

India, France agree to strengthen bilateral ties

India and France on Friday agreed to further strengthen their bilateral defence and strategic ties besides working together to enhance cooperation in bilateral, regional and multilateral forums.



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with his French counterpart Florence Parly at National War Memorial during the latter's visit to India, in New Delhi on Friday

These were the major take-aways from the talks between visiting French Defence Minister Florence Parly and her Indian counterpart Rajnath Singh here. France also offered to supply more Rafale fighter jets to India if it requires with Parly saying the use of the same aircraft by the two strategic partners is a reflection of "real asset and strength" in their ties.

France was also ready to supply the naval version of the jets for the second aircraft carrier INS Vikrant likely to be inducted into the Navy late next year. The carrier is indigenously designed and built here and is now undergoing mandatory sea and other trials.

On France willing to offer more Rafale jets, Parly said earlier in the day during a seminar "I am very happy that the Indian Air Force is satisfied with its Rafale and we are very proud that despite Covid, the 36 aircraft will be delivered on time according to the contract... It's a real achievement."

Covovax receives WHO approval for emergency use

The World Health Organisation on Friday approved emergency use listing of Covid vaccine Covovax, produced by the Serum Institute of India under licence from Novavax and part of the Covax facility portfolio. "This is yet another milestone in our fight against Covid-19. Covovax is now WHO approved for emergency use, showing excellent safety and efficacy. Thank you all for a great collaboration."

Sputnik V Covid vax effective against Omicron variant: Study

The Sputnik V vaccine and the one-shot Sputnik Light booster are effective against the vaccine-evading and super mutant Omicron variant of Covid, claimed a preliminary laboratory study conducted by Russia's Gamaleya Center on Friday.

Modi meets UP BJP MPs, 'Teni' not present

Against the backdrop of ongoing hectic poll-campaign in the Assembly election bound Uttar Pradesh, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday met BJP MPs from the State which, however, significantly missed the MP from Kheri Ajay Mishra 'Teni' whose resignation as a Central Minister is being demanded by the Opposition parties in connection with the Lakhimpur Kheri violence.

interaction in the Winter Session of Parliament with party MPs categorised Statewise. "Teni's son is among the 13 accused arrested in the Lakhimpur Kheri violence on October 3 during Farmers agitation in UP in which eight People were killed. "Teni" is a Brahmin, an influential caste in the UP which is to go to polls in less than three months. Around 36 MPs from the State attended the breakfast meeting with Modi. The number was reportedly restricted to less than the total strength of the party in Parliament from Uttar Pradesh due to Covid-19 protocols, sources said.

Ministers can't take it casually, says Naidu

Peeved over absence of Ministers in the Rajya Sabha, Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu on Friday said they cannot take it "casually" and "it cannot be usual" and asked the Government to take note. He made these observations when some ministers were absent from the house even though papers were listed against their names and others presented the papers on their behalf. "The Ministers who are supposed to lay papers on the table of the House having given notice to the Chair should not be absent from the House. In extreme circumstances — there would be some occasions — if there is any problem, they must approach the Chair in advance and seek permission. "Some of them are doing it while others think it is casual. It cannot be casual, it cannot be usual," he said, asserting he will not allow such things in the future. Naidu asked Leader of the House Piyush Goyal and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi to take note. He said he was not objecting to others laying papers on ministers' behalf with prior notice and permission. There have been occasions when ministers were not present in the House when their names are called for the laying certain official papers and others had to do so on their behalf. Meanwhile, Naidu also lauded chairpersons of some of the parliamentary standing committees for their timely reports and holding regular meetings. NAIDU ADJOURNS RS FOR DAY TILL MONDAY New Delhi: Rajya Sabha Chairman Venkaiah Naidu on Friday adjourned Rajya Sabha for the day till Monday within 17 minutes of its proceedings appealing to the members to reach a consensus so that the House can function normally for the remaining days. "Today I had a talk with the Leader of the House, and also some senior members of the Opposition. I would like to appeal to each one of you, please arrive at some sort of consensus to see that the House functions normally. In order to facilitate discussions among yourselves, I am adjourning the House to meet on Monday," Naidu said.

DGCA: 1.05 cr travelled by air in Nov in domestic flights

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Friday shared data saying around 1.05 crore domestic passengers travelled by air in November, 17.03 per cent higher than the 89.85 lakh who travelled in October. The data showed that domestic passengers travelling by air during the period from January 2021 to November 2021 were 726.11 lakh versus 556.84 lakh during the corresponding period of previous year thereby registering annual growth of 30.40 per cent and monthly growth of 65.50 per cent. This indicates a major revival in the confidence of the travellers in air travel in the country. "IndiGo carried 57.06 lakh passengers in November, a 54.3 per cent share of the domestic market, SpiceJet flew 10.78 lakh passengers, accounting for a 10.3 per cent share of the market", the data showed. Go First (previously known as GoAir), Air India, Vistara, AirAsia India and Alliance Air carried 11.56 lakh, 9.98 lakh, 7.93 lakh, 6.23 lakh and 1.20 lakh passengers, respectively, in November, the data showed. The occupancy rate for SpiceJet was 86.7 per cent in November. The November occupancy rate for Air India was 82 per cent, followed by IndiGo (80.5 per cent), Go First (78.2 per cent) and AirAsia India 74.6 per cent, it added. The data mentioned that in November 2021, Vistara had the best on-time performance of 84.4 per cent at four metro airports — Bengaluru, Delhi, Hyderabad and Mumbai. AirAsia India and IndiGo were at the second and third positions at these four airports in November with 82.4 per cent and 80.5 per cent on-time performance respectively, the DGCA said. During the last two years, all airlines in India have opted for cost-reducing measures such as pay cuts, leave without pay and layoffs in order to tide over the coronavirus-induced crisis.

Don't privatise public sector banks, Varun urges Govt

Speaking against the Centre's move to privatise public sector banks on the plea that they "alone failed to recover NPAs", BJP MP Varun Gandhi on Friday asked the Government to desist from privatising them given their huge capacity to employ people across the country and social role. In a tweet, Varun said private bank may not support self-help groups, provide rural banking and loans to SMEs. "As we push towards privatising public sector banks, we must take pause to note that they employ almost a million, while helping self-help groups, providing rural banking and giving loans to SMEs. All things that private banks may not pursue", the MP from Pilibhit, UP, said. In another tweet in Hindi, Varun sought the union finance Minister to consider pushing Banking bill (amendment) 2021, only after discussing it with the "all affected groups". He said there is "no basis" for privatising PSU banks "only on the basis that it is only banks which failed to recover their NPAs". Varun indicated that Government was as much accountable for Non-recovery of NPAs of the PSU banks in the country.

CBI files chargesheet against Corporation Bank former CMD

The CBI on Friday said it has filed a chargesheet against then CMD, Corporation Bank, Ramnath Pradeep besides then Chief Manager and then Senior Manager of the bank in a case related to loss of Rs 79 crore to the public sector lender. Besides Pradeep, the then Chief Manager SN Murthy Shankar, the then Senior Manager AP Shiva Kumar have also been named in the chargesheet. The CBI had registered a case on June 16, 2017 on a complaint from Corporation Bank, Mumbai against a Mumbai-based private company Parekh Aluminex and others including its Directors, Chartered Accountant & unknown others. The private company incorporated in 1994 was engaged in manufacturing of Aluminum Foil Containers etc. The accused had allegedly conspired and availed various credit facilities to the tune of Rs 60 crore from Corporation Bank (now UBI), the CBI said in a statement. They had also allegedly diverted the funds and deployed it in real estate and other non-related business activities by way of loans/advances in different real estate projects. An alleged loss of Rs. 79.04 crore was caused to Corporation Bank.

India, US announce programme to tackle climate, clean energy challenges

A programme to support India-US science and technology-based entrepreneurial initiatives to tackle climate and clean energy challenges was announced on Friday. The programme, titled 'Technology-based Energy Solutions: Innovations for Net Zero', will address the development and implementation of next-generation clean and renewable energy, energy storage, and carbon sequestration, a Science and Technology Ministry statement said. It constitutes a call for Ignition Grants by the US-India Science & Technology Endowment Fund (USISTEF), in partnership with Social Alpha, a non-profit organisation promoting S&T entrepreneurship, it said. The programme will identify and support 'technology showstoppers' or promising joint India-US S&T-based entrepreneurial initiatives in this area, the Ministry said. "Climate Change is one of the biggest challenges our world is facing in the current times, spurring the call for global collaborations to tackle this crisis. "The launch of the US-India Climate and Clean Energy Agenda 2030 partnership in April 2021 reiterated the commitment of both nations to work together to achieve their ambitious climate and clean energy targets and to strengthen bilateral collaborations," it said, adding that The new programme aligns with the goals of the US-India Strategic Clean Energy Partnership and will be administered by the Indo-US Science and Technology Forum (IUSSTF), a bilateral organisation under the India's Department of Science and Technology, and the US Department of State.

