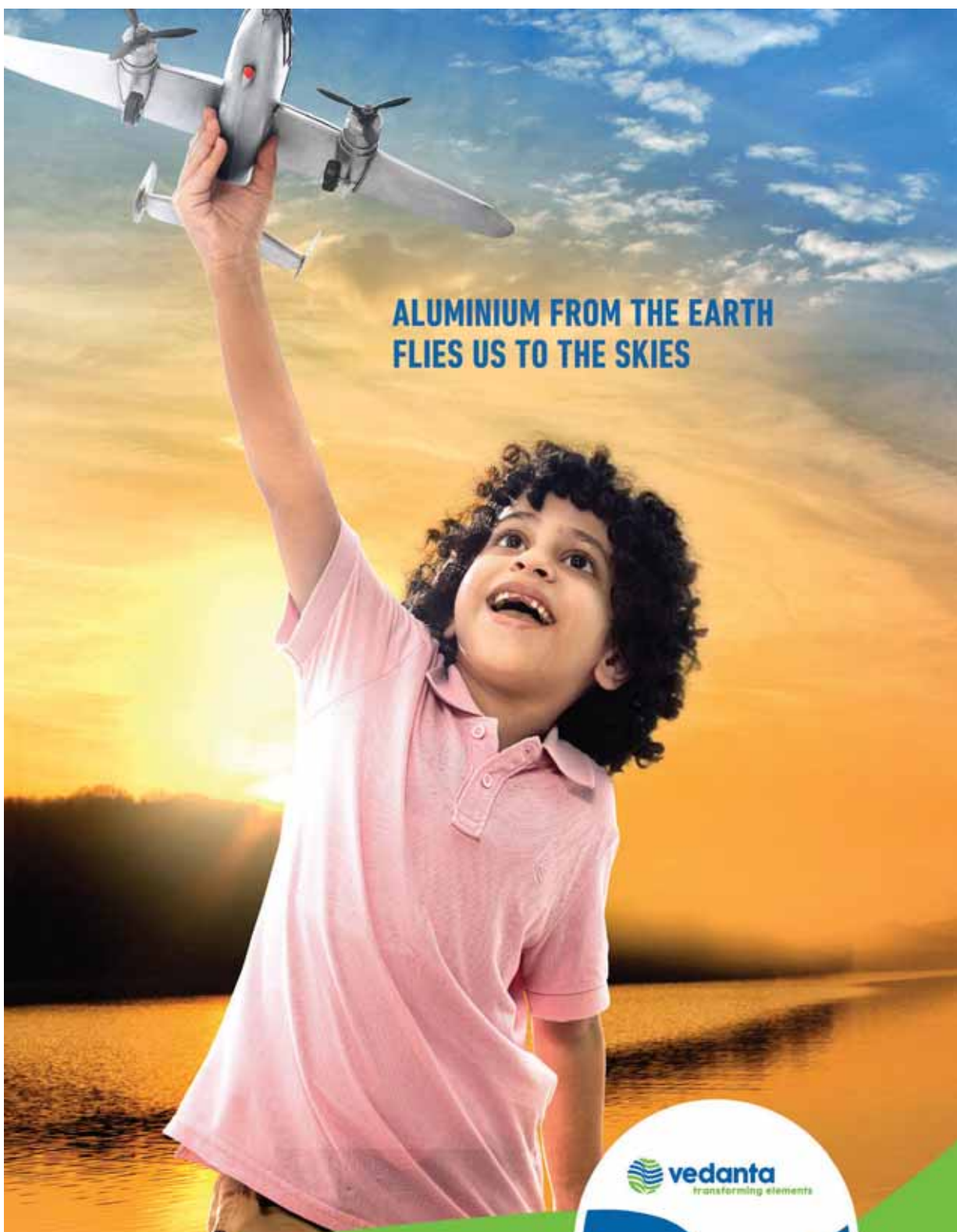
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# the pioneer agenda

Your regrets aren't what you didn't do. So I take every opportunity — Cameron Diaz



**Dussehra at Kulasekaranpatinam**  
A sleepy coastal village deep in the heart of South India (Tamil Nadu) gives Dussehra its own twist

2



4

**Season of empowerment**  
Shardeya Navaratri provides us with an occasion to get periodically geared up to take on life ahead in all strength

As the world battles a pandemic this year, the smog situation in Delhi can wreak havoc on public health, writes SONAL SHUKLA, as she details the factors and challenges before the concerned governments in handling the perennial hazard

# THE RETURN OF DELHI SMOG

A blanket of haze has been shrouding the National Capital for some days now: the smog season is back. The AQI has crossed 300, pushing air quality to 'very poor' level, which was last witnessed in February. NASA images show clusters of fire in Punjab and Haryana, as the post-harvest paddy stubble burning has started in the farms.

Last year towards October end, the Delhi Government had to declare a 'public health emergency' for nine days, as Delhi experienced its longest period of hazardous air pollution. This year, as the world battles a pandemic, the smog situation can wreak a havoc on the public health. The health experts warn that smog can increase the time the virus can stay in the environment, increasing the infection rate. The increased number of Covid cases in Delhi and Mumbai are already being linked to the higher pollution level of these cities. Pollution also affects immunity and lungs, thus placing the Delhi residents at higher Corona susceptibility and fatality risk.

