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FEAR PULLS YOU BACK: KRITI SANON 10 VIVACITY

Pak agrees to keep LoC calm

India, Pak DGMOs say 2 armies will honour 2003 ceasefire pact; but it doesn't restrict Indian forces from carrying out anti-terrorist, anti-infiltration ops in J&K

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a major step to reduce tension at the Line of Control (LoC), India and Pakistan on Thursday decided to strictly adhere to a ceasefire for "mutually beneficial and sustainable peace." The agreement arrived at between the Director Generals of Military Operations (DGMOs) on Thursday was aimed at avoiding civilian casualties on either side during firing.

However, the ceasefire, which came into force from midnight of February 24-25, will not restrict the Indian security forces from carrying out anti-terrorist and anti-infiltration operations in Jammu & Kashmir, it was clarified here.

Agreeing to adhere to the ceasefire announced by then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 2003, a joint statement issued by both the countries said the two armies will observe all agreements on ceasefire along the 750-km long LoC and other sectors, according to a joint statement issued on Thursday.

The decision was taken during talks between India DGMO Lt General PS Sangha and his Pakistani counterpart Major General Nauman Zakaria on the hotline.

The two DGMOs held dis-



cussions and reviewed the situation along the LoC in a "free, frank and cordial atmosphere," the statement said.

It added that in the interest of achieving mutually beneficial and sustainable peace along the borders, the two DGMOs agreed to address each other's core issues and concerns which have propensity to disturb peace and lead to violence.

Both sides agreed for strict observance of all agreements, understandings and ceasefire along the LoC and all other sectors with effect from midnight 24/25 February 2021.

Both sides reiterated that existing mechanisms of hotline contact and border flag meetings will be utilised to resolve any unforeseen situation or

misunderstanding. Incidentally, the two armies in 2018 had also agreed to follow the 2003 guidelines. However, situation remained volatile at the LoC.

Sources said the latest pact came about after rounds of back channel talks between the two countries over the last few months, adding National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval held talks in this regard with Prime Minister Imran Khan's special assistant Moed W Yusuf.

Pakistan Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa, the most powerful figure there to shape the national policies, earlier this month also favoured talks and said it is time to extend a hand of peace in all directions.

In Pakistan, Army

spokesperson Major General Babar Iftikhar said regarding the joint statement that "there have been contacts between India and Pakistan on a hotline level since 1987. Frequently, the DGMOs of both countries stay in contact through this established mechanism."

According to media report from there, he also said from 2014 there was a spike in ceasefire violations along the LoC. "Both the DGMOs have agreed that the existing 2003 understanding should be implemented in letter and spirit," he added.

Dawn newspaper said the latest development is seen as a thaw after years of tension between the two nuclear-armed neighbours. Both Prime Minister Imran Khan and Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa recently offered India to resolve all issues through dialogue.

Ties between India and Pakistan nosedived after a terror attack on the Pathankot Air Force base in 2016 by terror groups based in the neighbouring country. Subsequent attacks, including one on the Indian Army camp in Uri, deteriorated the relationship.

The relationship dipped further after IAF carried out air strikes against a Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) terrorist training camp in Balakot on

February 26, 2019 in response to the Pulwama terror attack in which 40 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) jawans were killed on February 15 the same year.

The ties between the two countries worsened after India in 2019 announced abrogation of Article 370 giving special status to Jammu & Kashmir and divided the State into two Union Territories.

There were 5,133 ceasefire violations last year in which 22 civilians were killed and 71 injured on the Indian side. Moreover, 24 security personnel were also killed in the firing while 126 were wounded. Moreover, nearly 300 incidents of ceasefire violation were recorded till January end this year.

In a written response to a question in the Lok Sabha earlier this month, Union Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy said a total of 10,752 cases of ceasefire violations have taken place along India's border with Pakistan in the last three years, in which 72 security personnel and 70 civilians were killed.

He said 364 security personnel and 341 civilians were injured in cross-border firings along the International Border and the LoC in Jammu & Kashmir in 2018, 2019 and 2020.

Centre frames rules for OTT, social media apps

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tightening its grip on unregulated media, the Government on Thursday announced a set of stringent regulations for social media firm like Facebook and Twitter as well as OTT players such as Netflix, requiring them to remove any content flagged by authorities within 36 hours and setting up a complaint redressal mechanism with an officer being based in the country.

The guidelines will also apply to popular mobile apps like WhatsApp and Telegram. The Government also announced guidelines for news portals operating from India, asking them to keep the rules and norms applicable to print and TV channel codes.

This is the first time such rules have been framed for digital and online media operating within the country's jurisdiction. IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad addressing media with I&B Minister Prakash Javadekar said concerns have been raised over rampant abuse of social media platforms and spread of fake news. To fix the fake ID users, the guidelines also insisted that social media platforms must verify the users through mobile phone firms.

"Social media companies are welcome to do business in India, and empower Indians...We welcome criti-



Union Minister of Law and Justice Ravi Shankar Prasad addresses a press conference as Union Minister for Environment Prakash Javadekar looks on in New Delhi on Thursday

cism and dissent... But it is important that users of social media are given a proper forum for the resolution of their grievances in a time-bound manner," Prasad said.

Prasad said intermediaries will fall into two categories — social media intermediary and significant social media intermediary. This distinction is based on the number of users on the social media platform, and the Government will soon notify the threshold of the user base that will distinguish the two. The rules require the "significant" social media intermediaries to follow additional due diligence including the appointment of chief compliance officer, a nodal contact person and a resident grievance officer. All the three officials will have to be resident-citizens of India.

The guidelines also make it mandatory for platforms such

as Twitter and WhatsApp to identify the originator of a message that authorities consider to be anti-national and against the security and sovereignty of the country. The rules about digital media and OTT focus more on in-house and self-regulation mechanism whereby a robust grievance redressal mechanism has been provided while upholding journalistic and creative freedom.

As per the guidelines, all social media, OTT platforms and news portals must have a resident Indian citizen grievance officer to handle the complaints. He must make a decision in 15 days and must maintain monthly data of such complaints. Social media and OTT firms also must have resident Indian citizen compliance officer and nodal officer, who will be responsible in responding to the Government agencies.

UK court says Nirav has a case to answer in India

PNS ■ LONDON/NEW DELHI

The UK's Westminster Magistrates' Court on Thursday ruled that diamond merchant and prime accused in the PNB credit fraud case Nirav Modi has a case to answer before Indian courts. With the UK court now clearing the legal pathway for Modi's extradition, the judgment will now need ratification of British Home Secretary Priti Patel for sending the fugitive back to India.

Reacting to the Westminster Magistrates' Court ruling, the CBI said the British court has accepted the contention of the Centre to extradite him.

"The UK court delivered the verdict wherein it held that the evidence against Nirav Modi is prima facie sufficient to order his extradition to India to face the charges. The (UK) court also upheld the assurances of the Government of India and rejected the submissions of defence regarding human rights violations, fair trial and prison conditions.

Rejecting the arguments of



defence, the UK court decided to send his case to the Secretary of the State, the UK for final decision," the CBI said in a statement.

India is a designated Part 2 country under the Extradition Act 2003 and the UK's Cabinet Minister has the authority to order the requested person's extradition after considering a number of further issues.

Under the Act, the Secretary of State must consider the possibility of imposition of the death penalty, in which case extradition cannot be ordered; the rule of specialty, which prohibits a person being dealt with in the request-

ing state for matters other than those referenced in the extradition request; and whether or not the person was in the UK following extradition from another state, in which case that state's permission must be obtained before extraditing to a third state.

If these factors do not apply, the Minister must order extradition within two months of the day on which the District Judge referred his decision to the office of Secretary of State, in this case by the end of April.

The Home Secretary's order rarely goes against the court's conclusions, as she has to consider only these provisions under the Act which cannot apply as the court has already junked those claims of the defendant.

However, the Westminster's court has granted Modi a window of appeal in the High Court and has up to 14 days to make that application after the Home Secretary makes her decision known. Any appeal, if granted, will be heard at the Administrative Division of the High Court in London.

MP Congress draws flak from within party for inducting Mahasabha leader

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh Congress is attracting criticism from within the party and elsewhere for inducting a Hindu Mahasabha leader who had made a temple of Mahatma Gandhi assassin Nathuram Godse in Gwalior.

The leader Babul Chaurasia is affiliated to Hindu Mahasabha, parental organisation of Godse, in Gwalior, and had won as a corporator in Gwalior. The central Indian state is due to witness civic polls in couple of months and the grand old party is busy bolstering ground base after losing power in the state.

Chaurasia joined Congress party in the presence of MPCC chief Kamal Nath and was accompanied by Congress MLA from Gwalior Pravin Pathak.

Former PCC chief Arun Yadav in his tweet criticised the induction of Chaurasia in Congress, saying "Bapu Hum Sharminda Hain."

However, as a seasoned politician, Chaurasia was quick to alter political affinity after joining Congress. He claimed that he was an old

Former PCC chief Arun Yadav in his tweet criticised the induction of Chaurasia in Congress, saying "Bapu Hum Sharminda Hain."

Mahasabha ideology, claimed Chaurasia.

Notably, Congress was viciously attacking BJP government over Hindu Mahasabha activities, mostly in Gwalior, where the radical outfit tried installing Godse temple and kept worshipping him for the past few years. Recently the Mahasabha had opened Godse Gyanshala, a library dedicated to Godse's life and other great personalities. It was closed down by Shivraj government after Congress party outcry.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Narottam Mishra on Thursday slammed Congress party for double standards.