New drug could treat patients with Covid pneumonia: Study

Namilumab drug — an antibody already in late-stage trials to treat rheumatoid arthritis — may be used to effectively treat some patients hospitalised with Covid-19 pneumonia, according to a study published in The Lancet Respiratory Medicine journal. However, the researchers said that as the sample size has been small, more investigations are needed in this regard. The team, including researchers from the University of Birmingham and the University of Oxford, UK, had tested namilumab in patients hospitalized with Covid-19 pneumonia. They were receiving 'usual' care, as well as having high levels in their blood of a marker of inflammation known as C reactive protein (CRP). "Our research has provided important proof-of-concept evidence that namilumab reduces inflammation in hospitalised patients with Covid-19 pneumonia," said Ben Fisher, co-chief investigator of the trial at the University of Birmingham and University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust (UHB). "However, our sample size is too small for a definitive assessment of clinical outcomes and further studies are required for this, as well as to understand better the population that may benefit most," Fisher said. Namilumab targets a 'cytokine' which is naturally secreted by immune cells in the body, but in uncontrolled levels is believed to be a key driver of the excessive and dangerous lung inflammation seen in Covid-19 patients. The trial carried out between June 2020 and February 2021 involved patients aged over 16 with Covid-19 pneumonia either being treated on a ward or Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at nine hospitals across the UK. The study involved 54 patients receiving 'usual care' — treatment with steroids and oxygen or ventilation — and 57 patients given usual care as well as a single intravenous dose of 150mg of namilumab. As well as Covid-19 pneumonia, all study participants had CRP levels greater than 40mg/l. The researchers compared the probability of the reduction of levels of CRP in patients.

PM asks Mayors to ensure LED bulbs widely used

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday asked Mayors of all cities across the country to ensure that LED bulbs are used widely in the streetlights and homes of their cities and take-up this work in "mission mode" and make cities "divyang-friendly". Addressing the All India Mayors' Conference through video conferencing, the Prime Minister referred to the recent developments in the ancient city of Varanasi and recalled his statement that the development of Kashi can be a roadmap for the entire country. The Prime Minister said most of the cities in our country are traditional cities, developed in a traditional way. In this era of modernisation, the antiquity of these cities is equally important. He remarked that these cities can teach us how to preserve heritage and local skills. The Prime Minister insisted that destroying the existing structures is not the way but emphasis should be on rejuvenation and preservation. This should be done in accordance with the requirements of modern times. UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri were among those present on the occasion. Modi asked Mayors to ensure that LED bulbs are used widely in the streetlights and homes of their cities. He asked them to take this up "in a mission mode." Modi also told Mayors to see that every facility in their city is "divyang-friendly" as per 'Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan-Accessible India Campaign'. He said "we should always think of using existing schemes for new uses and taking them forward."

IMD predicts cold to severe cold wave in some parts of country

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Friday predicted cold wave to severe cold wave conditions in some parts of the country, including Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Rajasthan in the next five days. Dense to very dense fog, ground frost conditions are likely in some areas, it said. Meanwhile, temperature is likely to drop a few notches in some parts of the country including Delhi. According to the IMD, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Saurashtra and Kutch could witness a cold wave or a severe cold wave from December 17 to 21. A cold wave is likely over north Rajasthan from December 18 to 21, while one is predicted for west Uttar Pradesh from December 19 to 21, and Gujarat from December 19 to 20. "Cold wave conditions are predicted for Jammu, Kashmir-Ladakh-Gilgit-Baltistan-Muzaffarabad, HP and Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana & Chandigarh during the next four days. Gujarat is likely to witness cold wave conditions over the next three days; West UP is expected to witness cold wave conditions between December 19 and 21," it said. The IMD added gradual fall in minimum temperatures by 2-3°C over most parts of Northwest India and Maharashtra; by 3-5°C over most parts of Central India during the next four days. The IMD records a cold wave when the minimum temperature is equal to or less than 10 degree Celsius at a weather station in the plains, and is 4.5 degrees to 6.4 degrees below the normal temperature for that period.

Modi to be awarded highest civilian decoration conferred by Kingdom of Bhutan

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be awarded Ngadag Pel gi Khorlo or the Order of The Druk Gyalpo, the highest civilian decoration conferred by the Kingdom of Bhutan for the unconditional friendship and support extended over the years and particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic. Modi is the first foreigner to receive the coveted award. Modi had earlier been recipients of highest civilian honours in Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, UAE, Palestine, Bahrain, Maldives and Russia. He also received the Legion of Merit by the US Government in 2020. "Overjoyed to hear His Majesty pronounce Your Excellency Modiji's @narendramodi name for the highest civilian decoration, Ngadag Pel gi Khorlo," Prime Minister of Bhutan Lotay Tshering tweeted on December 17, 2021, the country's National Day. Modi thanked Bhutan's king for according the country's highest civilian decoration on him, and said India will always cherish the country as one of its closest friends and neighbours and will continue to support its development journey in every possible way. The PM tweeted that he admires Bhutan for its unique model of sustainable development and the deeply spiritual way of life. "Successive Druk Gyalpos — Their Majesties the Kings — have given a unique identity to the Kingdom, and nurtured the special bond of neighbourly friendship that our nations share," he said. The Ngadag Pel gi Khorlo is being awarded to Prime Minister Modi for the unconditional friendship and support extended over the years and particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic.



A health worker administers the Covishield vaccine for Covid-19 to a worker at the factory of a face mask manufacturer on the outskirts of Ahmedabad on Friday

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Ants in pants

A section of orthodox parents is crying hoarse over a school's decision to introduce unisex uniforms

It is not funny how what we wear can create friction in society. It is as if fashion maligns culture. For some, the baggage of illogical and impractical traditions is lighter to carry than the weight of change. Take the case of girl students. Why does it always have to be girls, or women, when it comes to experimenting with change or conflicting with it? The latest is a section of Muslim community unhappy with a Kozhikode school in Kerala introducing unisex uniforms. A notice of the Government Higher Secondary School said boys and girls will wear trousers and shirts. If the girls wish to wear scarves or mufflers to cover their heads to respect their religious beliefs, they are allowed to do so. Is that what hybrid culture is, a mingling of the retro and the modern, a fusion of *haute couture* and tradition? That is a debate for another day. The school principal said they consulted the stakeholders — the students and their parents — before affecting the change. Incidentally, the move comes close on the heels of salesgirls in Kerala winning a court battle to get the right to sit while on duty. However, some conservative Muslims in Kozhikode are miffed at their girls dumping skirts for pants. They have organised protest marches, intent on making it a political issue. They must have realised the futility of the protest because no women joined them.



The Government, too, believes a uniform uniform bridges the gender gap and is a sprightly step towards gender equality. Some Kerala schools had introduced three-fourth pants a couple of years ago despite facing opposition. It would have been welcome had the debate been on whether the concept of gender neutrality that is sweeping across the world should impact school uniforms. The issue here, however, is quite narrow. It is a patriarchal objection to girls wearing pants. One of the Kozhikode protesters let the cat out of the bag by arguing that women wanting to progress does not mean they wear the same clothes as men. He makes two other points. One, that pants are "undemocratic" because they amount to a denial of "diversity". Imagine! Two, it is a "liberal" approach. That, surely, is the crux of the problem. The orthodox does not want progress to pass it by, leaving it alone by taking away the children. The girl students are thrilled to wear pants to school. They may have been more thrilled if they had a choice. The whole theory of empowerment of women goes for a toss if it is not about them having a choice. Reacting to a similar neutral uniform row in Ernakulam last month, Congress MP Shashi Tharoor remarked that making girls wear pants is no different from making them wear skirts. Why cannot they have the freedom to choose a uniform that makes them feel comfortable and confident? Wonder why boys are never asked to mandatorily wear *dhoti* and *kurta*.

PICTALK



Tourists take a boat ride at Ana Sagar Lake during sunset in Ajmer

PTI

An object lesson

Online classes are the way forward as these help save time, fuel and lessen health risks

The intensity of the COVID-19 pandemic might have ebbed but the cataclysm caused by it continues unabated. Several States are reeling under the impact of Omicron, the latest dreaded variant of the virus, and an impending threat of the third wave. Medical fraternity is worried about the pandemic's after-effects on children more than on the elderly. Uncharacteristically, complaints about 'memory fog' (loss of memory) are galore among the young citizens. Till the pandemic receded, the Government shut down schools and colleges and opted for online classes, which proved to be successful to a limited extent. But now that most State Governments have ordered the reopening of educational institutes, many parents are circumspect of sending their children to schools and colleges, fearing they may get afflicted by the bronchial affliction. Online classes are here to stay, according to many national award-winning school teachers and professors with decades of teaching experience. Dr C Ramakrishnan Nair, a venerated teacher for whom online classes were an altogether new experience, says the medium is more powerful than taking physical classes.