**WHAT'S BEHIND THE DELHI SMOG?**

The trough like topography of North India and meteorological conditions set by winter season makes the pollution linger over it, creating the condition for Delhi smog. With the onset of the winter season, weather condition becomes conducive to pollution, as cold settles air closer to the surface (inversion), wind speed drops and moisture goes up — so the pollution is not dispersed. Diwali firecrackers and stubble burning which also occur in the months of October-November, become contributory factors to the smog, as they add on to Delhi's pre-existing air pollution. As around this time the wind direction also changes to north-westerly, the stubble burning pollution is carried towards Delhi from its neighbouring states.

**CONTRIBUTION OF STUBBLE BURNING TO DELHI SMOG**

As the Government of Delhi, Punjab and at Centre, squabble over the contribution of stubble burning to Delhi's smog — while the Punjab CM cited the findings of IISER, to state that stubble burning is not responsible for most of the Delhi's pollution — a look at other studies on the matter is merited.

A recent study undertaken by IIT Kanpur and Delhi Pollution Control Board links contribution of PM 2.5 as 38% to road dust, 20% to vehicular emission, 11% to industries etc; with stubble burning merely adding on to the current load. Council of Energy, Environment and Water, a Delhi based think tank, which also arrives at similar figures, agrees that local sources and unfavourable meteorological conditions are the main factors behind Delhi's air pollution woes; with transportation and road dusts as the biggest culprits. Massive Earth Foundation, another think tank, also undertook a research to find the impact of stubble burning, thermal power plants, Diwali crackers and broken transportation of the air pollution; and found vehicular traffic as the biggest culprit, which has shifted base line of air pollution in India from a desirable 60 AQI to unhealthy 200.

According to Government's analysis of Delhi

smog during 2019, the contribution of stubble burning was variable, only peaking at 44% once. However, it will be pertinent to quote Supreme Court mandated agency, Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority (EPCA) on the issue, "even if it is not the only cause of pollution in the region, there is no doubt that the transportation of pollutants from burning fields is the tipping point that makes winter's already unhealthy air quality into a public health emergency."

**CASE OF STUBBLE BURNING**

The whole issue of stubble burning is based in structural fault in the Indian agriculture system, which promotes wheat and rice crops through assured MSP — even though India is the second largest producer of rice and wheat in the world, and a foodgrain surplus state. This is creating many ecological problems for Delhi's neighbours — the erstwhile Green Revolution states, Punjab, Haryana and Western UP — like alarming rate of ground water depletion due to excessive water intensive crop of paddy and stubble burning. The use of combined harvesters for paddy which is common in these states, leaves behind a nine-inch stubble in the farm. Moved by the Government assured economic returns, farmers in these states sow wheat after paddy harvesting — the time duration between the two is a month or less; not enough for the stubble to decompose naturally, thus stubble burning, the cheapest option, is resorted to.

Not just is the stubble burning polluting, it is equally harmful for the soil itself, which loses most essential nutrients like organic carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, sulphur with the burning of the stubble. The heat destroys the beneficial microflora and fauna from the soil and hardens it; thus affecting physical, chemical and biological attributes of soil making it less fertile and vulnerable to weed and drought.

The long term solution to the problem lies in crop diversification: a move towards less water intensive crops like soyabeans, pulses, corn — which are harvested by hand or can be harvesting mechanically earlier on, providing sufficient window for the residue to decompose before the next sowing. For the time being, the in-situ and ex-situ sustainable management techniques for crop residue are an alternative.

**SUPREME COURT IN ACTION**

The Supreme Court (SC) has been quite proactive on the issue of air pollution in Delhi; closely monitoring the situation since last year, when it criticised Punjab, Haryana and UP Governments for failing to control stubble burning. In February, SC directed Central and Delhi Government to take strong measure for stopping stubble burning; and approved an action plan on the matter, based on the affidavit of Ministry of Agriculture — which included steps like setting up smog towers, smog guns in Delhi, and implementing other in-situ and ex-situ stubble management techniques which will be funded by Central Government and implemented by the State Governments of Punjab, Haryana, UP and Delhi. In September, the SC had rebuked the Delhi and Central Government for delay in setting up of the Smog Towers in Delhi. A few days back SC



“THE LONG TERM SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM LIES IN CROP DIVERSIFICATION: A MOVE TOWARDS LESS WATER INTENSIVE CROPS LIKE SOYABEANS, PULSES, CORN — WHICH ARE HARVESTED BY HAND OR CAN BE HARVESTING MECHANICALLY EARLIER ON, PROVIDING SUFFICIENT WINDOW FOR THE RESIDUE TO DECOMPOSE BEFORE THE NEXT SOWING. FOR THE TIME BEING, THE IN-SITU AND EX-SITU SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES FOR CROP RESIDUE ARE AN ALTERNATIVE”

appointed former judge, Justice Lokur as one man committee to monitor stubble burning in Delhi, and its neighbourhood, and report to SC directly in 15 days.

**ACTION BY EPCA, CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND NEIGHBOURING STATES**

EPCA is monitoring the implementation of the SC approved Action Plan, by the Centre and the States. It also suggests other measures to the States like setting up control room, obtaining undertakings from big construction projects and red and orange category industries on pollution. Central Government is experimenting with PUSA decomposer in farms in Delhi, Punjab, Haryana and UP. It is also funding Smog Towers, in-situ stubble management machines, farmer awareness campaigns and has set off 50 teams of Central Pollution Control Board for monitoring the situation in Delhi and its neighbourhood.