"Godse ka Pujari- Ab Congress ki Savari," said Mishra adding this exposes the Congress party characteristic. "Gandhi for them are only Rajiv, Sonia and Rahul Gandhi. People like Mahatma Gandhi, Bhimrao Ambedkar and Sardar Patel are limited for them for vote bank, added the minister. He claimed that none from the Gandhi family is yet to visit Statue of Unity which is dedicated to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

Govt to protect interest of State's Basmati growing farmers: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said that efforts are being made to attract maximum investment in Madhya Pradesh. Emphasis is being laid on the establishment of food processing units in particular.

The state government is making continuous efforts to protect and promote the interests of Basmati growing farmers of the state.

Court proceedings for GI tag registration of Basmati paddy in the state is in progress. Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar has also been requested in this connection.

Chief Minister Chouhan stated this during a meeting with Sulaiman Al Rumaith of United Farms Investment Company, Saudi Arabia and Chairman of L.T. Foods Limited Group, VK Arora.

The industrialists discussed the possibility of investment in food and animal feed.

Chouhan said that investment is welcome in all sectors

in Madhya Pradesh.

The momentum that the local economy gets from investment in any sector will also help in building an Atmanirbhar Madhya Pradesh.

Efforts are being made for the sale and export of rice, wheat and vegetables. Kodokutki in the road map of Atmanirbhar Madhya Pradesh. Action plans are being implemented to sell local products of tribal areas in domestic and foreign markets.

The Chief Minister said that efforts have been initiated in Madhya Pradesh to bring popular products of the districts to the world market under 'Ek Zila-Ek Utpad'.

Along with banana of Burhanpur and garlic of Mandasaur, millet production is being promoted in some districts of the state.

Principal Secretary Industrial Policy and Investment Promotion Sanjay Shukla and Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister Manish Rastogi were present during the meeting.

CAPSULE

CAR WITH EXPLOSIVES FOUND NEAR ANTILIA

Mumbai: A suspicious vehicle with gelatin, an explosive material, inside was found parked near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's house in Mumbai on Thursday evening.

KEJRIWAL'S SECURITY NOT REDUCED: MHA

New Delhi: A day before Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's roadshow in Gujarat's Surat, sources in the AAP Government alleged on Thursday that his security cover has been scaled down, a charge denied by the Union Home Ministry and the Delhi Police.

COVID-19 IN MADHYA PRADESH

Dists	Total Cases	Fresh Cases
Bhopal	43873	70
Indore	59234	133
Gwalior	16509	2

INS asks Google to raise publisher share in ad revenue to 85%

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Newspaper Society (INS), which represents print media houses, on Thursday asked Google to increase the publisher share of advertising revenue to 85 per cent.

It also asked the technology giant to ensure more transparency in the revenue reports provided to publishers.

In a letter to Google India, INS President L Adimoolam said publishers are facing a "very opaque advertising system", as they are unable to get details of Google's advertising value chain.

INS has asked Google to compensate the Indian newspapers "comprehensively" for using contents published by them and to share its advertising revenues properly.

"The Society insisted that Google should increase the publisher share of advertising revenue to 85 per cent, and also ensure more transparency in the revenue reports provided to publishers by Google," said INS in a statement.

Content generated and published by newspapers at the considerable expense is proprietary, said INS while pointing out that it is this credible content that has given Google the authenticity in India ever since its inception.

"It has demanded Google should pay for news generated by the newspapers which employ thousands of journalists on the ground, at considerable expense, for gathering and verifying information, it said.

Ashwin fastest Indian to take 400 Test wickets

India win 3rd Test against England, inch closer to WTC final

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Ravichandran Ashwin on Thursday became only the fourth Indian and sixth spinner in the world to take 400 Test wickets, a feat which was nothing short of a "fairytale" for the seasoned pro who was called a "modern day legend" by skipper Virat Kohli.

Ashwin reached the landmark in the day-night third Test against England here when he dismissed Jofra Archer in England's second innings as India won the 3rd Test and inched closer to WTC final. Left-arm spinner Axar Patel created an illusion of turn with 11 straighter deliveries that put India on the brink of the World Test Championship final with a 10-wicket demolition of



Indian bowler R Ashwin celebrates the dismissal of England's Jack Leach with his team on the second day of the 3rd cricket test match between India and England at Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Thursday

England inside two days in the day-night third Test here on Thursday. The result was their lowest total against India — 81 all out in 30.4 overs leaving the hosts with a target of 49 which they achieved with minimum fuss taking a 2-1 lead in the four-match series. The visitors were also knocked out of contention from the WTC final.

Ashwin ended the match with seven scalps, which took his overall tally to 401. The 34-year-old off-spinner, playing in his 77th Test, is the 16th bowler in the world to have taken 400 Test wickets.

"It feels amazing actually (to reach 400 Test wickets). The entire stadium stood up and clapped for me. Pleased it hap-

pened in the winning cause. I can't really get a grip of what has happened in the last 2-3 months. It has been a dreamy run and a fairytale," Ashwin, who took seven wickets in the match to tally 431 victims from 77 Tests, said.

Skipper Kohli was effusive in his praise, saying, "I think we need to stand up and take notice of what Ashwin has done. In Tests, he is a modern day legend."

Ashwin credited his self-belief for reaching where he has. "It has been all about self belief. At the start of the Australian tour, I didn't think I would be starting, but then (Ravindra) Jadeja broke down and it might have had to happen," said Ashwin, who played a big role in India's historic Test series win last month.

Former captain Anil Kumble (619), Kapil Dev, (434), and Harbhajan Singh (417) are the other Indians who have 400 Test wickets to their cred-

it. Ashwin also became the second fastest to reach the milestone after Sri Lankan great Muttiah Muralitharan, who made it in his 72nd Test.

The veteran came into the match six short of the landmark and took three England wickets in the first innings.

Talking about the match, he said, "We were worried after getting bowled out for 145, didn't think we didn't have many runs on the board. But we then bowled beautifully on a wicket assisting us. "I don't know if I'm ageing, but it's incredibly hard to watch the game. To come back (after losing first Test) and win it is even more special."

Asked this was his best as a bowler, Ashwin said, "In 2015-16 everyone asked me (if I'm bowling at my best), the same in 2016-17. One thing is sure I've always wanted to improve. I won't be surprised if I improve further in the future."

ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT

State to achieve self-reliance in power: CM

Developing renewable, non-renewable energy sectors

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that work is being done at a rapid pace in Madhya Pradesh to fulfill Prime Minister Narendra Modi's dream of self-reliant India. Renewable and non-conventional energy sectors are being developed to achieve self-reliance in the energy sector. In the last 9 years, there has

been a ten-fold growth in the renewable energy sector in the state. Madhya Pradesh is now playing a leadership role in this field. In the year 2012, the renewable energy capacity of the state was 491 MW, which has now increased to 5,042 MW.

Chouhan has said that Madhya Pradesh is not only achieving self-reliance in energy sector due to the works being done in the field of renewable energy in the state, but the work is also helpful in the protection of the environment. In this regard, the works being done in the state will prevent the emission of 1.41 crore tonnes of carbon dioxide every year. This is equivalent to



planting about 43 crore trees.

The ultra mega solar project at Rewa has started generating power at its full capacity. It is one of the world's largest solar projects. It is generating 750 MW of electricity daily. Significantly, the power generated by it is also being given to the Delhi Metro apart from the

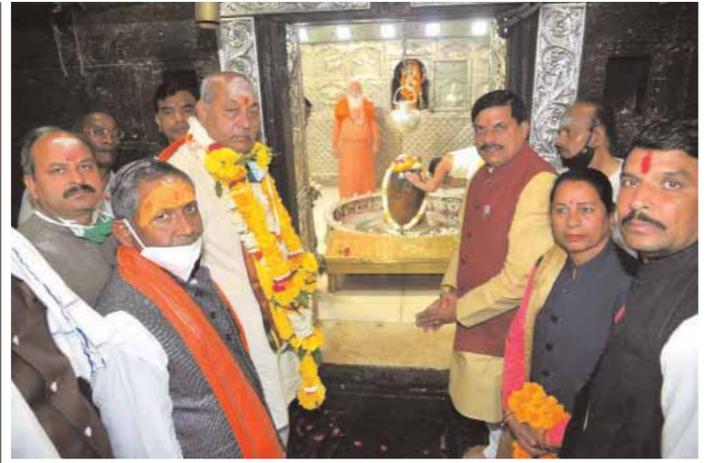
to the power distribution companies of the state.

A unique solar floating project is being set up on the Narmada River at Omkareshwar. For this, the survey has been started by the World Bank. It will cost 3,000 crore rupees and the power generation capacity will be 600 MW. The scheme has also been awarded the World Bank President Award.

In Madhya Pradesh, solar pumps are being provided to farmers at subsidized rates for irrigation, which has resulted in reducing the cost of irrigation significantly. Under the Atmanirbhar Madhya Pradesh roadmap 2023, 45,000 solar

pumps will be installed in the fields of farmers. So far, 22,673 solar pumps have been installed. Such farmers are also benefitting from solar pump scheme, whose fields are not getting electricity supply. Farmers are not only getting solar power for their own use but can also sell electricity to the power companies.

Solar parks are being developed in the Neemuch, Shajapur, Agar, Morena, Chhatarpur and Sagar districts of the state under the Atmanirbhar Madhya Pradesh roadmap. About 18,000 crore rupees will be spent on them and their power generation capacity will be 4,500 MW.