"If the teacher and the student are equally serious about studies, online classes are the best method to resolve the issues of scarcity of classrooms, poor infrastructure and the shortage of good teachers. The teacher can interact with students on a one-on-one basis and make sure that they have comprehended what has been taught," says Dr Nair, who takes hundreds of students across the country every day through the complex maze of various Indian laws and Constitution. His is not the lone voice. Sukumaran Periyachur, a national award-winning teacher, and Shylen dran, a teacher in Navodaya Vidyalaya, are of the view that online classes are safe, secure and make education accessible to all. "The only section which would be affected because of this technological advancement is the private school managements who literally hold the education system to ransom," say these two teachers. Another voice of authority is Isro's former chairperson G Madhavan Nair, who feels that if the Centre invests a few thousand crores in launching communication satellites, the entire education system in the country could be brought under the online network. The innovation would help save commute time and energy, fuel bills (with the exception of practical experiments) and learning could be done without external disturbances.

Reasons for dearth of Muslim leaders



PRAFULL GORADIA

Since 1762, a number of Muslim chieftains showed the spark with some good ideas but could not command the increasing followers

Salman Khurshid's defence of what he said about Hindutva as well as others defending him brings out a stark fact. Muslims of the subcontinent have failed to throw up a leader of stature since Akbar, the Mughal emperor. Akbar showed the way of integrating with the rest of the populace. He conquered territory after territory, consolidated his empire and ruled for five decades. He made it possible for his successors to rule well for a century and poorly until 1762.

Thereafter, the British began to rule for nearly two centuries, with a number of Muslim chieftains who had ideas but could not command the increasing followers. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan was a sincere officer who pleaded for educating Muslim youth but could not go beyond Aligarh and declaring that Hindus and Muslims were separate nations. Justice Ameer Ali was the first Indian High Court judge but migrated to England after he retired. Maulana Muhammad Ali was active and imaginative but he was obsessed with retaining the Caliph on the Turkish throne. It was his uppermost priority and he died too early to have greater influence.

Poet Iqbal wrote an extremely popular song, or *tarana* — *Saare jahan se achcha Hindustan hamara* — which Indian military bands play with alacrity even now. However, upon returning to India after a long tour of Europe, Iqbal underwent a revolution of mind and sponsored a division of India into the northeastern provinces and the rest. In short, he sponsored a confederate partition of India; he became a separatist.

Chaudhary Rehmat Ali, a Cambridge scholar, coined the name 'Pakistan' and did little else. Thereafter followed Qaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah, who was a true secularist until he arrived at the parting of ways with Gandhiji at the Calcutta plenum of the Congress in 1928. Earlier, popular Congress leader Sarojini Naidu described Jinnah as the "best ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity". He regularly wore lounge suits, never *chudidar* pyjamas and sher-



wani, which were mostly tailored at Saville Row London, the world's best for men's clothes. He became used to a peg or two of whiskey after sundown and enjoyed pork sandwiches in the afternoon. He did not know how to perform the *namaz* and seldom prayed any other way. This is according to his brother Ahmed, who was my grandfather's friend who resided at 401, Girgaum Road, Bombay. According to him, they were culturally Parsee; Mohammad married a Parsee, Ruttie Petit. Their daughter married Sir Neville Wadia.

Jinnah, in Gujarati, means tiny, which was his grandfather's name. When he converted from the Lohana, a Hindu caste, he continued being called Jinnahbhai but returned to India as Jinnah. He became a barrister in two years but was too young to be awarded the recognition. He had to stay back for two more years. He had learnt many an English habit and had no interest in religion.

On being sidelined by Gandhi in the Congress, Jinnah went away to London to continue his law practice and became arguably the highest paid barrister across

the British Empire. He had bought himself an impressive mansion in Hampstead in north London. In 1934, the Muslim League began persuading him to return to India because the party had become moribund. On the assurance that he would be made president for life, Jinnah returned to Bombay. He dictated terms to the League, whose other leaders did what Jinnah said. When the party did not do well in the 1937 elections, he decided to blow the bugle for Pakistan on March 22, 1940. To quote from his speech: "The Hindus and Muslims have different religious philosophies, social customs and literatures. They neither intermarry nor inter-dine and, indeed, they belong to two different civilisations which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions. Their views on life and of life are different. It is also quite clear that Hindus and Muslims derive their inspiration from different sources of history. They have different epics, different heroes in different episodes. Very often, the hero of one is a foe of the other and, likewise, their victories and defeats overlap."

The point we are stressing is that Muslims find it diffi-

cult to throw up a tall leader. Jinnah was successful in getting Pakistan but he played the role of a brilliant advocate rather than a leader. The only beneficiaries of Pakistan were a few migrants from UP, a few Gujarati businessmen from Bombay and the Punjabis who still dictate to the rest of their country centred around Lahore. The majority of Pakistanis went with Bangladesh. The rest feel that they are under Islamabad's heel. Yet, more Muslims remain in India than in Pakistan. Their economy is in a shambles. It is still agrarian, if not also backward. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and the hill districts are in the 19th, if not the 18th, century while Sindh is unhappy and Balochistan wants to secede.

Incidentally, another beneficiary of Pakistan was Jinnah who established his place in history as the founder of a nation. What is the reason for the paucity of leadership? Is it the comprehensiveness of the scriptures? Have they covered all aspects of life?

(The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha. The views expressed are personal.)



MUSLIMS OF THE SUBCONTINENT HAVE FAILED TO THROW UP A LEADER OF STATURE SINCE AKBAR, THE MUGHAL EMPEROR. AKBAR SHOWED THE WAY OF INTEGRATING WITH THE REST OF THE POPULACE

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ATTACK IS THE BEST FORM OF DEFENCE

Sir — The Bangladesh Liberation War, also known as the Bangladesh War of Independence or simply the Liberation War in Bangladesh, was a revolution and an armed conflict sparked by the rise of the Bengali nationalist and self-determination movement in what was then East Pakistan during the 1971 Bangladesh genocide. It was a bold and purposeful decision to give full autonomy to the Indian Army back then by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Similar to the freedom she gave to General Sam Manekshaw to liberate Bangladesh in 1971; Rajiv Gandhi in 1986 gave the same liberty to General Krishnaswamy Sundarji to evict the Chinese from Sumdorong Chu valley in Arunachal Pradesh. The recent Balakot surgical strike to eliminate Pakistani terrorists is another striking example.

There is no scope for buying time at this juncture from these eternal enemies at the Line of Control. Attack is the best form of defence and the Indian armed forces can strike the hard way to drive away the enemy once and for all. We remember the soldiers who laid their lives in these operations on the 50th Year of the Liberation War in Bangladesh. It is a proud day for our forces for these successful operations across the border.

MR Jayanthi | Mumbai

IS MAN NO LONGER A SOCIAL ANIMAL?

Sir — If being reminded that the aphorism 'live and let live' needs to be modified to suit the modern times is in itself a straightforward and unemotional statement difficult to comprehend; 'live and help others live' as the new cliché is sure to raise enough eyebrows. In an age where the 'self' has taken precedence over all other aspects of relationships, it is hard to perceive any special efforts being made towards giving shape to such a noble thought.

When it comes to awareness about our immediate vicinity, it is generally believed that concerns for our neighbours come first and then the community. But in most of the metro cities, even today, people are

Why so many elephant deaths?



The gigantic but lovable elephant is placed in schedule 1 of the Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. Many projects are in place in India to save this magnificent creature from extinction. But the stark reality is that elephant deaths have surged significantly over the last few years. As many as five elephants died due to collisions with trains in Tamil Nadu and Assam in November and early December this year. This perennial "train-elephant collision" has been studied for a very long time but halfhearted measures have not helped.

As is known, proper track signals, loco pilot sensitisation, periodic review and maintenance of elephant corridors and a unique elephant detection system are proposed for safeguarding the lives of elephants. But these measures have to see the light of day to help the jumbos. Overpasses and underpasses have proven advantageous. Solar powered fences and elephant proof trenches are vital to minimise deaths due to man-animal conflict. Such projects are on full swing in Kerala, a State known to love and admire the elephants. Shrinking elephant habitat is one of the root causes of the big mammal succumbing to causes other than natural. More and more elephant corridors and enhanced budgetary provisions for ensuring elephants are in the safe confines of their homes, and hence away from human interference, cannot be overstressed. Elephants are magnificent animals and a critical part of the ecosystem. It is high time we realised the need of the hour to find ways to protect this creature.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

unaware of the existence of residents next door. In these modern times where man's materialistic pursuits have morphed him into a caricature of insensitiveness, emotional connections hardly exist between people. Hence it is difficult to gauge any empathy building up for fellow beings. Considering that man by nature is a social animal, cordial interactions between people are expected. But personal interests always seem to gain the better of people and hence 'minding my own business' has become the social norm more so now than it was ever before.

Pachu Menon | Margao

DURGA PUJA GETS HERITAGE STATUS

Sir — Durga Puja is a Hindu religious celebration that has evolved into a cultural and secular occasion. It has also become a spot for social and artistic gatherings. Durga Puja, also known as Durgotsava or Sharadotsav, honours and pays respect to Hindu goddess Durga and commemorates

Durga's victory over Mahishasur. It originated in the Indian subcontinent. The emotion and joy of Durga Puja will soon be known world over as it has been accorded heritage status by a top UN body.