The steps taken by Punjab, Haryana and UP as reported to EPCA, mentioned in its last month's report are: making in-situ stubble management machines available to farmers at highly subsidised rates through purchase by farmer directly, or on rental through village panchayats and Farmer Producer Organisations by setting up Custom Hire Centres. A mobile app is also being launched for creating awareness in the farmers about the scheme. Ex-Situ management steps are also being taken for converting stubble into bio-energy and power plants are being set up for the purpose.

Despite of these steps by the Central Government and the States, farmers especially of Punjab and Haryana are complaining about not receiving any help from the Governments, thus being forced to burn the stubble. Hence, the implementation of these schemes seems to be rather thin on the ground, also its being reported that the action against stubble fires has not been as widespread this year, as before.

**TOWARDS A SMOG FREE DELHI**

Delhi needs 65% reduction in PM 2.5 to meet the desirable national standard. The strategy for that has to be comprehensive and multi-pronged. First, adopting crop diversification, proper implementation of in-situ and ex-situ residue management policies by States, creating a market for crop residue, setting up crop residue collection system based on municipal solid waste collection system — thus giving alternative options to farmers to opt out of stubble burning.

Second, to fix Delhi's broken public transport infrastructure. There has been four-fold increase in vehicles in Delhi between 2000-2018. The pandemic has further aggravated this trend, pushing up the purchase and plying of private vehicles on the road. Number of public buses in Delhi need to be ramped up, while creating smooth connectivity with the metro. Emission testing, which is only 25%, must be pushed up. More incentives on e-vehicles like waiver of road fee and low interest loans must be provided. Third, controlling the road dust by intensive roadside plantation of big crown trees, planting grass on the sidewalks and improved solid waste management.

The writer is a public policy analyst, and a lawyer, an alumnus of National Law University, Jodhpur

## STEPS TAKEN BY DELHI GOVERNMENT

- Campaign called 'Yuddh Pradhushan ke Viruddh'
- Green War Room for monitoring, enforcement compliance, complaint redressal
- Green Mobile app for launching complaints
- Spraying PUSA decomposer for free in fields for composting of stubble
- Smog towers to come up in Connaught Place and Anand Vihar in few months
- Strict anti-dust policy for construction and demolition sites
- Smog guns for hotspots
- Transplantation policy for projects
- Campaign 'Red light on, Gaddi off'
- E-vehicle policy — by 2024, 25% new vehicles be electric



## WHAT'S GRAP (GRADED RESPONSE ACTION PLAN)

- Comes into effect in Delhi and its neighbouring towns based on the severity of pollution
- Put in effect from October 15, by EPCA as AQI turned 'very poor'
- Banning of electricity generators apart from essential and emergency services, was ordered under it
- Other measures include increasing bus and metro services and raising the parking fee
- Steps when situation turns 'severe': closure of brick kilns, water sprinkling, frequent mechanised cleaning of roads, maximisation of power from natural gas
- 'Emergency situation' measures: odd/even scheme, banning construction activity and entry of trucks in Delhi



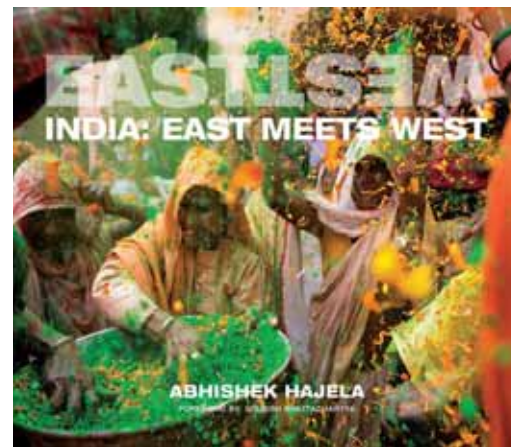


IT'S NOT THAT GOOD DOESN'T TRIUMPH OVER EVIL, IT'S THAT THE POINT SPREAD IS TOO SMALL — BOB THAVES



Devotees carry fire in earthenware pots and bowls, as fire is considered holy in Hindu mythology and is used during the festival to signify purity and the new beginnings that it brings

# DUSSEHRA OF KULASEKARANPATINAM, TUTICORIN



Signifying the triumph of good over evil, Dussehra is celebrated with much gusto and fanfare in several forms and almost all parts of India. The most interesting place to observe this epic festival is at Kulasekaranpatinam, near Madurai. A sleepy coastal village deep in the heart of South India-Kulasekaranpatinam, near Madurai, in Tamil Nadu, gives it its own twist. Devotees converge in Kulasekaranpatinam from all parts of Tamil Nadu as they take to the streets in the village dressed as Goddess Kali and various other mythological characters. The 12-day celebrations begin on the starting of the lunar cycle, and culminate on the day Dussehra is celebrated. The events take place in and around the 300-year-old Mutharamman Temple in the village, which is an important part of the town's history. The beginnings of the festival was much more humble, but over the years the participation of many more villages and towns have given it a deeper significance and fervor. The vast stretch of seashore along the area plays a gentle host during the occasion and a general air of gaiety, excitement and festivity hangs in the air...