Speaker of the Madhya Pradesh State Assembly Girish Gautam offers prayers at the historical Mahakaleshwar temple in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh on Thursday. Pioneer photo

If Cong wins, EVM is good, when it loses, it becomes faulty: BJP

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

State president of BJP and SMP Vishnudutt Sharma said that whenever Congress wins, EVM is good and if it loses it becomes faulty.

While interacting with media persons in Rewa on Thursday he said the kind of victory that BJP achieved in municipal elections of Gujarat has rattled Digvijay Singh who has again started harping the same string on using ballot paper for civic body elections in the state.

The truth is that the Congress has already started being afraid of defeat. In

Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan, when the Congress wins the election and the Congress government is formed, the EVM becomes good. But when they start losing, the Congress people start blaming faulty EVMs to find an excuse and keep themselves in the focus.

He said that we have won all the municipal corporations in the Gujarat Municipal Corporation elections as well as 84 percent seats have been won by the Bharatiya Janata Party, which is a record. In the last municipal elections in Gujarat, Congress had won 30 percent seats, but this time it

has reached 10 percent.

Public will prepare election manifesto as it will be prepared by public opinion, not by the BJP, but by the thoughts of the people. Taking feedback from the public, what Rewa's enlightened people want for development will be included in the party's manifesto. He said that the party's manifesto for all urban bodies will be of public.

He said that the Prime Minister also says that our booth worker is the most important and it is not just for saying. Our effort is to go to the booth president's house and talk to him.

I have to protect interest of each House member: Speaker

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Speaker of State Assembly Girish Gautam has said that he has got the responsibility of protection, the interests and principles of each member of the Assembly and he would handle it with utmost sincerity.

Gautam hoped that he will get the support of all members of the ruling and opposition parties, and it will be emphasized that the House should reflect on matters related to serious concerns and

public interests.

Speaker was talking to media persons here on Thursday in the State Assembly.

Gautam said that the interests or rights of members are not their own, but the interests of the people of the area which he represents. In such a situation, the protection of the interests of each member indirectly means the protection of the interests of the public.

New legislators need innovation in the training of the meeting. In the training pro-

vided to the MLAs, it is important to pay attention to the theoretical as well as the practical side. He said that it was his parliamentary experience that the starred question is not only the head of the Legislative Assembly, but also the other modes through which the members can raise their problems faced in the field and get it resolved. That is why new members need to be trained on how much use of the proceedings of the House will be required for the welfare of their constituency.

IGRMS exhibits Manipuri Boys' Dormitory 'Rahanki'



STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Under the 37th series of its online exhibition by Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, on Thursday presented the "Rahanki" the Boy's Dormitory of the Maram Naga Tribe of Manipur situated in the Tribal Habitat open air exhibition of Manav Sangrahalaya has been presented online with its basic information and photographs and videos.

About this exhibition, Praveen Kumar Mishra, Director, IGRMS said that the Maram Naga is largely distributed in the Senapati District of Manipur. According to the 2001 census their population in the state was 37340 (Manorama Yearbook 2012). Out of the many villages inhabited by the Maram tribe, the Willong Khullen village is considered to be the second-largest village. Traditionally, each village was ruled by their respective chieftains and the post of a village chief was purely hereditary and is chosen by the rule of primogeniture i.e. the eldest son successively inherits the post of the father. In the olden days, taxes were levied to the revered chief in the form of Mpak Pai (shawl), paddy, etc. but these systems are no more in practice today. Thus the present-day chief is just a nominal head of

the village but the village council/ elders decide whom to give tax.

However, as a traditional chief, he still holds authority over religious rights and it is under his permission that the traditional religious observances commenced.

About the Rahanki, Surya Kumar Pandey, Assistant Keeper told that - The Willong Khullen village is approximately 116 northwest of Imphal and it is reached via NH 39 turning to the west from the Maram Khullen Lamkhai (Junction). The Barak River meanders the route on its northwesterly and provides a breathtaking view of its scenic river basin.

The village is located spur of a hill giving an enchanting view of the village from a distance. It is said that the name of the village is derived from an indigenous flowering tree called Maguilongi which were abundantly available on the hill slopes around the village. Later, it became connoted with a corrupt word as Uilong or Willong. The village is well known for its large assemblage of more than a hundred megalithic monuments in the village land. It serves as an important center for traditional sport, and also links with the institutional practices of the boy's dormitory.



BJP district President Sumit Pachouri addresses a meeting of eminent citizens called to invite the suggestions for BJP Sankalp Patra ahead of the local bodies elections in Bhopal on Thursday. Pioneer photo

Movie on civilians' role during war 'Citizen's Air Force' screened at Shaurya Smarak

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A movie depicting the bravery and contribution of common people during wars 'Citizen's Air Force' was screened at Shaurya Smarak on Thursday. The movie was screened at the open air auditorium of Shaurya Smarak under the regular series of film screenings.

It is to be noted that every day movies based on the bravery of the Indian army, air force, navy and police is being screened at Shaurya Smarak. The regular film screening is being organised as a tribute to

their contributions and their sacrifices.

The movie 'Citizen's Air Force' was screened here on Tuesday. The movie focuses on the contributions of civilians during wars. Indian Air Force gives an opportunity to the civilians to fulfill their dreams of flying in the sky.

Though, other than air force no one can best maintain security on land, while keeping a watch from the sky, but, the Indian Air Force welcomes young and enthusiastic people to join it.

This entire process is Citizens Air Force and the

youth who have ever dreamt of joining air force they get a golden opportunity to join it. The movie is directed by KL for the Indian Films Division. The movie showcases all about Citizens Air Force.

At the Indian Air Force the youth are selected as the second defense line, the citizens are selected and trained on the basis of merit. What is the procedure, how can a disciplined civil servant also provide non-routine service of Air Force, its military movie 'Citizens Air Force' shown in the bar. Besides, a book is also written over the Citizens Air Force.

MPSFA player to represent country in World Cup in Russia

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Khushi Dabhade, a talented player of Madhya Pradesh State Fencing Academy, will represent the Indian team in the World Cup to be held in Kazan, Russia.

The World Cup will be held from March 19 to 23. Khushi Dabhade has been selected for the World Cup on the basis of a ranking by the

Fencing Association of India for his outstanding performance in national fencing competitions.

State Sports and Youth Welfare Minister Yashodhara Rajee Scindia congratulated Khushi Dabhade on her selection. She gave her good wishes by encouraging Khushi to bring the country a medal by performing excellently in the World Cup. She said that the

sports daughters of the state are showing great talent in national and international competitions and are flaunting the glory of Madhya Pradesh. We are proud of our female players.

Khushi Dabhade's father is an OT attendant in a private hospital in Bhopal and lives in the slum area. He said that there was a wave of happiness in the whole family when the daughter was selected in the World Cup.

Babarao Dabhade's daughter got the credit for this achievement.

Chief Instructor of Fencing Academy, Bhupendra Singh said that Khushi Dabhade is a very talented player. She trains with dedication and never misses her training. Khushi will surely get success in international competitions with high level sports facilities, training and her talent performance through

Fencing Academy. Asian and olympics my dream

It was Khushi Dabhade's dream to represent India in the Asian and Olympics and to give the country a medal and she is working hard to make it happen. Khushi has so far won ten medals including two gold, two silver and six bronze in the national fencing competitions in Madhya Pradesh. Apart from this, he has earned 11

gold and 3 silver medals in state level competitions.

Notably, world class facilities and training are provided in the academy to the players coming from the general environment that the players of the state are making their international recognition at the international level. It is expected that other fencing players will also brighten Madhya Pradesh's name in future.

Malwi Gayan, tribal dance 'Saila and Karama' performed at MPSTM

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The Bhopalites enjoyed Thursday evening with folk dance and music at Madhya Pradesh State Tribal Museum 'Malwi Gayan' by Jeejeevisha Shrivastava-Seoni and Gond tribal dance 'Saila and Karama' by Lamu Lal Dhurve and group.

The dancers were accompanied on Shehnai by Hamchand Dhurve, Mandar Durjan Lal, Timki by Krishna Kumar and Sarfaraj Singh playing Manjira and Dilip Kumar, Jogha Singh, Dealan Singh, Kamal Bhan Singh, Rajesh Singh, Mahendri Bai, Dealan Devi, Yashoda Devi, Kaleshwari Devi and Gombi Devi in the dance.

Saila dance is named Saila because of performing dance song with the hand of the hand. After the Dussehra festival of the Gond tribe, Saila Reena is performed with dance songs on the night of Sharad Chandni and collectively perform Saila Reena dance songs

in the village on Diwali. Whenever, on the special invitation of a prominent person from another village, the women and men of the village take their own cultural party in their presence and go from one village to another and perform Saila-Rina dance songs. Mezwan village is very respectful to this team and at the conclusion, takes donations of cow and takes blessings.

Karama dance is an enchanting dance that inspires karma. The beat and rhythm of the instrumental instrument: Timki adds to the stunning sound of the instrument.

In the Shukla Paksha of the month of Bhado caste, God is worshipped by worshipping his favorite deity, Kul Dev, Bada Dev and other deities. Karma songs are done after eating Nava and when a female guest comes to the village from somewhere, the young man and woman of the village take it and perform the Karma dance song.

The fraud came to fore after magistrate found that the documents were not real and issued orders to verify the documents and during the investigation it was found that the documents provided were forged.

After the preliminary investigation the police registered a case under section 419, 420, 467, 468 and 471 of the IPC and started further investigation. During the investigation police found that

Narmadaprasad used to work as mediator for providing bail using fake and forged documents.

Meanwhile Chola Mandir police have booked a miscreant who burgled donation box from Shiv temple situated at Shiv Nagar; over Rs 10,000 were in the donation box.