For the first time in Asia, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) has inscribed Kolkata's Durga Puja on the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (ICH), giving Bengalis and Indians a cause for celebration. Durga Puja joins other Indian cultural practices and manifestations on the ICH list, including the Kumbh Mela, Bengal and Odisha's Chhau dance, Manipur's Sankirtana, Yoga, Ramlila, Buddhist chanting in Ladakh and Nawruz. "A subject of tremendous pride and excitement for every Indian", Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted.

Khushbu Khatri | Ujjain

SOUNDBITE

He (PM Modi) fears only one thing — losing an election. I'm glad that he fears at least something.



Congress leader — P Chidambaram

The Omicron variant is going to spread rapidly in the US and a winter of severe illness and death awaits the unvaccinated.



US President — Joe Biden

Very interesting that I'm promoting one of the most iconic film franchises of all time and I'm still referenced as "the wife of..."



Actor — Priyanka Chopra

Sourav Ganguly is the BCCI president and surely should be asked why there is this discrepancy.



Former India captain — Sunil Gavaskar

Mamata Banerjee is trying hard to be recognised as the face of Opposition but I have no doubt that she will fail.



BJP leader — Roopa Ganguly

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

THE BANKERS' STRIKE IS MERE TOKENISM

As the general public is not with the unions, there is no way they can stop privatisation of banks



S KALYANASUNDARAM

Banking operations, including cheque clearances across the country, got affected as bankers under the aegis of the United Forum of Bank Unions have gone on a nationwide strike to protest against the proposed privatisation of two government banks. The United Forum of Bank Unions which is an umbrella body of nine unions has given the strike call for December 16 and 17. For the same demand they have abstained from work on March 15 and 16 also. Earlier as part of budget announcement, the Finance Minister had informed that two unnamed public sector banks will be privatized. Bank workers going on strike is not a new phenomenon, but over the years the strength of the unions to bargain 'based on their right to strike work' has depleted. It is well settled under different labour laws that employees have a right to strike work to highlight their demands as any management can have the right of lock-out or lay off, all subject to conditions. Long



time ago, we had only public sector banks and some private sector old generation banks and the workers of these banks were all well organized under communist unions. The workers had different settlements that were reached under Industrial Disputes Act and there was not much scope for the management to deviate from any of these. There used to be a system of 'collective bargaining', which in a lighter vein used to mean that the 'management will bargain' but ultimately 'unions will collect'. However, in 1990s, new private banks, like ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank, Axis Bank etc, had come into existence. These banks have adopted technology for providing service and the role of labour unions has been curtailed by keeping all the staff under officer cadre. Over the years, these banks have acquired sizeable business also. As the employees of new private sector banks are not under these unions, these private banks function without any disruption. Even in public sector banks, when customers are having facility of online banking, the employees' strike does not disrupt transactions. Alternate channels like internet banking, mobile banking, ATM etc ensure that customer service is not affected. The only major service which is affected is clearing house function where cheques are cleared under the Cheque Truncation System administered by Reserve Bank of India. Though most of the employees obey the command of the unions and strike work, they are not happy about it. Under the principle of no-work-no-pay, they forego the wages of the days of strike. Moreover, when they resume the work next day, there will be added pressure of work without any compensation. When the issue involved is other than service conditions, they feel that they are unnecessarily dragged into the issue which is political. And many of them are not convinced with the ideology of the unions also. Everyone knows that the government will carry on their agenda as they have got the mandate of the people. With the majority they have in both the houses of parliament, any amendment to Acts required will be carried out. As the unions are totally opposing the move of the government, they lose the opportunity of bargaining for the welfare of their employees after privatization. If the unions are tactful, instead of blindly opposing the privatization, they can bargain for the welfare of the employees in those banks and cooperate with the government. In any case the government will carry out its agenda. When the general public is also not with the unions, there is no way that they can stop privatization of banks. The strike is just tokenism.

(The writer is a retired banker. The views expressed are personal.)

Insects help richly in ecological restoration

Insects help break down organic matter like corpses and animal faeces. This is important as it reuses nutrients, making them available for aerating the soil



BKP SINHA

Rewilding is a progressive way to conserve the environment. It is a form of environmental conservation and ecological restoration which has significant potential to increase biodiversity, create self-sustaining environments, and mitigate climate change.

There are two main approaches to rewilding: First, it enables degraded lands to recover by preventing anthropogenic influences, and allowing nature to conserve itself with minimum human interference. Second, re-introducing lost or dwindling plant or animal species into their natural environment, enabling restoration of their populations and ecological balance.

Rewilding does not take place only in protected areas or remote locations. Examples of this can be seen in many cities. Over the years, mining has caused rampant destruction in parts of the Aravalis, in Gurugram, Haryana. An NGO led by Latika Thukral and her team has healed nearly 550 acres of land and converted it into the Aravali Biodiversity Park by planting thousands of saplings. Today, it is a repository of native flora and fauna, which also has a water-conservation zone, and is an educational space for spreading awareness about environmental issues. Similarly, Yamuna Biodiversity Park of Delhi is an example of the successful restoration of barren land.

Kaikondanahalli Lake, which lies on the south-eastern periphery of Bengaluru, was severely polluted with sewage and solid waste. Following a newspaper report, the corporation planned to restore this lake with the support of groups formed of local residents, experts from engineering, education, ecology, etc. A year after restoration, over 50 species of birds and a great variety of butterflies, snakes, and frogs began to appear. There has been an enormous increase in animal and insect species since then. Regeneration of Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary in Rajasthan is also an example of the revival of a degraded ecosystem.

This article will briefly discuss the importance of restoration of insect habitats, which is currently untouched despite their tremendous potential and biological contributions in restoration of biodiversity in urban areas. The term 'Biodiversity' is used to describe the enormous variety of life on Earth. It refers to all of the species in a particular region or ecosystem which encompass plants, bacteria, animals, humans and other living things.

Insects are critical to agriculture, human health, and bioresources because they play important role in cycling of nutrients, disperse seeds, pollinate plants, maintain soil structure, improve fertility, and control population of other organisms. Insects are at the base of the food chain, therefore their recovery is a prerequisite for the recovery of other species.

They provide various kinds of useful services which are described below:

Insects possess significant amounts of



THE CONSERVATION OF INSECTS CAN RICHLY BENEFIT FROM INSECT-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND POLITICAL ADVOCACY. HENCE, WE HAVE NUMEROUS WAYS TO CONSERVE INSECTS AND CAN USE ANY OR ALL OF THEM TO SLOW DOWN INSECTS' DECLINE. IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT WE PROTECT AND PRESERVE THE INSECTS' WORLD FOR A THRIVING FUTURE

(The writer is a former IFS officer. The views expressed are personal.)



nutrients required by both humans and animals such as proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins, fibres, minerals etc. In South America, caterpillars, beetles, grasshoppers, and crickets are popular foods. Approximately \$500 million worth of tinned silkworm pupae are exported from Thailand.

The pollination process of many flowering plants and crops relies on animals — primarily insects. Animal induced pollination is crucial to the production of the food we eat.

Predatory insects feed on pests that threaten crops, thus performing the role of pesticides without chemicals. This reduces pest-control costs and increases crop yields, while reducing pesticide residues.

Insects also contribute to the breakdown of organic matter like fallen litter, corpses and animal faeces. This is important since it reuses nutrients, making them available for aerating the soil.

Some plants produce fruit and seeds that are eaten and collected by ants. They bring these seeds to their nests to eat and it is possible that some seeds are dropped along the way and others may be cached in the soil. These seeds may germinate and establish plants at a new location. Therefore, ants play a crucial role in the dispersal of fruit and seeds from plants. There are over 150 plant species that depend on insects for dispersal.

Similarly, honeybees pollinate and help plants grow, breed, and produce food. To keep the cycle of life going, bees transfer pollen between flowering plants. Most of the food we consume depends on pollination, particularly by bees: like almonds, apples, squash etc.

We also rely on insects for silk, dye, honey, wax and medical and

genetic research.

It was once stated by EO Wilson, a noted biologist: "If all mankind were to disappear, the world would regenerate back to the rich state of equilibrium that existed ten thousand years ago. If insects were to vanish, the environment would collapse into chaos."

An ecosystem is based on the coexistence of species and communities alongside the environment. The rivet popper hypothesis was proposed by Ecologist Paul Ehrlich to illustrate the consequences of species extinction on ecosystem. He compares key species to airplane rivets and claims that if those rivets were gradually removed, the plane would also crash. Similarly, if key species are removed from an ecosystem, their absence would eventually harm the ecosystem not immediately but in the long run.

There are many countries where pollinators have disappeared and people are forced to hand pollinate apples, pears and passion fruits, etc. Therefore, the loss of insects from the food chain would negatively impact human food supplies.

A recent study led by experts revealed that darkling beetle (indigenous to East Asia including the Korean peninsula) larvae are capable of decomposing plastic components by breaking them down at the molecular level. Researchers discovered that the larvae of the beetle in the order Coleoptera (Plesiophthalmus davidis) can decompose polystyrene, which earlier was difficult to break down due to its unique molecular structure. Currently, there are more than 50 known species of plastivores, including the greater wax moth, providing hope for scientists seeking to reduce

plastic pollution.