Excerpted with permission from Abhishek Hajela's India: East Meets West. A recipient of International Nikon Award, Hajela is a passionate travel photographer, who loves to capture people in their environment and likes to tell life stories through visual imagery

A number of villages and towns in Tamil Nadu field participants during the festival who divide themselves into groups of 6-10 people. These people dress up as mythological characters, saints and Goddess Kali. An accompanying orchestra team that loudly announces their arrival and presence further enhances this procession



Once a person wears the Kali outfit, they go into a state of trance and start dancing almost maniacally. It is said that the Goddess Kali possesses whoever wears the Kali outfit and those people become manifestations of her divine form

The trident represents the three supreme beings of Hindu Mythology, which are Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. It is also said to represent the past, present and the future, the seven chakras and the three energy channels of Ida, Pingala and Sushmana



# Larger than life US elections and Trump's comeback

US elections are a spectacle and roller coaster ride par excellence with their intertwined doses of confetti and the miniaturised Star-Spangled Banner with the poignant Bald Eagle in the background. It is all symptomatic of the oeuvre of symbolism, American homeland's verve and the patriotic and the MAGA phenomenon, (Make America Great Again). The US elections are an extravaganza normally but with the Trump Administration battling the Covid-19 pandemic, the spectacle and the larger verve of the exciting hustings have been dampened a bit. But, no one can keep the palaver about American Presidential elections down for long, not even a deprecatory Joe Biden, who leads by a slender margin of 10 per cent in the aftermath of the first presidential debate hosted by Wallace of Fox News a few days back.

In the first televised debate between the twin candidates, Joe Biden, the Democrat candidate, has raised questions about the anti-pandemic policies and proclivities of President Donald Trump. He contended aloud in the Fox TV moderated debate, "The Administration should provide masks and other paraphernalia to the American citizens. It's a different matter to talk about the measures the Government has undertaken. The functional aspect of the Administration should not be relegated to the backburner in the light of hyperbole." Another brick bat which Joe Biden utilised to beat the incumbent with was the allegation that the question of removing the race factor from the sensitivities list of the US Marines was a blunder which the presidential seat of power which the White House has indulged in. Thus in a manner the debate brought out contradictory aspects of US presidential elections but the chutzpah attached with the elec-

tioning extravaganza remains subdued due to the persistent essential evil of the novel coronavirus which has taken a heavy toll on the world's sole surviving superpower.

US elections in the past were carried out in the grand old rail road and big business era of the United States through whistle-stop tours carried on by the candidates who addressed audiences from the pulpits of the last coaches of the trains. Thus, apart from the foggy trail of the big bosses of the political parties, it can be ascertained that the spectacle still remains the core refrain of any US elections in the past era too. The strategy earlier was to sway the voters with the hidden intent of President Donald Trump that he will win the elections through the modicum of postal ballots which will be the praxis in a pandemic infected scenario in the homeland's domestic polity, society and economy. It might be a close race and President Donald Trump has lived true to his image of lambasting the left liberal domain of the Democrats, especially in the States of California and Montana which need to be strengthened as they are swing States going by the nomenclature of the American elections. This was one riposte cannily advanced by a fighting and adversarial entrepreneur, President Donald Trump presented in the televised debate when being riled for the case of Peter Floyd in Charlottesville.

It was in 2016 that the presumptive candidate, Hillary Clinton, was leading till late in the US elections but the white collared vote along with the ecclesiastical support base of the WASP majority let him sail through with the flailing Star-Spangled Banner. Will it be the same fate of the US elections in line with what transpired in the 2016 contest with Hillary Clinton? This happens to be a million dollar question. Al



President Donald Trump dances after a campaign rally at Pensacola International Airport in Pensacola on Friday

AP

Jazzera has reported that Biden is winning with the lot of undecided voters while Joe Biden is also taking an expanse amid all kinds of voters. This might be early days but the US President has returned to the White House in the wake of his testing positive for coronavirus which might be what the doctors ordered for the electoral fortunes of President Donald Trump. The Democrats are uselessly cranking up the fact that single mothers have been hard hit by the novel coronavirus retrenchment in an

unimaginative to ratchet up the support of the single women which Hillary too had attempted in the year 2016 to no avail. So it's a known and tried strategy which did not work the way of the Democrats in 2016 and is a fashionable tenet of referring to fake concerns of lift and liberals for spawning political gains in the American political firmament. Al Jazzera reports, "The US Senate Judiciary Committee announced that it would open a confirmation hearing for President Donald Trump's

Supreme Court nominee, Amy Coney Barrett, on October 12, making clear that an outbreak of Covid-19 will not interfere with the election schedule." Thus, the Opposition attempts to ratchet up all possible permutations and combinations and commissions indulged in by the American President in the 2020 election trail.

As part of the process part of the US elections in 2020, the American Embassy has to inform that, "Americans will go to the polls on November 3,

2020 to cast their ballots for the man who will serve as US president for the following four years, but first they must select delegates who will vote at national conventions to determine which candidates appear on those ballots." The Democrats are also creating the wily canard that President Donald Trump is a Teflon President and if Joe Biden does not come through as the victor then the grand American nation would crack up badly and inimitably.