According to the police, the accused Narmadaprasad Shrivastava had produced forged documents to secure bail for accused Santosh on February 15 and when the documents were verified he was nabbed by the police.

The fraud came to fore after magistrate found that the documents were not real and issued orders to verify the documents and during the investigation it was found that the documents provided were forged.

After the preliminary investigation the police registered a case under section 419, 420, 467, 468 and 471 of the IPC and started further investigation. During the investigation police found that

Narmadaprasad used to work as mediator for providing bail using fake and forged documents.

Meanwhile Chola Mandir police have booked a miscreant who burgled donation box from Shiv temple situated at Shiv Nagar; over Rs 10,000 were in the donation box.

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47TH KHAJURAHO DANCE FEST Bharatanatyam's Kala Yatra Naipathya centre of attraction

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Diverse dimensions of the Indian art tradition have come together at the world famous 47th Khajuraho Dance Festival.

Not only are tourists and art lovers enjoying the live classical dance performances, but they are also getting acquainted with the systematic history of dance and arts.

The undertaking of films focused on art, artist and art tradition motion pictures and the Indian dance style of Bharatanatyam's Kala Yatra Naipathya remain the centre of attraction at the Khajuraho dance festival.

Films and exhibitions focused on the history of classical dance and arts of India are being appreciated by art lovers and tourists. Raj Bendre, who is coordinating the film workshop at the Khajuraho dance festival,

said that central films based on Indian art and art tradition are being screened through motion pictures.

These films feature music, dance, paintings as well as artists from other art traditions and memorable moments of their lives. The film provides a novel approach to the art lovers, which will always inspire them. The films which are being screened from 4 to 6 pm are very appealing to all tourists.

Art of Indian dance style Bharatanatyam Yatra Naipathya Smt. Abhinaya Nagajyoti, who is coordinating Kala Yatra 'Naipathya' workshop of Indian dance style Bharatanatyam at Khajuraho Dance Festival, said that this year's theme is Indian classical dance - Bharatanatyam. Tourists are being told about the history of classical Bharatanatyam dance through the Naipathya workshop and exhibition.

The sequence of historical development of Bharatanatyam dance has been demonstrated through photographs, interpreters, costume and jewelry.

Tourists are being familiarized with the mridangam, violin, flute and talam, etc. used during the dances. In this workshop, tourists are being given all information and their queries related to Bharatanatyam dance are also being resolved.

The introduction to the history of Indian classical dance art during the Khajuraho dance festival is a new experience for tourists. Now Khajuraho is making its mark as a place of study of art and dance, rather than a venue for dance festival.

The amazing combination of dance performances, descriptions, of history exhibitions, films and tastes of local cuisine have made the Khajuraho dance festival memorable for tourists and art lovers.

2ND PHASE OF DEENDAYAL ANTYODAYA RASOI YOJANA CM to inaugurate 100 new kitchens

Will interact with beneficiaries present at kitchen centers

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will inaugurate 100 new and equipped kitchen centers in the second phase of Deendayal Antyodaya Rasoi Yojana at Minto Hall on February 26 at 3 pm.

Chouhan will also interact with the beneficiaries present at the kitchen centers of Indore, Ujjain, Morena, Dhar and Chhatarpur districts. The kitchen centers will be operated in 52 district headquarters and 6 religious cities Mathar, Omkareshwar, Maheshwar, Amarkantak, Orchha and

Chitrakoot. Urban Development and Housing Minister Bhupendra Singh and Minister of State for Urban Development and Housing OPS Bhadoria will also address the programme. The programme will be broadcast live on regional TV news channels and various social media platforms.

The Chief Minister will also dedicate the portal made for continuous monitoring of the scheme. The portal has details of the number of beneficiaries being benefitted daily, details of kitchen centers, online kitchen centers and facilities for donations to urban bodies made available to the public.

The portal also has a dashboard, which will enable better review of the implementation of the scheme in various centers along with transparency in

the implementation of the plan. All kitchen centers of the scheme are also tagged on google map. With this, common citizens will be able to find kitchen centers easily.

Zaroorat ki thali-Nahi rahegi khali Urban Development and Housing Minister Bhupendra Singh has said that the main objective of the scheme is 'Zaroorat ki thali-Nahi rahegi khali'. Rs 10 per plate meal will be provided in the kitchen center from Monday to Saturday. Food distribution timing will be from 10 am to 3 pm.

The kitchen center has been established near the bus stand, railway station, district hospital. The scheme will also benefit the poor people of the city as well as people coming to the city for work from villages.

The Deendayal Rasoi Thali

will comprise roti, seasonal vegetable, dal and chawal.

One-time assistance of Rs 13.36 crore and recurring expenditure of Rs 15.84 crore has been approved for the establishment of kitchen centers under the new scheme. For the first time, the state government has approved the grant at the rate of Rs 5 per person.

Due to the availability of institutional arrangement in the form of Deendayal Antyodaya Rasoi Yojana, food has been made available to poor urban citizens, migrant labourers and the needy during the Covid period.

These kitchen centers proved to be extremely supportive during the pandemic. From the beginning of the first phase till now, 1.42 one crore thalis have been served with food.

Play 'Romeo and Juliet in the Smart Cities of Contemporary India' staged at Shaheed Bhavan

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Love never changes, no matter how many generations do. This message was given through a play 'Romeo and Juliet in the Smart Cities of Contemporary India', staged at Shaheed Bhavan. The play marked the second day of 15 Rang Mahotsav on Thursday.

Directed by renowned playwright Saurabh Anant, the play was beautifully performed by the artists of Vihaan Drama Works.

Romeo Juliet in Smart Cities of Contemporary India revolves around two young lovers, Mridul and Vaibhavi, who work at call centers and lives on rent separately. Their landlords do not allow the presence of any other male/female in their space. So they meet-up at Mridul's room secretly. Meanwhile, Bhole Bhakt Mandal, a fringe group, seeks revenge from Mridul



A scene from the play 'Romeo Juliet' staged at Shaheed Bhavan in Bhopal on Thursday. Pioneer photo

over a pity dispute. They break the door open and start harassing them in the name of religion and morality. After severe mental, physical and emotional torture, both decide to take a step, which is going to change their life forever.

The prevailing conditions of the country, the ill elements of the society and the old age traditions stopped the lovers to

meet. With rib-tickling comedy scenes the play tried to showcase that even in modern times people are living with stereotype mentality. The hypocrisy of the society held them back to meet and make a decision which is an eye-opener.

The play was wonderfully staged and the audience were awestruck with the impactful performance of the artists.

Criminal killed in violent group clash

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A notorious criminal was killed while he escaped with injuries after two groups of criminals entered violent clash late in the night on Thursday.

The main accused Nadeem Baccha is under police custody while Faizan and Syed are absconding.

The deceased was identified as Shadab Jehlra was stabbed to death who was a watch list criminal of TT Nagar police and was booked for over 31 cases and was denied bail in the month of July last year. He was recently released on bail.

Nadeem Baccha is a watch list criminal of Nishatpura police and has been booked over two dozen cases.

According to the police, Shadab along with Sparsh Soni was near Reliance petrol pump with Nadeem and two others and after sometime they attacked Shadab with sharp edged weapons. Shadab was rushed to hospital where he was declared dead while Sparsh escaped with injuries.

The accused escaped and later Nadeem was arrested while two are still absconding. The body was sent for the post mortem after the preliminary investigation.

During the investigation a case under section 302 of the IPC was registered and started further investigations. The accused and victim are habitual criminals and were acquainted with each other. They had enmity over dominance in the different areas.

In the video of CCTV it could be seen that Nadeem silted throat of Shadab and later stabbed him several times to ensure that Shadab is dead.



Qualified aspirants celebrate their success after The Institute of Company Secretaries of India declared Company Secretary-2021 results for Executive and Professional courses, in Bhopal on Thursday. Pioneer photo

Woman hammered to death by husband

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 25-year-old woman was hammered to death and later strangled allegedly by her husband on Thursday morning in north Delhi's Bhalsawa Dairy area.

Police said that the accused has been identified as Devki Nandan (26). Police said that he first hit his wife's head with a hammer and later strangled her with a chunni.

"A known person of the landlord of the accused informed police about the inci-



dent. Nandan runs a food cart of pav bhaji in the area. He suspected his wife of having extra

marital affair," said police.

According to Rajeev Ranjan, the Deputy

Commissioner of Police (DCP), Outer north district, at 12 pm, police received information that a person killed his wife at Mukund Pur, Bhalsawa Dairy area following which a police team was dispatched for the spot.

"Police reached the spot and recovered the body," he said. According to police, Nandan, the husband of Pooja, has been taken into custody and the weapon used in crime has been seized.

Further investigation is underway, police added.

Punjab looks for safe transportation of kids amid Covid-19 resurgence

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

Amidst COVID-19 resurgence in the state, the Punjab Government wants to make the Safe School Vahan Scheme safer for the school children.

With the state's 1,392 schools — both government and private — reporting more than 700 cases of the novel coronavirus and one casualty since the reopening of school after a gap of more than a month, the state Education Department is initiating steps to check the spread further.

As a part of the same, the Department has asked all the school authorities to ensure safe transportation of the kids by ensuring strict adherence to COVID-19 safety protocols.

According to the available figures, as many as 452 students and 271 teachers have tested positive for the virus till February 21, besides one death

of a teacher in Ludhiana.

Notably, the state government had reopened schools for students of classes IX to XII in mid-October last year making parents' consent mandatory for physically attending the school, with the continuation of online mode of study too.