Thus, insects constitute a substantial part of our ecosystem but the number and diversity of insects are decreasing due to habitat loss, pollution, and climate change. Preservation and restoration of habitats that support insect diversity are essential to their conservation, otherwise many of these species will become extinct.

Therefore, every home, school, and local park should dedicate a portion of their lawn space as a natural habitat which would provide the insects a conducive environment. Pesticides and insecticides such as Neonicotinoids should be prohibited in local vegetation and green areas since they harm insect populations and mandate nature-friendly development practices. Furthermore, artificial light at night can harm and kill many creatures including amphibians, birds, insects and plants. For example, most nocturnal insects are attracted to artificial lights that indirectly kill insects via exhaustion or through predation before dawn. Therefore, protecting dark night skies will benefit insect populations. Growing native plants provides more benefits to native insects due to their close ecological relationships. There are many insect species that depend on these plants for food and nesting sites and become prey for birds and other wildlife, so native plants indirectly attract numerous vertebrates. Insects' conservation can richly benefit from insect-friendly environmental policies and political advocacy. Hence, we have numerous ways to conserve insects, and we can use any or all of them to slow insect declines.

It is imperative that we protect and preserve the insects' world for a thriving future.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

THOSE WHO SAID WE DON'T ALLOW DURGA PUJA IN BENGAL SHOULD BE ASHAMED OF THEMSELVES. TODAY, THEIR FALSEHOOD STANDS EXPOSED.

—WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER MAMATA BANERJEE



WE HAVE NOT FORGOTTEN HOW THE TMC TWICE TRIED TO STOP DURGA PUJA IMMERSION AS THE DATE OF MUHARRAM CLASHED WITH IT.

—BJP NATIONAL VICE-PRESIDENT DILIP GHOSH

Preserving the linguistic diversity of Northeast India

Since English is the preferred medium of instruction, learners have remained aloof from the benefits that come with education in mother tongue

The north-eastern region of India is blessed with unparalleled ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity. The land of seven sisters and a brother, it is the most diverse part of the most diverse nation, being home to a number of plain and hill tribal communities having their own cultures, traditions, livelihood practices, language and dialects.

As for linguistic diversity, in Assam, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh, around 23, 20, and 15 languages, respectively, are in use and Meghalaya is home to Khasi, Garo and Pnar/Jaintia languages. The languages used across the region belong to five different language families, namely, Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Tibeto-Burman, Austro-Asiatic and Tai-Kadai.



RAGHAVENDRA P TIWARI

(The writer is Vice-Chancellor, Central University of Punjab, Bathinda. The views expressed are personal.)

However, these are not recognised by respective governments as official languages.

The pace of development in the region is exerting massive pressure on the autonomous tribal communities. As such, some of these languages and dialects encompassing cherished civilizational discourses have already become 'vulnerable' to 'morbund'. The contributing factors to the vanishing of languages in the region are better job prospects in English, conversion to Christianity and impact of churches in the choice of lingua franca and inappropriate language policies framed for administrative conveniences.

A mother tongue is vital for design thinking and comprehension and creating the mind-set necessary for holistic



development. Moreover, learning in a foreign language also brings a sense of alienation from one's own culture and heritage leading to an inferiority complex, whereas learning in mother tongue helps develop a better sense of one's cultural traits. Thus, learning in the mother-tongue is of paramount significance in improving the quality of education. Since English is the preferred medium of instruction in India, learners have remained aloof from the benefits that come with education in the mother tongue. UNESCO has

also recommended the use of mother tongue in the early years of schooling to enable children to learn to read and write alongside introducing them to the early mathematical and academic concepts. In order to capitalise on the advantage of learning in the mother tongue, The NEP 2020 emphasises mother tongue as medium of instruction at least up to the fifth standard. This policy also envisages integrating teaching and learning of Indian languages with school and higher education at every level.

It is in this backdrop that the announcement made by Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan in the recently concluded North East Education Conclave on NEP-2020 organised by Assam

Government and Shamkardev Education and Research Foundation for making Guwahati the Language Laboratory of India and for creating safe educational zones is significant. He also emphasised capitalizing on the strength of ethnic, cultural, linguistic, biotic and abiotic diversities of North-eastern region for its emotional integration with the rest of the country.

Thus, the North-eastern States should not adopt English as the State language merely for administrative conveniences but embrace regional languages as State languages as many languages are being pushed to the endangered category without the official status and patronage. Major dialects should be given scripts so as to promote them to the

status of languages. The policy of the three-language formula should be revisited to promote regional languages. Dictionaries and learners' books need to be written for every language and dialect spoken in the north-east. A group of people needs to be trained in languages spoken in the region for the purpose of translation, as is being done for international languages. Customs and traditions should be penned down in every language and dialect.

Skilled teachers for every language should be there for the purpose of teaching and creating ICT enabled e-materials in those languages. High-quality programmes in translation and interpretation should be offered in all the languages of the NER. Every

central university in the north-east should be sanctioned a Centre for Preservation and Promotion of Local Languages and Dialects (CPPLD) for implementing these and other imperatives for preserving linguistic diversity and harmonious inter-relationships of the tribal communities with nature, ecology and cosmos.

We are running out of fuel with the passing away of senior citizens, and without a holistic language policy, languages and dialects are getting increasingly marginalised, causing a decline in our traditional knowledge base about tribal cultures, traditions, livelihood practices, environmental ethics, nature centric development, etc which are necessary ingredients for securing the future of the region.

US senators nod import ban on China

Senators gave final congressional approval on Thursday to a bill barring imports from China's Xinjiang region unless businesses can prove they were produced without forced labour, overcoming initial hesitation from White House and what supporters said was opposition from corporations.

China vows to respond after US enacts Xinjiang sanctions

The China will take all necessary measures to safeguard its institutions and enterprises, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said Friday after the U.S. Senate passed a law barring imports from the Xinjiang region unless businesses can prove they were made without forced labour.

Soaring infections rattle Europe, fuel dread about holidays

Soaring infections in Britain driven in part by omicron variant of coronavirus rattled Europe on Thursday, prompting new restrictions on the Continent and fueling a familiar dread on both sides of Atlantic about entering a new phase of pandemic just in time for the holidays.

UN leader urges 'concrete' moves on year-end vaccine goal

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres exhorted the world on Thursday to make "concrete" progress within days toward a now-distant goal of vaccinating 40% of the global population against COVID-19 before the year ends.

MBS now uncrowned King amid concerns over father's health

Riyadh: GB From greeting foreign leaders to heading regional summits, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is taking over reins from his elderly father and becoming Saudi Arabia's uncrowned king.

2,500 Myanmar villagers flee Army troops into Thailand

Fighting between two sides is intermittent, but heated up after military in February seized power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

US regulators lift in-person restrictions on abortion pill

The Food and Drug Administration on Thursday permanently removed a major obstacle for women seeking abortion pills, eliminating a long-standing requirement that they pick up the medication in person.

KAVYAM - AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECT. Advertisement is invited to inform general public at large regarding cancellation of units of already allotted customers through the 1st draw of lots dated 24.06.2019, 2nd draw of lots dated 01.08.2020 and 3rd draw of lots dated 22.01.2021 due to non-payment despite several reminders, in the Residential Apartments in the Affordable Group Housing Project Kavyam is being developed by Agrante Realty Ltd Sector-108, Gurugram, Haryana, as per terms and conditions of the policy prescribed by the Town & Country Planning Department, Government of Haryana vide notification no PF-27/48921 dated 19.08.2013 & amendments thereof (details available at the Department website, i.e. www.topharyana.gov.in).

Office of Executive Engineer Uttarakhand Jal Sansthan. Letter No: 2140 /E-Tender notice/21-22 Dated: 16.12.2021. NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING e-Tender notice. On behalf of the Chief General Manager, Uttarakhand Jal Sansthan, Dehradun online tenders in Two Bid System, on item rate contract basis, are invited for the following works in District Dehradun (Uttarakhand) from technically and financially capable bidders, registered with Uttarakhand Jal Sansthan/Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam in appropriate class & category up to prescribed date & time on the portal as mentioned in terms and conditions.

Table with 4 columns: Bid No., Name of Work, Bid Security (Earnest Money), Cost of Bid Document (in Rs), Period of completion of works. Includes tender time schedule (Key Dates) as follows: 1 Date of Online Publication 18.12.2021 at 11:00 Hrs, 2 Document download : Start Date 19.12.2021 at 11:00 Hrs, 3 Pre-Bid Meeting : Date 23.12.2021 at 11:00 Hrs, 4 Bid Submission : Start date 29.12.2021 at 11:00 Hrs, 5 Bid Submission : End date 06.01.2022 upto 17:00 Hrs, 6 Offline Submission of Documents (Cost of bidding Document, Bid Security, Original affidavits and all supporting Document in support of qualification), 7 Date of Technical Bid Opening 10.01.2022 at 11:00 Hrs, 8 Date of Financial Bid Opening 14.01.2022 At 11:00Hrs.