In the contemporary times,

the US elections are slated to take place in the month of November, 2020. Joe Biden, the Democratic presumptive candidate, made an issue out of the Covid outbreak in the US wherein, he cannily, forecasted that President Donald Trump would postpone the elections in the light of the ravaging impact of the pandemic which was denied by President Donald Trump and the Republic establishment. The initiation of the Indian origin Kamala Harris is being posited a voice of the Indian diaspora in the United States but little is known of her in the sphere of foreign policy making and decision-making experience. Kamla Harris has many times repeatedly stated, "I am a Negro and I am a Negro first and nothing more with my American underpinnings." She has never actively confabulated with the public sphere in the United States concerning her Indian origins. She might be the first non-white Vice Presidential candidate but does not have many credentials to show off herself, as being the sole feminine voice of the Indian diaspora in the American homeland. In summation it can be argued that a stable but happening world comity of States chaperoned by the American dreamers and the vishwa gurus might be the panacea for what the doctor ordered for the larger ecosystem of nation states in a to be turbulent and testy 2020. With the pandemic becoming a larger reality, it can be argued that the gaffes committed by the White House in the light of calling the novel coronavirus as a flu and a mild malady, President Trump might still romp home with the backing of the global coalition of the Quad comity of nations and the global churn against China.

(The writer teaches at International Relations and International Organisations, IIPA, New Delhi)

**With the pandemic becoming a larger reality, it can be argued that despite the gaffes committed by the White House in the light of calling the novel coronavirus as a flu and a mild malady, President Trump might still romp home with the backing of the global coalition of the Quad comity of nations and the global churn against China**



MANAN DWIVEDI

## PERSPECTIVE

# Hard task ahead for charismatic Jacinda

**At a time when right-wing parties have a field day around the world, Jacinda Ardern has led the centre-left Labour Party to a historic victory. Considering her winning formula of compromise and consensus, the absolute majority might prove a challenge for her as she needs to take along the polar opposite groups: the affluent middle class and the poor**

The recently concluded New Zealand parliamentary election has once again brought back Jacinda Ardern to power. The election was scheduled for September, but because of the Covid-19 pandemic, it was postponed by a month. Since the introduction of the MMR in the 1996, the Labour Party has become the first ever party to form Government on its own, winning 64 seats out of total 120 in the House of Representatives. Looking at the results: Labour Party 64 seats (49.1%), National Party 35 seats (26.8%), ACT (Association of Consumers and Taxpayers) 10 seats (8%), Greens 10 seats (7.6%), NZ First (2.7%), but no seat, Maori Party 1 seat (1%) and others got 7.7% (no seat), it is clear that the centre-Left Labour has recorded a landslide victory.

With this thumping victory, Ardern has spread the message of stability and certainty to the people of New Zealand.

Jacinda's foray into politics is an interesting story. With her father being a police officer and mother a school cook, Jacinda had a ground experience of poverty that her country was facing. When she was 17, she was an active Labour Party worker. After completing her degree in Communication Studies in Politics and Public Relations, she started working for Helen Clarke, the then Prime Minister of the country. She also had the experience of working in the UK Cabinet Office when Tony Blair was the Prime Minister of the UK. By 2008, she was back to her country from London and became an MP of the Labour Party. One of her most controversial political moves was an attempt to introduce a Bill to support gay rights in her

country. She even renounced the Church of Jesus Christ Latter-day Saints in her early twenties as the Church's views on gay rights clashed with hers. Thus, she is in favour of equal rights for the LGBTs.

"Jacinda Mania" has finally worked. She has been awarded an outright majority, with an approval rating of 55 per cent. The election was set behind an extraordinary background accompanying three pronged crises — the first being a terror attack, second the natural disaster, and third the global pandemic of Covid-19. She has been able to handle all the three issues much better than any other leader of the country. Her unequivocal stand not to defend the white man accused of the terror attack in the Chirstchurch area that killed 50 and wounded more than fifty in mid-March 2019 earned her admiration of the people.

The mass shooter Brenton Tarrant, an Australian white man driven by anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiments, was temporarily based in the country before the incident took place. In fact, an unsigned manifesto before the carnage on the Twitter and 8chan, an online messaging platform which has been used by anonymous accounts to share extremist messages and cheer on mass shooters, was posted in Tarrant's name. The attack threatened the country, particularly the Muslim community. Throughout the entire crisis, Jacinda stuck to her stand that the white gunman was a terrorist and emphasised that he did not represent the people of New Zealand.

Second, when a volcanic eruption rocked the White Island or Whakaari, a small volcanic Isle in New Zealand's



New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern is congratulated by her partner Clarke Gayford following her victory speech to Labour Party members at an event in Auckland on October 17

AP

Bay of Plenty, on December 9, 2019, it shocked the nation as Covid-19 was already gripping the world around the same time. This was probably the worst case scenario for the islanders that killed more than 17 people. Jacinda joined a nation-wide mourning on this incident. The fact is that the White Island is a summit of a complex submarine volcano. As the island is regularly visited by tourists, the Government was extremely careful in taking the best of the post-volcanic disaster management measures.

Third, unlike many other countries, the Covid-19 handling was too early and followed by extremely hard actions by the Jacinda Government. Its success in controlling the virus has been widely described as "crushing the curve". The island nation's Covid strategy was based on speedy testing, contact tracing and isolation, while adhering to strict public health guidance norms across the country. Indeed, the country benefitted from being a high income and an island nation with an advanced health care system at

its best. But the best part of the Government was that it called on its entire population to fight the menace as a "team of five million" to protect their families, friends and all the neighboring nations. And Jacinda has earned rare reputation and fame by taking such preventing measures to save her people from this health havoc.