On January 7, the Punjab Government also reopened schools for Classes V to VIII on an optional basis, followed by Classes III and IV from January 27 onwards, while from February 1 onwards, schools were reopened for the rest of the primary classes as well.

Even as majority of the private schools conducted classes in batches for two to three hours every day, the Government schools started classes from 10 am to 3 pm from January 7 onwards, while revising the timings from February 22 onwards for primary classes (9 am to 3 pm) and for middle, high and senior secondary classes (9 am to

3.20 pm).

To ensure safe transportation, the State's School Education director (senior secondary) has written to all the District Education Officers, of both senior and elementary education, to implement the safe school vahan scheme.

At the same time, they have been asked to make the parents aware about the same by conducting the parent-teacher meetings.

Along with the letter, the school education director has also attached the previous order of the State Education Department and also the state Transport Department order regarding the scheme.

As per the scheme, the principal, headmaster or headmistress of the school will be responsible for transportation of school children, besides ensuring that all school buses should not ferry more children than the registered seating capacity, and ensure medical check-up of van drivers as

well.

"The school authorities have been asked to ensure that the attendants are provided in buses to ensure COVID-19 protocol like proper distancing, wearing of masks, etc. The school authorities would also have to ensure that the driver and attendants are not suffering from any contagious disease," said the Department official.

SHOCKING FIGURES

As per the figures available, 78 students and 31 teachers had tested positive for the contagion between January 7 and February 8, including a 40-year-old teacher who died. Between February 8 and 21, a total of 374 fresh cases were reported among students and 240 new cases among teachers with a jump of 82.7 percent and 88.5 percent respectively.

By February 21, the number rose to 723 — a cumulative increase by 84.9 percent in total cases.

PGIMER witnesses 100% increase in Covid-19 patient load over past 10 days

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

With COVID-19 cases witnessing surge across various parts of the country, the Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research has witnessed 100 percent increase in positive cases over the past ten days.

"The numbers of COVID-19 cases had been consistently diminishing since sometime and were stable for over a month. However, the trend has reversed recently with numbers again rising on a daily basis and there has been a surge of admitted patients from 30 to 57 over last week, making it 100 percent increase in COVID-19 positive here in PGIMER," said Prof GD Puri, Dean (Academics) & Head, Department of Anaesthesia and Intensive Care, PGIMER.

Prof Puri was assessing the present situation of

COVID-19 in PGIMER along with Prof Ashish Bhalla and Dr Inder Pal Singh.

A 250-bedded Nehru Hospital Extension building in PGIMER was earmarked as COVID hospital last year. Till January 16, the PGIMER had taken care of about 2700 seriously ill COVID-positive patients, 7700 suspected COVID patients in various isolation wards and clinically screened more than 12,000 patients in special screening OPDs across the institute. In January, the COVID cases had decreased in various parts of the region.

Expressing his concern over the consistent rise in the severe and moderate cases of COVID-19 over the last few days here at PGIMER, he said, "COVID-19 pandemic is far from over. With mask use down and mobility up, we are definitely contributing to accelerate the rise in COVID-19 cases."

Earnestly urging healthcare workers and other eligible people to get vaccinated at the earliest, Prof Puri said, "The peerless and fearless frontline warriors have confronted the challenge of COVID-19 so bravely, so why this hesitancy for vaccination when it is vital for their safety considering their vulnerability due to the exposure at the job. In fact, who knows more than the healthcare workers how deadly COVID-19 can be."

VACCINATION COVERAGE ONLY 26 PER CENT IN CHANDIGARH

The overall COVID-19 vaccination coverage stood at 26 percent in Chandigarh on Thursday. Since the beginning of vaccination drive on January 16, a total of 20540 healthcare workers and frontline workers have been inoculated in the city.

Punjab Cong to gherao Raj Bhavan on Mar 1 to protest against spiralling prices

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

To protest against exorbitant hike in prices of kitchen gas, diesel, and petrol, Punjab Congress on Thursday announced to gherao Punjab Raj Bhavan on March 1 — the same day the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) had announced to conduct a protest march towards the Punjab Vidhan Sabha on the first day of the budget session.

"The party would take the voice of the people against this cruel rise in prices of essential commodities to the Centre. We will keep pressurizing the Central regime which has completely forsaken the interest of common man to force it to control spiralling prices," said

Punjab Congress president Sunil Jakhar.

Castigating the Centre for "looting" the public, Jakhar slammed the atrocious Rs 25 hike in LPG prices while pointing out that Rs 100 have been added to the gas cylinder price already in the last one month by the Centre.

Condemning the similar upward trend in prices of petrol and diesel, Jakhar underlined that this was happening when the prices of crude oil are at half than what it was during the Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh's tenure.

"Modi regime is looting people by burdening them with this extra prices," said Jakhar adding that the Centre was filling coffers of its favorite cor-

porates at the cost of the public.

"The present central regime is working at the behest of corporates while letting people of the country suffer," Jakhar said warning the Modi Government that no dispensation can exist by torturing the public.

"That's why Congress has planned this protest to intimate the Governor about the condition of the public so he could forward his report to the Centre," said Jakhar.

Responding to a media query, Jakhar said that SAD is acting as a shadow of BJP by trying to shield Centre over grave issue of rising prices and draconian agricultural legislations.

Show cause notices to 63 hosps in Punjab

For not following AB-SSBY guidelines

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Acting on the reports and complaints of discrepancies regarding the implementation of AB-Sarbat Sehat Bima Yojna (SSBY), Punjab's State Anti-Fraud Unit has issued 77 show-cause notices to 63 erring hospitals. "SAFU was directed to actively monitor, pursue any instance of fraud or irregularity observed under the AB-SSBY and take stringent action on every erring entity," said the state Health and Family Welfare Minister Balbir Singh Sidhu on Thursday.

The Minister said that Punjab's State Health Agency's

(SHA) Chief Executive Officer Amit Kumar, who is also SAFU Committee chairman, informed that 77 show cause notices have been issued so far to the hospitals and penalty amount of Rs 27,67,358 has been recovered from various hospitals, while 14 hospitals have been de-empanelled and nine have been temporarily suspended. Besides, 24 hospitals have been issued warning letters, while seven hospitals have also been issued advisories, added the Minister.

Giving details about major discrepancies made by hospitals, Sidhu said that State SAFU team have cracked wrong referral cases, money taken cases for beneficiaries for medicines and treatment by the empanelled hospitals

State SAFU team have cracked wrong referral cases, money taken cases for beneficiaries for medicines and treatment by the empanelled hospitals

money for the bilateral surgical procedures whereas the unilateral procedure was performed, denial of cashless treatment by the empanelled hospital to the beneficiaries and more than one surgical package claimed during a single hospitalization.

To avail the easy access of secondary and tertiary treatment services under the SSBY,

the Minister said that the Punjab Government has also established the District Anti-Fraud Units (DAFU) in all districts to check these types of deceptions.

"DAFU has been directed to take immediate action, if any health establishment under ABSSBY is found to indulge in fraudulent means. After a thorough investigation, concerned DAUFU puts up the case to the State Anti Fraud Unit for further action," he said.

"To reduce the financial burden of people, Punjab Government is vigorously working to cover all patients and around 828 hospitals have been empanelled across the State," he said, adding that the Government has also established District Grievances Redressal Committees for redressal of grievances of beneficiaries.

EOW arrest man for duping investors in Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Delhi Police has arrested a 46-year-old man for allegedly inducing and duping investors on pretext of investment in a housing project in Delhi's Dwarka area. Police said that the accused had duped people to the tune of Rs 2.50 crores.

Police said that the accused identified as K Ponniah, an ex-serviceman, was declared a proclaimed offender in 2018 after he fled to his native village in Tamil Nadu and did not join the probe related to this case despite issuance of several

notices to him. Police said that he was arrested on Tuesday from a lodge in Pudukkottai district of Tamil Nadu by a team of EOW on February 23.

According to Dr O P Mishra, the Joint Commissioner of Police, EOW, the complainants were induced by the accused to invest in his housing firm namely Defence Personnel Welfare Housing Organisation (DPWHO) for a project which was to come up in Poachanpur village in Dwarka sector 23.

"He convinced investors about the project and told them that the construction

had commenced and would be completed within the stipulated time. In 2014, complainants were offered residential units in tower 24B constructed by DPWHO. However, till 2016, the accused did not hand over the possession and in 2017, the complainants came to know that the flats booked by them had been sold to other people," said the Joint CP.

"After an initial enquiry, a case was registered in 2017 and was later transferred to the EOW in 2019. During investigation, bank details were verified and relevant documents were also scrutinized. It was revealed that Ponniah formed

DPWHO in 2012. Thereafter he prepared a collaboration agreement with the land owning company to construct two towers -- 24A and 24B -- with 16 flats each," said the Joint CP.

"As per the agreement, after completion of the buildings, tower 24B will be owned by the company owning the land and tower 24 A will be owned by DPWHO. However, Ponniah convinced the complainants and took booking for the flats that were in the tower No 24 B, which is owned by the land owning company," said the Joint CP.

"After the case was transferred to EOW in 2019, sur-

veillance was mounted during which the police traced the location of the accused to Tiruchirappalli but since he was not found there, the investigating team moved to his native place in Thiruvavur district," said the Joint CP.

"Sensing police raids in his village, he escaped from Tiruchirappalli and reached Pudukkottai and switched off all his phone numbers. However, surveillance was also mounted on those whom he contacted and later a police team arrested the accused from a lodge in Pudukkottai district where he had been hiding," said the Joint CP.