RAJASTHAN STATE ROAD TRANSPORT CORPORATION. OFFICE OF THE GENERAL MANAGER (S/P) JHOTWARA ROAD, JAIPUR. TEL No. 0141-2281912, 2281913 Email: gmsrprtc@gmail.com. E-Tendering Notice. NIT-05. E-tender invited for the purchase of Tyre retreading material. For further details you can visit online website https://eproc.rajjasthan.gov.in or from e-procurement cell RISL, Yojana Bhawan, Tilak Marg, C- Scheme, Jaipur-302005 and contact on Toll Free number No. 1800-3070-2232 (Help Desk be contacted directly in the following mobile nos. 91-7878007972 and 91-7878007973 10.00 AM to 06.00 PM on all working days), and e-mail eproc@rajasthan.gov.in. UBN No RTC2122GLOB00294. Raj Samwad/C21/9536 Advt. No. 161/2021-22 General Manager (S/P)

National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (A Govt. of India Undertaking). Corporate Office : 3rd Floor, PTI Building, 4-Parliament Street, New Delhi-110001.

NOTICE TO KEY PROFESSIONALS REGISTERED ON INFRACON WEB PORTAL OF MORT&H

1. INFRACON is a web based National Portal for Consultancy Firms which facilitates the hosting of CVs of Key personnel and Credentials of Consultancy Firms since 2015 under MoRT&H maintained by NHIDCL. 2. The CVs of Key Personnel in INFRACON Portal are currently under the process of Background Verification and the issues in CVs have been intimated through Official Emails and through notifications in respective INFRACON IDs. The portal gets updated in a dynamic manner; hence, the Key Personnel are advised to continuously monitor the Portal for important updates. Note: a) In case your issues/queries have been resolved then this Notice may be ignored. b) Key personnel are also advised to refrain themselves from any unwanted non-factual complaints as it will invite strict legal action apart from debarment. For details of observations on your INFRACON CVs, refer to our Email from support-infracon@gov.in or by logging into your INFRACON ID on www.infracon.nic.in. davp 37112/11/0004/21-22 BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE, BUILDING THE NATION

LORDKANHIYA INFOTECH LLP. LLPIN: AAF-4647. Regd. Office: 68, Chandlerok Enclave, Pitampura, Delhi-110034.

"FORM NO. URC-2" PUBLIC NOTICE. Advertisement giving notice about registration under Part I of Chapter XXI of the Act [Pursuant to section 374(b) of the Companies Act, 2013 and rule 4(1) of the Companies (Authorised to Register) Rules, 2014]. 1. Notice is hereby given that in pursuance of sub-section (2) of section 366 of the Companies Act, 2013, an application is proposed to be made after fifteen days hereof but before the expiry of thirty days hereinafter to the Registrar of companies at Delhi that LORDKANHIYA INFOTECH LLP a Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) may be registered under Part I of Chapter XXI of the Companies Act 2013, as a company limited by shares. 2. The Principal objects of the company are as follows:- Carrying on the business of Traders, Merchandisers, Importers, exporters of computers, its parts, allied products and developing any type of software, giving of services 3. A copy of the draft memorandum and articles of association of the proposed company may be inspected at the registered office at 68, Chandlerok Enclave, Pitampura, Delhi-110034 on any working day 4. Notice is hereby given that any person objecting to this application may communicate their objection in writing to the Registrar at Central Registration Centre (CRC), Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA), Plot No. 6,7,8, Sector 5, IMT Manesar, District Gurgaon (Haryana), Pin Code-122050, within twenty one days from the date of publication of this notice, with a copy to the company at its registered office. Dated: 18th December, 2021 Name(s) of Applicant(s) 1. Vijay Garg 2. Ashish Garg

IMPORTANT NOTICE. For the convenience of rail passengers, Railways have decided to change the composition of the following Express Trains from the dates shown against each:- REVISED COMPOSITION OF THE TRAINS. Table with columns: Train No. & Name, Existing Composition, Revised Composition, Date w.e.f. (Originating Station). For any kind of information such as detailed Time-Table and stations enroute etc., passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in or NTES App. All norms of the State and Central Government regarding COVID-19 including Social distancing, sanitization etc., may be followed in the trains and at the Railway stations. All other precautions associated with COVID-19 should also be ensured. Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav. NORTHERN RAILWAY. visit us at: www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in. Please join us on. SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE.

Office of the Superintending Engineer, Construction Circle, Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam, Kathgodam, Haldwani. (E-mail : sepeyjal_ntl@yahoo.co.in, Phone :- 05946-298296). E-Tendering/Tender Notice. Letter No. 6099 / 613 / 545 Date 17-12-2021. Name of Work :- Over Head Tank, Pipe Line, FHCT, Pump House, Boundary Wall & Appurtenant works in following Water Supply Schemes. Table with 4 columns: S. No., Name of Scheme, Estimated cost, Period of completion of work. 1 Majhola-2 MVS W/S Scheme Rs. 419.69 Lakh 12 months, 2 Gangi MVS W/S Scheme Rs. 376.84 Lakh 12 months, 3 Gausi Kunwa MVS W/S Scheme Rs. 422.52 Lakh 12 months, 4 Jhankat MVS W/S Scheme Rs. 425.94 Lakh 12 months, 5 Aencheta MVS W/S Scheme Rs. 358.71 Lakh 12 months, 6 Haraiya MVS W/S Scheme Rs. 219.60 Lakh 12 months, 7 Haldwani MVS W/S Scheme Rs. 427.95 Lakh 12 months, 8 Pindari MVS W/S Scheme Rs. 424.60 Lakh 12 months, 9 Chikaghat MVS W/S Scheme Rs. 266.06 Lakh 12 months, 10 Bar ki Dandi MVS W/S Scheme Rs. 375.94 Lakh 12 months, 11 Deyudi MVS W/S Scheme Rs. 250.16 Lakh 12 months, 12 Pandari MVS W/S Scheme Rs. 425.46 Lakh 12 months. Key Dates :- 1 Date of Online Publication 18.12.2021 at 17:00hrs, 2 Document Download : Start Date 20.12.2021 at 10:00hrs, 3 Document Download : End Date 03.01.2022 at 17:00 hrs, 4 Pre Bid Meeting 24.12.2021 at 14:00 hrs, 5 Bid Submission : Start Date 20.12.2021 at 10:00hrs, 6 Bid Submission : End Date 03.01.2022 at 17:00 hrs, 7 Offline submission of documents (Cost of bidding document, Bid Security, Original Affidavits & all the Supporting Documents in support of qualification) 04.01.2022 upto 17:00 hrs, 8 Date of Technical Bid Opening 05.01.2022 at 11:00 hrs, 9 Date of Financial Bid Opening To be announced Later, 10 Details of tender, corrigendum or cancellation etc may be obtained at web site: www.uktenders.gov.in Superintending Engineer

Benchmarks bleed as virus, taper trigger global retreat; log weekly losses

Mumbai: The Sensex plummeted 889 points while the Nifty sank below the 17,000-mark on Friday...

BSE, NSE come out with guidelines on technical glitches for members

New Delhi: Leading stock exchanges BSE and NSE have put out comprehensive guidelines for handling technical glitches at members' end...

Forex reserves decline USD 77 mn to USD 635.828 bn

Mumbai: Declining for the third consecutive week, India's forex reserves dipped by USD 77 million to reach USD 635.828 billion...

Rupee firms up gains to end at 76.06 against dollar

Mumbai: The rupee pared its initial losses to settle marginally higher by 3 paise at 76.06 against the US dollar on Friday...

Gold climbs ₹398; silver zooms ₹1,033 on global cues

New Delhi: Gold price in the national capital on Friday rallied by Rs 398 to Rs 47,762 per 10 gram reflecting gains in precious metal prices...

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY, PRAYAGRAJ E-Tender Notice. Tender Notice No.: T_21-22_DPC23009_NOTICE. Coach MLR Workshop, Jhansi.

सार्वजनिक सूचना. सर्वसाधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि आवंटित भूखण्ड संख्या-700, पॉकेट-एन, सैक्टर-20, क्षेत्रफल-300 वर्गमीटर.

UJVN Limited. H.O.: "UJWAL", Maharani Bagh, G.M.S. Road, Dehradun-248006. Telephone: 0135-2763808.

Sale Notice. The under mentioned Assets will be sold through auction on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS" and "AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" for recovery of dues as per court orders...

कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियन्ता. चतुर्थ वृत्त, लोक निर्माण विभाग, रुद्रपुर (उधम सिंह नगर). राष्ट्रीय प्रतिस्पर्धात्मक अल्पकालीन निविदा (e-tendering).

Office Of Executive Engineer, Maintenance Division, Uttarakhand Jal Sansthan. Lane No-1, Tarun Vihar, Mothrowala Road, Dehradun-248001. NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING e-Tender Notice.

Airtel prepays ₹15,519 cr to DoT to clear all deferred liabilities for 2014 spectrum

New Delhi: Telecom operator Bharti Airtel on Friday said it has paid Rs 15,519 crore to the government towards prepayment of its entire deferred liability pertaining to spectrum acquired in the 2014 auction.