Her charisma is well appreciated. On record, she has become a Labour leader just seven weeks before the 2017 parliamentary election that gave her a rare opportunity to

grab power at Wellington with a coalition Government with the New Zealand First Party and the Greens Party, although she was able to score only second highest number of votes. But the country's unique proportional representation system had helped her to form the Government with these two coalition partners. Very soon, she was branded as an anti-Trump liberal icon at a time when the international community witnessed a wave of rightist nationalist leaders around the world. Again she came into prominence for

wearing a Maori cloak, known as "Korowai", while meeting her monarch Queen Elizabeth-II in April 2018.

Jacinda's popular slogan "be strong, be kind" has worked magic in this election. And she has become the third woman Prime Minister of the country. She has driven a positive message across. Considering her age, unlike the other Opposition leaders, she has long and bright future in New Zealand's politics. But the critics and global political experts say that the absolute majority could be a problem for her, even as top Opposition leaders like Judith Collins of the National Party has accepted her defeat and she has vowed to play the role of a robust Opposition figure in Parliament.

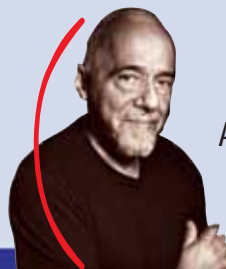
Much more than this, people have also voted on two critical referendums; the first being the legalisation of euthanasia and the second, for using cannabis. The first will offer terminally ill patients to go for assisted dying. It is a binding vote and if more than 50 per cent voters say yes, this will be implemented soon. The second is related to the recreational use of cannabis making legal. This is not a binding vote which implies that even if more than 50 per cent people say yes, cannabis can't be made legal on the basis of this referendum. The Jacinda Government has to bring a fresh Bill to legalise this. And finally when the results of both these referendums are expected on October 30, the decisions delivered by the voters will make a lot for the entire nation and especially for the widely popular Jacinda.

(The writer is an expert on international affairs)



MAKHAN SAIKIA





WHEN YOU ARE ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT WHAT YOU DO, YOU FEEL THIS POSITIVE ENERGY. IT'S VERY SIMPLE — PAULO COELHO

YOUR WEEK AHEAD

MADHU KOTIYA



**ARIES** March 21-April 19

Some negative forces are at play and you must fight with them this week. Seasonal ailments might make you inactive and dull. Proper diet, exercise and rest is the *mantra* of a healthy life. If you compromise on these basics for longer, you may face the repercussion of it. The working environment is not favourable and may frustrate you at times. Don't waste your time and precious energy plotting revenge. Just get on with the next phase of your life. If you are looking for work, a potential position that you'd pinned your hopes on may not come through. On the relationship front, this week you can be the master and a mentor in your relations. You are attracted to people who are very creative and maybe more than usually focused on your career now.

Lucky number 13  
Lucky colour Yellow  
Lucky day Thursday



**LEO** July 23-Aug 22

You need to be cautious regarding your health. You are likely to be under stress from a combination of factors, so it is particularly important to be gentle with yourself. If you are angry, vent it out. Release your anxiety rather than turning your anger and sorrow upon yourself. Professionally, things are not in your favour. You might face some false allegations, interference from higher authorities, and interrogations this week. You may need some assistance to find a better approach to work. Don't hesitate to ask. If you are looking for work, this too may show a need to look in a different way or a different field than the one you have been pursuing. Love and marital affairs occupy your mind but you are unable to find a smooth going.

Lucky number 12  
Lucky colour Maroon  
Lucky day Wednesday



**SAGITTARIUS** Nov 22-Dec 21

Your health will require your attention as you are prone to illness. A family member's health needs your attention too, do not neglect it. You need to let go of old wrongs and wounds to move forward. Help your loved ones to see the truth. Learn to express yourself; don't suppress your feelings and requirements. This is a good week career-wise. Businesspersons will see financial stability and gains in financial ventures. People will respect you more and your popularity will increase. Your social status shall enhance. Those who are in a job, favour from the boss is likely, your works and endeavours are taken into consideration and appreciated. You may sense some restlessness in your relationship. Make sincere efforts to make your partner happy.

Lucky number 11  
Lucky colour Silver  
Lucky day Monday



**TAURUS** April 20-May 20

This week confusion will prevail. Several issues of concern might appear with regard to health this week. You may have some hidden matters to deal with. ENT problem may surface too, that will make you run to the doctor and might occupy most of your time. You need to learn to prioritise things. On the career front, you share a good bonding with your colleagues and the people at work. This is the right time to participate in conferences and negotiations. Your compromising attitude will gain you a good opportunity. This is a good week for relationships. You will learn a whole lot about how you can take your relationship further. You will be able to make room for new people and new experiences. Make the most of this period.

Lucky number 20  
Lucky colour White  
Lucky day Friday



**VIRGO** Aug 23-Sep 22

Your physical well-being depends on your mental well-being. This is a time when you need to be very conscious of your intuitive urges and reactions and bring them into balance with the greater good and meaning in life. This is not a time to act out in rage or hatred but instead to look at the situation from a place of love and compassion. Career-wise, pay more attention to what people around you are doing. Be cautious of politics at the workplace. Some negative forces are at play at your workplace to put you down. Avoid making important decisions now. You will have delays and overdue/pending problems in all your works. And this will affect your relationships as well. Be practical and try to bring balance in life. That must be your priority.