DJB accuses Centre for water crisis in Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Jal Board (DJB) Vice-Chairperson Raghav Chadha on Thursday accused the Centre of stopping 232 MGD of water coming to the national capital from Beas River for a month. The move will create havoc in Delhi as it is 25 per cent of the total water supply to the city.

Chadha said that the people of Delhi depend on groundwater along with the water of Yamuna, Ganges and Beas River; the Beas river provides 25 per cent of the total water supply of Delhi.

"With the agency of Union

Jal Shakti Ministry, BBMB is going to close Beas Hydrel Channel from 25th March to 24th April on the pretext of repair and maintenance; it will affect the water supply of Delhi. The discontinuation of 232 MGD water supply from Beas River may cause water crisis in Delhi and may also disturb law and order," he said.

The Vice-Chairman further said that, he has written to the BBMB along with the Center and the Haryana Government, requesting to put maintenance work on hold and not to reduce the water supply in Delhi. Chadha also said, due to the affected water supply in

Delhi, the President House, Prime Minister's residence and many other institutions of national and international importance to be affected.

"We have demanded the Union government to convene a meeting with all the stakeholders to put their points. Kejriwal government is doing everything possible to save Delhi from the water crisis," added Chadha.

Delhi is a state which is landlocked by various other states which means that Delhi does not have its own water body, he said, adding that this is why the citizens of Delhi depend on four sources of water.

No let up in Covid cases in Maha, 7 other States

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

There is no let up in the renewed rise in daily new cases in States like Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Chhattisgarh.

A total of 16,738 new daily Covid-19 cases have been recorded in a span of 24 hours taking the total tally of active infection to 1,51,708.

The Union Health Ministry said 89.57 per cent of the new cases are from the seven states with Maharashtra continuing to top the chart at the highest daily new cases at 8,807. It is followed by Kerala with 4,106 cases while Punjab reported 558 new cases. In fact, Maharashtra reported 80 deaths, highest in two months (since December 24, when 89 deaths were reported). With this, the total cases in the State jumped to 21,21,119 and the toll touched 51,937. The Centre has already deputed high-level multi-disciplinary teams there to ascertain reasons for the surge and coordinate with the state health departments in Covid-19 control and containment measures.

The Centre has also written to states and UTs to focus on undertaking aggressive



measures to break the chain of transmission.

States and UTs have been advised to increase testing in a focussed manner in the affected districts with the appropriate split of RT-PCR and rapid antigen tests and to also ensure that all symptomatic negatives of antigen tests are compulsorily tested via RT-PCR tests. The positive persons are to be isolated/hospitalised, all their close contacts be traced and also tested without delay. They have been advised to critically review the emerging situation on a regular basis with district officials concerned to ensure that gains made so far in Covid-19 management are not lost.

India has administered over 1.30 Crore vaccine doses so far. A total of 1,30,67,047 vaccine doses have been given through 2,77,303 Sessions, as per the provisional report till 6

The five most affected States by total cases are Maharashtra (2,121,119), Kerala (1,045,009), Karnataka (949,183), Andhra Pradesh (889,503), and Tamil Nadu (849,629)

pm on Thursday. These include 65,82,007 HCWs (75.5%) who have taken the 1st dose and 18,60,859 HCWs (63.6%) who have taken the 2nd dose, along with 46,24,181 frontline workers (FLWs) (1st dose) (45.1%). While the countrywide vaccination drive was rolled out on 16th Jan 2021

Vaccination of the FLWs started on 2nd Feb 2021. Just eight states account for more than 56 per cent of the total vaccine doses.

Constitutional institutions should work together for a strong democracy: Speaker



PNS ■ SHILLONG / NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla Thursday said it is important for all constitutional institutions to complement and cooperate with each other for a strong democracy. "Democracy can be strengthened only when all constitutional institutions work in tandem and cooperate with each other within their respective constitutional jurisdictions. All the institutions should complement each other," Birla said, addressing the members of the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly.

"There can be dissent during discussions but we should not reach an impasse. Our discussions should lead to the welfare of the people of the country," the Speaker added.

Birla, who is currently on a two-day visit to Meghalaya, said one of his foremost priorities in Parliament was to make women, young and newly-elected MPs aware of various parliamentary conventions and practices. "I always promote and welcome their active participation in debates and dis-

cussions that take place in the House. It is very important to ensure the capacity-building of the members to pave way for constructive debates in Parliament," he said.

The Speaker also talked about some of the new initiatives being taken in Lok Sabha to enhance the practical knowledge of the members, including briefing sessions on the bills being introduced in the lower house.

He advised that similar programmes should be organised in the legislative assemblies as well. Birla also talked about PRISM, a new service that was introduced in Parliament during the Budget Session, to provide MPs with parliamentary research and information support.

"I would like you to set up a similar modern research wing in the legislative assembly to provide round-the-clock support to the members. We will be happy to provide all possible support for setting up such a research wing," he told the MLAs.

Among facilities that were underway, he said, was the NeVA (National E Vidhan Application) that would make proceedings and debates of Parliament and State legislature available on a single platform.

NIA files chargesheet against TPC commander

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The NIA on Thursday filed a chargesheet against the self-styled Zonal Commander of TPC, a Jharkhand based terrorist group of Naxal hue.

The second supplementary chargesheet was filed before the NIA special court, Ranchi against Vikas Ganju, who is known with aliases like Avinash, Dashrath Ganju and Varun Ji, is a Zonal Commander of TPC. The agency chargesheeted him under Indian Penal Code Sections relating to criminal conspiracy and extortion besides provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and Criminal Law Amendment Act.

The case was initially registered as FIR No. 157/2017 at Police Station Panki, Palamu, Jharkhand on November 23, 2017 after recovery of ₹5 lakhs cash along with arms and ammunition from Shyam Bhokta alias DC, a TPC operative.

The TPC, a break-away terrorist group of CPI (Maoist) is also an unlawful organisation proscribed by Jharkhand government under CLA Act, 1908.

City Innovation Exchange platform launched to find solutions to challenges



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The City Innovation Exchange (CiX) platform was launched by Durga Shanker Mishra, Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, at an online event on Thursday. The platform will be a significant addition to the growing innovation ecosystem of India and focuses on fostering innovative practices in cities. CiX, through an 'open innovation' process, engages with innovators to design-test-deliver on solutions to pressing urban challenges.

According to the HUA ministry, this initiative is among the ongoing efforts of the Government to realise Prime Minister's vision of New and AtmaNirbhar Bharat, by making cities more self-reliant and enabled to meet the needs

of and provide services to their citizens.

Anil Agrawal, Joint Secretary, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Kunal Kumar, Joint Secretary and Mission Director, Smart Cities Mission, CEOs of Smart Cities and other officers of the Central and State Governments were also present at the event.

The City Innovation Exchange (CiX) will connect cities to innovators across the national ecosystem to design innovative solutions for their pressing challenges. The platform will ease the discovery, design & validation of solutions through a robust, transparent and user-centric process that will reduce barriers for innovators and cities to discover fitting solutions.

MoU pushes for farming, fisheries ops & income

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a first step towards setting up of the Farmers Produce Organisations (FPOs) and Fish Farmer Producer Organisations (FFPOs) in the Union Territory Lakshadweep, the island administration and National Co-operative Development Corporation (NCDC), have inked a pact to scale up farming operations of the agricultural and coastal communities for better access to quality input, technology, credit and market through economies of scale.

The MoU was signed recently by Sundeep Kumar Nayak, Managing Director of NCDC on behalf of the apex finance entity under the Union Agriculture Ministry with A Anbarasu, Advisor to Lakshadweep Administrator in the presence of UT Administrator Praful Patel.



The MoU was signed recently by Sundeep Kumar Nayak, Managing Director of NCDC, on behalf of the apex finance entity under the Union Agriculture Ministry with A Anbarasu, Advisor to Lakshadweep Administrator in the presence of UT Administrator Praful Patel.

As part of the collaboration, among various activities, the NCDC would also appoint Community based Business Organisation (CBBO) to pro-

vide FPOs and FFPOs by collaborating with them in a holistic manner, said Nayak.

The NCDC will provide handholding to these organizations for next five years to

help them realise a better price of their farm produce and make them self-reliant in the long term, he added.

On his part, Anbarasu welcomed the initiative saying that the collaboration will bring innumerable benefits in the region. "This will ensure employment and entrepreneurship skills among farmers and fishermen in the island. One out of seven persons is a fisherman here engaged in coastal activities like fisheries, seaweed business and coconut trade besides farming. This is a good beginning and we are looking forward to forming entities of the farmers and fishermen for their benefits besides all round development of the community."

Setting up the FPOs and FFPOs is the part of the Narendra Modi Government's

scheme of bringing more and more small and marginal farmers on a big platform as a joint entity for which budgetary support of ₹4,496 crore by 2024 has been allocated. Aim is to form and promote at least 10,000 new FPOs by that period across the States.

Currently, there are over 3,000 FPOs in the country, considered to be quite low given the fact that the total marginal and small farmers, having landholding size of up to five acres, account for over 85 per cent of total farmers in the country.

Besides, as per the part, the NCDC and Lakshadweep administration will also work together on areas such as animal husbandry, dairy, agriculture, food processing, rural finance and women issues through cooperative principles in the island.

Fishers need independent Ministry, says Rahul

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Thursday said fisherfolk need an independent fisheries ministry and not just a department within a Ministry, responding to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's swipe at him.

At a public meeting in Puducherry, the Prime Minister expressed shock over Rahul Gandhi's statement last week that there was no "dedicated" fisheries ministry. At the time, BJP leaders, including Union ministers, had also taken a swipe at Gandhi.