Table with 7 columns: SR NO., BRANCH NAME, CUSTOMER NAME, LOAN AC NO., AMOUNT OUTSTANDING, DATE OF RECALL, GROSS WEIGHT. Includes branches like ASHOK VIHAR, DARYAGANJ, FARIDABAD, LAJPAT NAGAR, KALKAJI, NAZAFGARH, NOIDA, ROHINI, SECTOR 14, SECTOR 16, SHALIMAR BAGH, SWASTHYA VIHAR, TILAK NAGAR, VAISHALI, GHAZIABAD, and VIKASPURI.

TRAVEL BUG

IN A FOREST FULL OF BUTTERFLIES

The area around Ramnagar in Uttarakhand might be known for tigers but NIVI SHRIVASTAVA finds it to be a haven for winged creatures also



Did you know that just like bees, butterflies are excellent indicators of environmental changes? Not only do they play a vital role in an ecosystem by pollinating billions of flowers and trees, but they also warn about the climatic changes and rise in temperature of the earth by their life-cycle patterns. According to experts, there are 1,327 identified species in India but due to data deficiency, one cannot put them in the endangered category. In the forests of Ramnagar, adjoining the Jim Corbett Park known for tigers, one can find myriad varieties of butterflies and moths in the Terai West region of Kumaon, Uttarakhand.

On a balmy winter day, I travelled with some butterfly experts to discover the hidden aspects of eco-tourism in this area. Just 250 km away from Delhi by road, it's convenient to plan a last-minute getaway to explore this offbeat forest region solo or in a group. The best time to visit this quiet town is mid-November to mid-June when the jungle safari is open for the public and the weather is pleasant to explore the forest on foot.

The Ramnagar forest belt, especially the Kyari region, is blessed with a variety of flora and fauna and hence a wide variety of butterflies and birds are found here. As we crossed the semi-arid Khichdi River at Corbett Tiger Reserve to reach our destination, I couldn't help but notice the monkeys perched on lush green pines and a curious herd of deer crossing our path and guiding us into the dense forests. There are many places to stay inside the forest as well as close to it. The adventure lovers can book luxury tents while those who prefer leisure accommodations can stay at resorts and hotels that are operational in the tourist season. Early morning is the best time to find butterflies in their natural habitat near the Kosi River forest area where many local villagers go to catch fish and some mushroom enthusiasts trek to collect the rare fungi varieties that only grow here. During the nature walk, one can hear the wild calls of birds and see butterflies fluttering over wildflowers. On close inspection, one can even see the various stages of a butterfly's lifecycle on the trunk of an old tree. Right from the cluster of eggs to metamorphosis into larva, pupa and adult butterfly — the forest fauna nurtures these colourful creatures in every stage of their life.

As for the myriad butterflies, one can spot the Common Mormon, Oak Leaf, Common Mapwing, Plain Tiger, One-Spot Grass, Walnut Blue as well as various types of Hairstreak butterflies like White-Spotted, Wonderful, Dull Green, Brown Gorgon across the forests. Experts have even reported some rare species of Swallowtails, Five Bar Swallowtails and Redbreasts in this region.

To highlight the attractions and create awareness about butterflies, a month-long festival for tourists and local children was held recently in Ramnagar. Anil Orav, regional director (North), the Ministry of Tourism, informed, "People so far know Jim Corbett Park for tigers but the whole Bhabar belt around the National Park is also very unique. We want more people to enjoy the forest area and the Titli Tyar programme was one such initiative to spread awareness about the beautiful butterflies, moths and rare birds." As part of the awareness for butterflies, Sohail Madan, an ecologist from Bombay Natural History Society, mentioned how chemical poisoning with man-made fertilisers and linear infrastructures (roads and highways, electric power lines, railway lines, canals, pipelines, firebreaks and fences) in cities



and towns are hampering the habitat of butterflies. He says, "Habitat loss is the primary reason for the fall of insect population coupled with the use of chemical poison and anthropogenic pressure. To prevent this, we must plant native host plants, stop the use of chemical poisons and raise our voice against linear infrastructure development."

It is a fact that butterflies need the sun to survive and ecological experts studying their behavioural patterns point out that every specific butterfly sub-species requires a specific temperature to continue its life cycle. Any delay in their annual patterns could be a clear indicator of changes in average temperatures, leading to the inference of climate change. "Although, scientifically inconclusive, a comprehensive study of butterflies may lead us to decipher the subtle evolution of nature and climate around us," mentioned Saurav Bhattacharya, founder member of Tyar Foundation. His non-profit organisation hosted the Titli Tyar festival centred around butterflies to impact the wildlife tourism industry through tourists and the local community. "Did you know that moths and butterflies are the same species? And that one comes

out with the sun and the other in the darkness of the night. All creatures are created equal and were supposed to have an equal share of the environment. With a higher intellect, humans have evolved into supreme beings with the biggest footprint. However, micro-fauna such as the amazing butterflies have an equally significant role to play in the scheme of nature. With a multi-pronged life cycle, butterflies are involved in many crucial aspects of ecology. From feeding on the host plants as a caterpillar to being the high protein nutrition of birds and reptiles, from helping floral pollination to being indi-

cators of a diverse and healthy habitat, this species is an absolute miracle in our sacred environment," informed Bhattacharya as he guided us through the butterfly trail.

After an informative butterfly exploration, one can also visit the untouched Corbett falls and have a little picnic in the jungle with proper precautions. This pristine waterfall is located 25 km away from Ramnagar and is surrounded by teak wood forest. After reaching the parking area near the forest, you will have to trek 1.5km up to get there but the walk is worth remembering.

— The writer is a freelance journalist who reports on responsible travel and hospitality trends

LIVING A FAMILY-ENTERTAINER

AMOL PARASHAR, SMRITI KALRA, and KEVIN DAVE reveal that they had a lot of fun during the shoot of their recent satirical and witty film, *Cash*, in a heart-to-heart with KHUSHBU KIRTI

With the recent release of the film *Cash*, my mind was transported to 2016 when we had queued up in long lines in front of ATMs under scorching heat. Many might say it was a terrible time, the remaining might recall it as a petulant move by the government. But as director Rishabh Seth mentioned, the filmmakers or the actors are not here to pass judgement on it or their stance on it, even today, remains very neutral. They want to take people back to that time and remind them that we all got past this together. And when you go back in time — even if you thought that it was dark time then — you can always, in retrospect, laugh it off. The idea behind the film was to use collective consciousness and evoke laughter instead of pain.

Cash, directed by Rishabh Seth and produced by Vishesh Bhatt, stars Amol Parashar, Smriti Kalra, Swanand Kirkire, Kevin Dave, and Gulshan Grover. The light-hearted dramedy, that centers around the period of demonetisation and rising entrepreneurship in India, started streaming on Disney+Hotstar.

Read on for excerpts from a heart-to-heart with the young actors, Smriti, Amol and Kevin:

Tell us a bit about your characters.

You're a street smart entrepreneur (Armaan), Amol. Let's start with you.

AP: Yes! (all pumped up) Armaan Gulati is a street-smart entrepreneur and that kinda encapsulates his whole personality because he's a hustler and keeps brimming with new ideas. He is always thinking and wants to become a wealthy person like Elon Musk, wants to succeed in life. His wild dream is to create a successful start-up. Demonetisation is the trigger of a new idea because a lot of businesses failed at the time and he realised he

could take advantage of their failure. He decided to help people convert their money. Armaan is joined by Neha and Soda to culminate his plans.

They try various ways — funny and bizarre — to convert this money and that was what might've happened at the same. People to desperate to save their black money. So, you know, the guy is a bit of an opportunist, in a way. I'm saying this because his heart is clean, even if his ideas are twisted.

Smriti, we've loved the character of Suvreen Guggal you've played before. How was this new avatar you donned?

SK: Thank you! (cheerful) Since you just mentioned Suvreen, Neha — the character that I play in the film — is 180° opposite (laughs). So, Neha is sassy, she's feisty, she's independent, confident and extremely *jugaadu*. She is a natural fixer and someone who can double-cross you for her own good. So, Armaan and Soda approach Neha and while Armaan is smart and has a lot of ideas, Neha has tons of contacts up her sleeve. And, so, they're the perfect fit — for a start-up.

She's someone you would want on your team, because she's so *jugaadu*, she'll find one way or another to do her job. In a way, she orchestrates things so that is Neha, something I'm completely not, something I've completely never been, and a very, very different character that I've played and have thoroughly enjoyed.

KD: So, I'm playing Soda in the film, who is Armaan's best friend and is, thus, always stuck with him. In the name of the said friendship, poor Soda always ends up in trouble as Armaan's accomplice (chuckles). First, he denies all of Armaan's ideas but eventually gives in. Soda is loyal, however, Armaan and Soda are poles apart. Like Amol said, Armaan is a



hustler, while Soda is a coward. He finds problems in everything, while Armaan finds opportunities in the same. Smriti's character sort-of balances the two, you know. So, the trio sets on this new endeavour.