Lucky number 21  
Lucky colour Pink  
Lucky day Wednesday



**CAPRICORN** Dec 22-Jan 19

Health is likely to suffer this week. Consider a second diagnosis. Get another health professional's opinion before you take any final decision. Be open to spiritual healing. Those who are struggling with a serious illness, know that a cure is not always linked with healing. You may require some therapy or surgery. On the career front, businesspersons will make a considerable stand. Hold your head up high and know that you have a lot that you are bringing to the table. Financially too, you may do better than you had ever dreamt of. You need to be trustworthy and reliable otherwise a rise in mental distress and misunderstanding with the family is indicated during this time. You have to be extra careful and avoid arguments.

Lucky number 19  
Lucky colour Purple  
Lucky day Tuesday



**GEMINI** May 21-June 20

This week you will feel renewed energy and charm in your life. The care and attention you have been providing to your body will leave you in high spirits. You experience the cheerful and happy state of mind. It is also the time to rely on divine faith. New direction and protection infuse trust in you that the divine spirit is working in your best interest. Professionally, you feel a new spark, a new sense of creativity within yourself. You are more confident and aggressive in your approach and decision making now. Recognition, praise from friends and authorities, promotion are likely to take place. On the personal front, limited conditions from the past might have made you detached from the world. You feel cheated and deceived in a relationship.

Lucky number 15  
Lucky colour Grey  
Lucky day Tuesday



**LIBRA** Sep 23-Oct 22

You are working hard day and night to meet the challenges of life. Slow down the speed and look after your health, which is prime of importance at this time. Your enormous efforts give you what you want in life. Overall, your vitality factor is strongly reflected at this point in time and you may be on the move. This is an excellent time to begin or increase a fitness plan. At work, you are bold and courageous in your undertakings and actions. Your creative energies are high, and you have a good sense of direction in life. You may head a meeting, conference, or just lead a project which requires group activities and handle it with command. Things are not so good on the love front. You may face disappointments and depression. Research before you get into personal relationships.

Lucky number 25  
Lucky colour Brown  
Lucky day Sunday



**AQUARIUS** Jan 20-Feb 18

You are mentally strong this week. Your open-mindedness and straightforwardness will help you grow more if you add generosity and pinch of kindness in your attitude. Showing your authority is important as is gentleness. On the professional front, you are giving more in terms of time and energy to the organisation you are working for. A powerful person is likely to support you. Overall, your career is looking up. On the personal front, you may be a little detached. This week romance and close personal relationships are not the brightest for you. Listen to what your inner voice tells you. Stress levels need to be taken into consideration. This is a temporary phase, you will be on the right track soon.

Lucky number 18  
Lucky colour Black  
Lucky day Saturday



**CANCER** June 21-July 22

This week you will feel fresh, rejuvenated, and inspired to move ahead. The health remains good, and you are in the process of making it even better. A good diet, nutrition, exercise, and living life natural are a part of your resolution. Spiritually and emotionally you will feel fulfilled. Your enthusiasm and charm is increasing by the day, making others envious of you. On the career front, you may find that the situations are not favourable for you at the workplace and you may make up your mind for a change. You may be holding yourself back because you fear to move into the future. Seek new opportunities, for a better future. On the personal front, you should be flexible and go with the flow right now. Stick to your principles and at the same time honour others' intelligence as well.

Lucky number 28  
Lucky colour Sky Blue  
Lucky day Saturday



**SCORPIO** Oct 23-Nov 21

This week you grow even stronger and are ready to face any obstacle in your life. Even when facing serious health challenges, a positive attitude can work wonders. Your firm stand and taking care of your health will work in your favour. On the professional front, a good news is on the cards. Your connections with people will grow. You are an expert in fitting things together in new or unusual ways and that makes the work a lot smoother. If you are looking for a job, you are about to find the right fit. You are very balanced and organised workwise than you think. On the relationship front, co-operation and harmony will be your major concern this week. Be a good listener, trust your instincts, and connect with your innermost desires.

Lucky number 10  
Lucky colour Mustard  
Lucky day Tuesday



**PISCES** Feb 19-March 20

This week you are focused on being disciplined and know the needs of your body, mind, and spirit. You have a clear vision with regard to your values. Your concentration during this time is commendable. Your creativity will make you move constantly. You should use your positive energy in creative works, as an inner sense of satisfaction will give you more confidence. On the career front, other people may not understand or support your new ideas or proposals, but if you know that you are right, go ahead, and try to make them understand what your point of view is. Love relation is under question. It is important to give your partner time and space. You need to share your feelings with the one who you trust and find out the possible solution.