Responding to the PM's swipe, Rahul tweeted, "Dear PM, Fisherfolk need an independent and dedicated ministry of fisheries, not just a department within a ministry." "PS-

'Hum do Humare do' obviously hurt bad," he said referring to the jibe he had used against the Government recently to allege that it is being run by Modi and his "corporate friends".

Modi, in his remarks in Puducherry, said, "Congress leaders say we will make a fisheries ministry. I was shocked. The truth is, it is the current NDA government that had made a ministry for fisheries in 2019." In 2019, the Modi Government had formed a Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying.

In a separate tweet, Rahul Gandhi also attacked the government over a media report claiming that the government has started clearing foreign direct investment proposals from China on a case-by-case basis.

Govt cannot implement farm laws as matter is with SC: Tomar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

At a time when farmer unions have decided to support the Bharat Bandh called by transport and trade unions on February 26 and appealed farmers to make it success, Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Thursday said the Government cannot implement the farm laws as the matter is with the Supreme Court and the SC-constituted committee is yet to submit its feedback. The Minister also added that the farmer unions, which have been protesting against the farm laws for nearly three months, have not given their feedback on the centre's proposal of putting the farm laws on hold for 1.5 years.

The Minister said that the Government is fully sensitive towards farmers. "The government has held 12 rounds of talks with the farmers and they are ready to talk to farmers anytime. We have held several rounds of talks (with unions). We proposed many amendments as well as keeping the farm reform Acts on hold for 1.5 years and setting up a joint panel to find solutions. But, they have not responded to our proposals," Tomar said on the sidelines of an event on Thursday.

"We can't implement the farm laws as the matter is with Supreme Court. The Supreme Court constituted committee is yet to submit its feedback. They did not respond to the proposal. We are ready for talks whenever farmers bring their views on the government's proposal," Tomar added.

Notice Inviting Re-e-Tender
No.SSA/EsstU/Pre-Primary/Furniture/406/2020/4616 Date:25.02.2021
Mission Director, Axom Sarba Siksha Abhijan Mission, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, Assam invites re-tender through e-Tendering process from reputed Manufacturer /Authorized Dealer/Distributor of manufacturer of plastic moulded furniture for supply of Plastic Moulded Storage Cupboard.
To participate in the tender process through e-procurement document, bidder should have valid Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) and have to register in the portal <https://assamtenders.gov.in> by themselves.
The Bidder who have downloaded the tender schedules containing the tender details, terms and conditions, from the website shall submit their tender on-line on the website <https://assamtenders.gov.in>, with proof of payment of non refundable tender processing fee of Rs. 5000/- (Rupees five thousand) only in the form of demand draft/Bankers Cheque drawn in favour of Mission Director, Axom Sarba Siksha Abhijan Mission, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, Assam, from any nationalized/Scheduled Bank and payable at Guwahati. The tender should

Sd/-Executive Director,
Janasanyog/ICF/5357/20
SSA, Assam, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19

NORTHERN RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE
The Deputy Chief Engineer/Survey & Const., Tilak Bridge, Northern Railway, New Delhi, for and on behalf of the President of India invites open e-tender for the following work:
Mode of Tender: E-Tender (Single Packet)
Tender Notice No. 257-W/SURVEY/TKJ Dated: 24.02.2021
Full name of work: Renovation of existing Survey and construction office space on first floor building of DyCE/S&C Office at Tilak Bridge, Near ITO, New Delhi.
Approx. cost: Rs. 8399151/- (Rs. Eighty Three Lakhs Ninety nine thousand One Hundred and Fifty one).
Completion period: 05 months (Five months)
Earnest money amount: Rs. Nil.
Sale/availability of tender document on Rty. Website: Tender documents will be available on IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in from 02.03.2021 to 17.03.2021 upto 11:30 hrs.
Last date/Time of upload of tenders: 17.03.2021 upto 11:30 hours. Tender documents can be uploaded by the tenderer(s) on IREPS website w.e.f. 02.03.2021 to 17.03.2021.
Date and time of opening of tender: 17.03.2021 at 11:30 hours (immediately after close of uploading of tender (D2) in the office of Deputy Chief Engineer/Survey & Const., N.Rty. Tilak Bridge, New Delhi-110002.
This notice is available on www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in website and documents on www.ireps.gov.in site is available.
Tender Notice No. 257-W/SURVEY/TKJ Dated: 24.02.2021 434/2021
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

JNCASR scientists develop molecule to halt dementia

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After nearly a decade of research, scientists from the Jawaharlar Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR), Bengaluru, have developed a molecule that could be a potential drug candidate to halt or cure the leading cause of dementia (70-80 per cent) worldwide. The research has been published in the journal Advanced Therapeutics.

About 5-6 per cent of individuals between the ages of 65-70 years in India suffer from Alzheimer's disease, a neurodegenerative condition which is incurable. However, a recent trend has been observed where

people in their 30s or 40s are also developing signs of Alzheimer's disease, which is a cause of worry.

In such a dismal scenario, the study by the JNCASR, an autonomous institute under the Department of Science & Technology (DST) is a ray of hope for many.

As per the study, Dr T Govindaraju, Professor, JNCASR, and his team designed and synthesised molecules which can reduce the toxicity of amyloid peptide—that accumulates in the central nervous system. "The molecule, called TGR63, can rescue neuronal cells from amyloid toxicity. We saw that the molecule helped in reducing the clumping and slowly reversing the cognitive

decline," claimed Dr Govindaraju.

He pointed out that the experiment was carried out on mice with and without Alzheimer's disease. "Mice brain affected with Alzheimer's showed a significant reduction of amyloid deposits when treated with TGR63. The mice also showed reduction in learning deficiency, memory impairment and cognitive decline as revealed by distinct behavioural tests.

These key attributes have validated the potential of TGR63 as a promising drug candidate, he said. "We are looking for pharmaceutical companies to fund our project to start clinical trials," Dr Govindaraju said.

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA TENDER NOTICE

Sr. No.	NAME OF DEPARTMENT	NAME OF WORK NOTICE TENDER	OPENING DATE CLOSING DATE	AMOUNT / EMD (APPROX.) IN RUPEES	WEBSITE OF THE DEPARTMENT	NODAL OFFICER/CONTACT DETAILS/EMAIL
1	PWD B&R, ROHTAK	RESTORATION OF ROAD CUT ON NH-10 FROM KM. 74.800 TO 75.800 IN ROHTAK CITY.	23.02.2021 08.03.2021	21.84 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9416865641 pawdeep3nhrk@gmail.com
2	PWD B&R, KARNAL	CONSTRUCTION OF SHC ATERNA DISTT. SONIPAT (PDG. EI ONLY) AND CONSTRUCTION OF SPORTS STADIUM AT VILLAGE RINDHANA DISTT. SONIPAT (PDG. EI ONLY).	24.02.2021 03.03.2021	4.52 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	01842265696 pwd-eeed-karnal@hry.nic.in
3	PWD B&R, FATEHABAD	SPECIAL REPAIR OF CONSTRUCTION OF PARKING, FOOTPATH, PARAPHERY PATH ALONG BOUNDARY WALL INSIDE, CHECK POST ON MAIN GATE IN GUAVA RESEARCH NURSERY CENTRE AT BHUNA IN FATEHABAD DISTT. + OTHER OS WORKS.	22.02.2021 18.03.2021	48.90 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	01667220120 pwd-eeed-fatehabad@hry.nic.in
4	PANCHAYATI RAJ,AMBALA	PDG E.I. IN VILLAGE KNOWLEDGE CENTER IN VILLAGES ODHI, TANKRI, MOHANPUR BLOCK BAWAL, BHANDHOR, MAYAN, BASS DUDA BLOCK KHOL DISTRICT REWARI + 1 OTHER WORK	24.02.2021 04.03.2021	14.22 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	0171-2980510 prexeengelec.amb@hry.nic.in
5	FOOD, CIVIL SUPPLIES & CONSUMER AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT HARYANA	AUCTION OF DAMAGED WHEAT	26.02.2021 05.03.2021	2.28 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9416687064 dfscsnp@gmail.com
6	HARYANA STAFF SELECTION COMMISSION, PANCHKULA	FOR PROVIDING TENT SERVICES IN HARYANA STAFF SELECTION COMMISSION	24.02.2021 17.03.2021	1 LACS	https://hssc.gov.in/	0172-2586501 Secretary.hssc-hry@go.gov.in
7	PUBLIC HEALTH ENGINEERING YAMUNA NAGAR.	ISMATIPUR GRAM PANCHAYAT- LAYING OF DI WATER SUPPLY PIPE LINE IN BALANCE STREETS AND PROVIDING BALANCE FHTC. "LAYING OF WATER SUPPLY DI PIPE LINE, PROVIDING BALANCE FHTC, CONSTRUCTION OF SLUICE VALVE HAUDI COMPLETE IN ALL RESPECT AND ALL OTHER WORKS CONTINGENT THERETO". RS. 38.73 LACS	02.03.2021 12.03.2021	38.73 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	ee1ynagar@phedharyana.gov.in
8	IRRIGATION & WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT HARYANA, CHARKHI DADRRI	PROVIDING UNSKILLED, SEMI-SKILLED AND SKILLED MANPOWER UNDER OUTSOURCING POLICY IN THE OFFICE OF H/GARH CANAL DIVISION CHARKHI DADRRI	CLOSING DATE 08.03.2021	EMD 1.30 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	xen-wsmgarhcdrr.irr@gov.in
9	IRRIGATION & WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT HARYANA, JIND	REMODELING OF WATER COURSE AT QIL RD 33800/L MSL MINOR + 5 OTHER WORKS	CLOSING DATE 09.03.2021	114.05LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	xenwsj@gmail.com
10	IRRIGATION & WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT HARYANA, JIND	LAYING PIPE LINE FOR DEWATERING OF FLOOD WATER OF VILLAGE GATOLI & JAI JAI WANTI OUTFALLING AT RD 15200/R KARSOOLA MINOR + 5 OTHER WORKS	CLOSING DATE 09.03.2021	483.13 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9464040970 xenwsj@gmail.com
11	IRRIGATION & WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT HARYANA, GURUGRAM	DISTEMPERING, PAINTING EXTERIOR ACRYLIC EMULSION PAINT APEX AND OTHER MISC REPAIR AND REPLACEMENT OF DOOR AND WINDOW AND WATER SUPPLY ARRANGEMENT IN CLASS-III QUARTER IN CANAL COLONY, GURUGRAM +2 OTHER WORKS	CLOSING DATE 17.03.2021	7.77 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9653630001 xen-gwsgrr.irr@hry.gov.in