We know Cash is a satirical take on a very serious event, how do you think the drama and comedy mingle into the seriousness of it?

AP: Kevin had rightfully said it in the last interview, 'tragedy mei bhi comedy hoti hai'. At that time, none of us would've wanted to have a funny take on this. But, now, from a distance once you've crossed the event, you can laugh about even the bitter parts. Now that it is in the past, that is an advantage we have, people now remember it as a memory. We're now laughing on how these people that are trying to convert their money in all the stupid and bizarre ways. We're not laughing at people that have probably faced real misery. These are people — the people who had black money on them and were running from here to there to somehow save themselves — we cannot have sympathy with. We would sympathise with other people who, in the process of because of your money laundering, had to face difficulties.

SK: You know, the script is so well-written by Arsh Bora, the writer, and Rishabh Seth, the director, that I was just smiling all through, so the comedy, drama and satire were well-blended, served to us on a plate. It's a fast-paced situational comedy, based on the chaos created in the situation. Our job was, thus, made easier. We just had to imbibe the script and live the characters.

What do you feel about the shift from home viewing to OTT? Has the shift given an impetus to stories based on real events?

AP: Um, I believe we used to have stories from real events earlier, too. OTT has a wider audience and so, yes, people watch this stuff there. SK: The thing is that the content on OTT platforms is at the tip of your fingers, you're empowered to pause/play. AP: Yes, and there's more responsibility in OTT, to write better. Because in theatres, you'd buy a ticket, would be entitled to stay because you've paid so much for one film. Here, OTT is cheaper and you have the liberty to watch so much more content. KD: And there is luxury of having this audience in OTT, but also there's the responsibility of entertaining them also. There are so many options and that puts pressure, of a good kind, on the stories you choose and tell. SK: Which is why films and television will up their game because of healthy competition. Every genre has expanded, one of which is real-life based content. People are experimenting on this medium. (pauses and adds) Which is good!

What was the most exciting part of the film, Smriti?

SK: It's my first film, man! (pumped up) I'm so excited.

I went for different paths in life — I was a science student and then some time later, an RJ before stumbling upon acting. I'm grateful to the director for having faith in me.

What is one thing that this thing (portraying social reality) has taught you, Kevin?

KD: We should not hoard black money... (everyone breaks into laughter). (He chuckles and continues) As actors? We learnt what limits people can go to, to save themselves, to get out of trouble when, clearly, they are in the wrong.

What do you feel about the shift from home viewing to OTT? Has the shift given an impetus to stories based on real events?

SK: I think, I learnt the importance of contacts, something that I don't have. Also, that there's always a way out, you know.

You recently worked in Sardar Udham Singh, and the genres are poles apart. How was the experience?

AP: Exactly, opposite genre from

Udham Singh which was a very serious film. *Cash* was fast-paced comedy that I fully enjoyed. To be open to other's ideas of funny, as an actor, there are four-five ways of approaching the same scene and being funny and the greed was that we wanted to shoot everything. So, a lot of sweat and tears.

I came out a different human being. I had fun, I worked with lovely people and got to make a fun film.



The poster boy of content cinema, Ayushmann Khurrana, is hugely keen to play India's golden boy at the Olympics, Neeraj Chopra, in case a biopic is made on him.

Khurrana, who is riding on tremendously positive reviews and word of mouth for his recent release *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui* in which he is tackling the issue of inclusivity of the transgender community, says, "I'm constantly inspired by real people who do extraordinary things. Right now, I'm hugely inspired by Neeraj Chopra and what this youth icon has achieved on the world stage and made our nation incredibly proud."

Khurrana is keen to play Chopra in case he chooses to not play himself and act in his biopic. Khurrana adds, "The resolve and the nerves of steel that he showcased at the Olympics to a win gold for India needs to be saluted. I would love to play him in a biopic if it's

India's golden boy

Bollywood star AYUSHMANN KHURRANA would love to play NEERAJ CHOPRA if the latter chooses to not play himself in his biopic. By TEAM VIVA



'THE RESOLVE AND NERVES OF STEEL THAT HE SHOWCASED AT THE OLYMPICS TO WIN GOLD FOR INDIA NEEDS TO BE SALUTED. I WOULD LOVE TO PLAY HIM IN A BIOPIIC MADE IN NEAR FUTURE'

made in the near future and if Neeraj chooses to not play himself on screen. Such achievements need to be celebrated and the life stories of such heroes need to be told to people across the country."

In his debut at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, Chopra won the gold medal in javelin throw. As of 2021, he is one of only two Indians to have won an individual Olympic gold medal (the other being Abhinav Bindra), as well as the youngest-ever Indian Olympic gold medalist in an individual event and the only one to have won gold in his Olympic debut.

Living the avatar

Actor AVINASH WADHAWAN has changed his body language, attire and attitude to get into the skin of his character in *Aggar Tum Na Hote*. By TEAM VIVA

Zee TV recently launched a fresh Zromantic drama, *Aggar Tum Na Hote*, which showcases the extent to which a nurse goes to treat her patient. The story revolves around Niyati Mishra — a young, hard-working, and dedicated nurse and Abhimanyu Pandey who is a charming, rich young man dealing with mental instability. While the show has a unique storyline, it is Abhimanyu and Niyati's camaraderie that has become the talk of the town. While the leads Simaran Kaur and Himanshu Soni have made an impression on the audience, one such character who has mesmerised the audience with his impactful performance is Avinash Wadhawan. Wadhawan has been a part of Zee TV's *Piyaa Albela* before and now he is making a comeback on television after almost three years as Gajendra Pandey in the show.

Wadhawan plays the pivotal role of Abhimanyu's father, who is a very influential, rich, and suave power broker based in Uttar Pradesh. He is a very strong and authoritative man and there is no task that he cannot complete once he sets his mind to. He loves his family too much and would do anything to keep them together. His character has a dark side, but as his story unfolds, we get to know how he is so caring towards his family. His relationship with his son has a lot of friction but he has a heart of gold for the people in need. He has even

RULING OTT SPACE

TEAM VIVA picks brave, untold and clutter-breaking films that dominated 2021

Nothing about the entertainment industry was predictable or cliched in 2021 as filmmakers and storytellers moved beyond tired narratives to explore new milieus, themes and issues. Here are some of our favourites that ruled the OTT space this year:

200 HALLO HO

This Sarthak Dasgupta directorial and Yoodlee production bravely mainstreamed a story about caste-based atrocities, the denial of justice and the inevitable retribution that follows when hundreds of Dalit survivors strike a blow to avenge the systematic suppression of their pain and violation. Inspired by true events, this ZEE5 original slow burns to reach a moment of cathartic explosion when 200 women take law into their own hands to respond to centuries of erasure. Starring Amol Parashar, Rinku Rajguru, Barun Sobti and others, the film equated Dalit identity with power and not just victimhood and reminded us why we must tell and hear more such stories.

JAI BHIM

Palekar, Rinku Rajguru, Barun Sobti and others, the film equated Dalit identity with power and not just victimhood and reminded us why we must tell and hear more such stories.

SHERNI

Sherni is yet another example of how director Amit V Masurkar is pushing the thematic limits of Hindi cinema. Produced by T-Series and Abundantia Entertainment, *Sherni* had a solid female lead in Vidya Balan who played an upright and conscientious Forest Service officer caught in the corruption and inertia of a cruel and incompetent system. Sharat Saxena, Vijay Raaz, Ila Arun, Brijendra Kala, Neeraj Kabi and Mukul Chaddha played supporting roles. The film highlighted little known aspects of animal and human conflict and how habitat destruction is pushing wildlife on the margins of forests and into a spiral of extinction.

and then goes missing from police custody. What follows next is wrenching and eye-opening. *Jai Bhim* also became the first Indian film to top the IMDb ratings.

SHERSHAAH

Vicky Kaushal continues to stun with his ability to become every character he gets to play and *Sardar Udham* is no exception. This historical drama helmed by Shoojit Sircar, and produced by Rising Sun Films in collaboration with Kino Works, gives Kaushal another chance to display his depth and histrionic range as an actor as he plays the titular character of an iconic freedom fighter who assassinated Michael O'Dwyer in London to avenge the 1919 Jallianwala Bagh massacre. The film is a far cry from hurried entertainers and takes viewers on an intense journey to meet the man who tried to right a historic wrong.

A war film without jingoism seems like an anomaly but this Dharma and Kaash Entertainment production pulled this off while paying a passionate tribute to Param Vir Chakra-awardee Captain Vikram Batra. Directed by Vishnuvardhan, the film showed us how an idealistic young man who loved life as much as his country, made the ultimate sacrifice during the Kargil war. It also celebrated his eternal love story with a girl who chose to celebrate his memories and his life even after losing him tragically. Sidharth

THE RESOLVE AND NERVES OF STEEL THAT HE SHOWCASED AT THE OLYMPICS TO WIN GOLD FOR INDIA NEEDS TO BE SALUTED. I WOULD LOVE TO PLAY HIM IN A BIOPIIC MADE IN NEAR FUTURE'



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