Lucky number 30  
Lucky colour Peach  
Lucky day Saturday

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**ASTROTURF**  
BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

# Season of empowerment

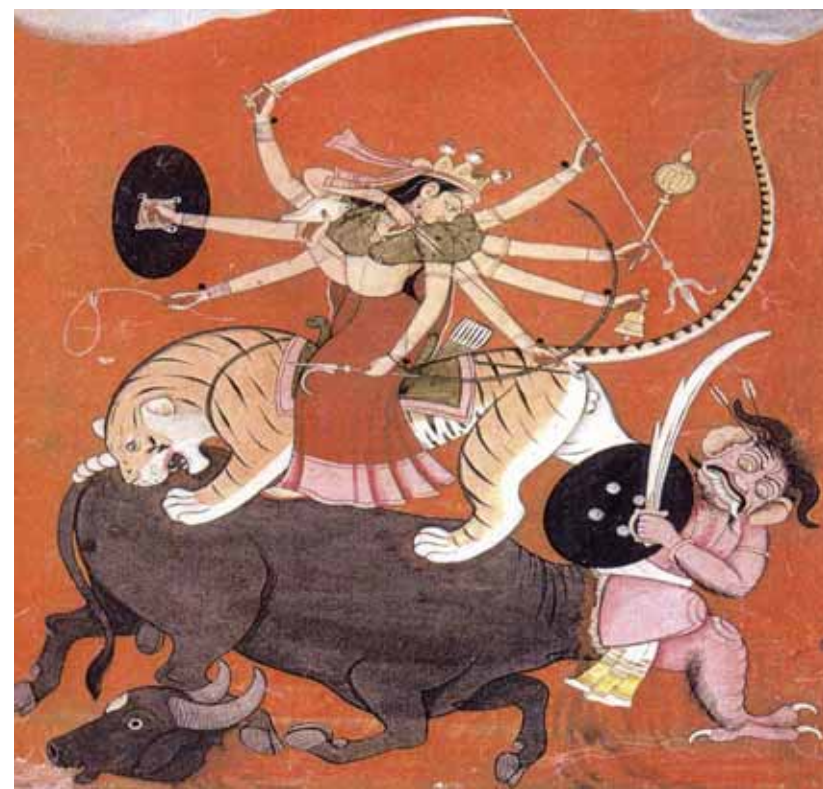
At the outset, I greet the valuable readers on the solemn occasion of *Shardeya Navaratri*, which ends today, following a nine days of intense prayer regime. The beauty of this particular festivity is that after spiritedly pursuing prayers, it ends in a celebratory mode on *Vijaya Dashami* — the day marked with Lord Shri Ram's victory over demonic Ravana and freeing Sita from his captivity. The question now is: Is it just remembrance of that singular auspicious event, or that it is supposed to offer something relevant in today's terms? If it has some lessons for us in immediate terms, then it is time to assess, what we have gained during the process.

Symbolically speaking, what does Sita being freed from captivity mean for us in contemporary terms? It needs to be remembered that potentially we are born with immense powers — in fact, divine. That however, doesn't involuntarily play out, and mostly remains hidden within. We need to explore, identify, acknowledge, hone and then bring them out of captivity of ignorance.

The process as such is not easy. The challenges are many. Remember, Mother Goddess Durga is visualised having 10

hands. In eight, she carries armouries made available by different *Devtas*, so as to combat evil forces coming from as many directions. Only two hands carry accessories marked with creative potential — Conch shell in one and Lotus flower in the other. Conch shell when blown gets tu ned to cosmic forces. Lotus flower marked with its beauty and splendour is symbolic of creativity. But what are those evil forces expectedly coming from eight different directions? Are they negative forces thrust by external factors, or are they within us? Of course, we shall have to combat challenges thrown by external factors. But they can be spotted and countered, if we pool in all resources in hand and efficiently use them.

More challenging, however, are the evil forces playing from within — our preconditioned mind marked by our unending cravings and temptations of life, negative thought trends, lack of alertness necessary for timely initiatives and responses, and habit tendencies. All the more because they stand in way of positives within coming out in full play. Caught up in the usual flow of life, we seldom care to identify, acknowledge and address them within time. That makes it



incumbent upon us to first address the evil forces playing from within.

Nine days of prayer regime is stipulated with the above end in view. In the process, the primary focus is on Mother Goddess Durga, the epitome of *Shakti*. For, all aspects of our dynamic existence are primarily driven by nature driven energy-orchestra (*Shakti*). And energy remains a double edged weapon. When judiciously used for productive ends, it is rewarding and fulfilling. If, however, knowingly or unknowingly it gets misdirected — put to unbecoming acts — it can prove self-defeating. How we apply our energies in real terms, depends on our unique character — positively or negatively oriented. We need to be on full alert to consciously use our power towards well-meaning purposes. The irony, however, is that ordinarily, our flirtatious mind remains caught up in the tempting influences of the glare and glitters of the seeming world. We keep passionately chasing what lies at the surface level, randomly jumping from one desire trend to the other. In the process, we seldom remain alert enough to use our power base in a reasoned way, and with obvious consequences.

From the fourth day, we simultane-

ously pay attention to Mother Goddess Laxmi marked with our creative aspirations. This reminds us to remain focused to our need based requirements. Nothing, however, would come through, if we don't use our resources intelligently. So, during the last three days, Mother Goddess Saraswati, the epitome of knowledge and wisdom is pursued. All through the process, our indwelling negatives will keep playing from within, which we could identify and acknowledge. We are supposed to make offerings of such unseemly tendencies at the altar of Mother trinity, so as to purify our mind. Following which, we gain access to full landscape of mind to come out with our best. We then look at the issues in hand, the aspirational urges, and challenges coming our way in right perspective due. That paves the way to negotiate with the callings of life as an informed and wide awake person with ease and comfort, which may lead us to a better tomorrow.

*Navaratri*, thus, provides us with an occasion to get periodically geared up to take on life ahead in all strength.

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