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT : www.haryanaeprocurement.gov.in or www.etenders.hry.nic.in

UNION TERRITORY OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR
OFFICE OF SENIOR MATERIALS MANAGEMENT OFFICER (PURCHASE I)
SHER-I-KASHMIR INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES SOURA, SRINAGAR-190011
Extension: 2275, Email: ammopurchase1@skims.ac.in, Tele/Fax NO: 0194-2403929

Subject: Amendment

The tentative quantity / specifications (including BOQ) of haemodialysis fluids etc. attached as Annexure "C" to e-NIT No: SIMS 325 (PI) Tender 03 of 2021 Dated: 16.02.2021 is modified & shall now be as per following insted of existing:

S. No.	Description	Unit/Size	Tentative 2 year requirement
01.	Inj. Haemodialysis Fluid with Potassium	10 Litre Cans	4000 Cans
02.	Inj. Haemodialysis Fluid without Potassium	10 Litre Cans	360 Cans
03.	Inj. Haemodialysis Fluid "Ca" free (Calcium free or without calcium)	10 Litre Cans	40 Cans
04.	Inj. Haemodialysis Fluid with low calcium	10 Litre Cans	40 Cans
05.	Inj. Haemodialysis Fluid with Dextrose	10 Litre Cans	200 Cans
06.	Inj. Peritoneal Dialysis Fluid with Potassium	1000 ml Bottle	1200 Bottles
07.	Inj. Peritoneal Dialysis Fluid without Potassium	1000 ml Bottle	1000 Bottles

Rest of the NIT shall remain unchanged
No: SIMS 325 P (I)-e-Tender 03 of 2021-1135-40-6101-04. Sd/- Sr. MATERIALS MANAGEMENT OFFICER PURCHASE I
Dated: 25.02.2021

Can't trust Pak: LoC residents

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Despite facing the brunt of heavy shelling along the Line of Control in Poonch and Rajouri sectors large number of border residents living in the direct line of firing on Thursday reacted cautiously to the joint statement by the India and Pakistan army to strictly observe all agreements, understandings and ceasefire along the Line of Control and all other sectors with effect from midnight 24/25 Feb 2021.

"We have been repeatedly targeted by the roaring Pak guns in the forward areas. We want to live in peace and cultivate our fields. But due to heightened tension in the region we were not able to do so for a long time. Students in the region suffered the most due to prolonged suspension of classes due to repeated incidents of cross LoC firing, Mohd Imtiyaz of village Shahpur in Poonch said.

A local panch in the area claimed, we cannot trust Pakistan so easily. It's in the habit of pushing infiltrators via this route. Our parents suffered due to regular shelling. Now our generation is also facing the same. We regularly pray and want peace to prevail. The



reaction of border residents in the Nowshera area of Rajouri was no different. Most of the villagers engaged in the farming activity said, we always want peace to prevail and lead peaceful lives without facing the brunt of border firing. We have seen armies standing eyeball to eyeball and now we want to see our next generation to live in peace and focus on their careers.

Meanwhile, political parties in Jammu and Kashmir welcomed the agreement between armies of India and Pakistan on ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC) and other sectors. "We welcome it and hope

the LoC. Dialogue is the only way forward if both countries want to stop the unending cycle of violence & bloodshed across the borders and J&K," Mehbooba said.

In a statement, Congress party said that it always favoured any initiatives aimed at restoration of peace on the borders and LOC and ensuring safety of our residents and jawans in Jammu and Kashmir but questioned whether the infiltration and cross border terrorism has been stopped by Pakistan. Reacting to the latest developments, JKPC Chief G A Mir Thursday questioned the Modi government for its flip flop policy as it had been stating that the talks and terrorism / cross border firing can't go together.

BJP had been always saying that the no talks are possible with Pakistan till it stops cross border terrorism and infiltration. It had been targeting the previous UPA government for track two diplomacy and dialogue on the ground that no talks should be held till Pakistan stops cross border Terrorism and firing. It always advocated tough posturing with Pakistan by claiming that you need a 56" chest to deal with Pakistan.

5 killed in blast in fireworks factory in Tamil Nadu

More than ten sheds where chemicals had been stored were razed to the ground in the mishap

PTI ■ VIRUDHUNAGAR (TN)

Five people were killed and six injured in an explosion at a fireworks factory near Sivakasi in the district on Thursday, police said.

More than ten sheds where chemicals had been stored were razed to the ground in the mishap, the second such incident this month in a cracker manufacturing unit in this region, the country's fireworks hub.

Fire and rescue service teams battled the blaze in the unit at Kalayar Kurichi, police said, adding the injured were rushed to hospitals.

The cause of the explosion was not known immediately.

More than 20 people had died and around 30 injured in a major explosion in a fireworks unit at Achankulam village near Sattur in this district on February 2.

Go for BEST, reject Congress' feudal culture: PM in Puducherry

FIANS ■ PUDUCHERRY

Virtually launching BJP's campaign for upcoming Assembly elections in Puducherry, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday urged people to vote for NDA's good governance agenda and reject anti-development forces.

Addressing a party rally in the union territory, a day after Centre recommending imposition of President's Rule following collapse of the Congress Government, the Prime Minister appealed to the people to bring to power a government that will restore Puducherry's glory.

He said NDA wants to make Puducherry BEST -- B for business hub, E for education, S for spiritual hub and T for tourism hub. While the Congress "are gold, silver and bronze medal winners in telling lies" and neither work nor allow others to work.

Launching a scathing attack on the Congress party for failing to live up to people's expectations, he said: "In 2016 Puducherry did not get a people's government. They got a government that was busy serving Congress high command in

Delhi. Their priorities were different."

Attacking former Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy, Modi said: "Your former chief minister was an expert at lifting slippers of his top party leaders but he did not have interest to lift people out of poverty."

The Prime Minister said Puducherry deserve a government whose high command are people of Puducherry and not a small group of Congress leaders sitting in Delhi. "NDA assures the people of Puducherry that the next government will be people-powered government."

Modi claimed that the enthusiasm and energy he was seeing at the rally was a harbinger of the change in political direction of the state.

"I am seeing great happiness -- this joy for two reasons. One there are many developments works which were inaugurated today and second people of Puducherry are celebrating freedom from misgovernance of Congress," he said.

He alleged that Congress government damaged every sector of economy. "Congress does not believe in working for

people I can understand that but what I can't understand is why Congress does not want others to work for people," he said alleging that the there was non-cooperation from Congress government.

Modi also mentioned about Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's recent visit to Puducherry during which then Chief Minister Narayanasamy gave wrong translation of a woman who was complaining about the government.

"Instead of telling truth to the nation, the chief minister gave wrong translation. He lied to people and his own leader. Can a party whose culture based on lies ever serve the people," he asked.

He also slammed Congress for not holding panchayat elections in Puducherry. He said while Congress leave no opportunity to call others anti-democratic but they need to look at themselves in mirrors. He said people will punish anti-democratic mindset of Congress.

He said while colonial rulers had the policy of divide and rule, Congress divide, lie and rule. "They are gold, silver and bronze medal winners in telling lies," the PM said.

All students of classes 9, 10, 11 declared pass: Tamil Nadu CM

FIANS ■ CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister K. Palaniswami on Thursday announced that students of Classes 9, 10 and 11 will be declared passed without writing their annual/board exams for the academic year 2020-21.

Announcing this in the Assembly, Palaniswami said considering the extraordinary Covid-19 pandemic situation and going by the views of the education experts and appeals

of the parents, students of 9, 10 and 11 classes will be declared as all pass without them writing the annual school or board exams.

He also said the government will announce the detailed norms for calculating the marks for the students for the academic year 2020-21.

Palaniswami said the pandemic and the students learnt through the Kalvi TV channel and online. Their study portions were also reduced.

N-E will be India's growth hub: Shah

FIANS ■ GUWAHATI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has identified the Northeast region as India's 'Growth Hub'.

Addressing a gathering in Nagaon district's Batadrava Than, Shah said the Modi government has already started work to make the region as the growth engine of India.

"To take the Northeast development in a mission mode, the Prime Minister had visited the region 35 times in the past five years. The Congress leaders and ministers visited Assam only during the election time," the senior BJP leader said.

"Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's stewardship, a new era of development has started in Assam and the Northeast region. Entire Northeast region is transforming. Northeast India will emerge as the highest contributor in the GDP of India," said Shah.

Urging the people to reinstall the BJP government for the second time, Shah promised that his party's vision is to make Assam an infiltration free, flood free, corruption free, violence free, agitation free and number one state in India. "A satellite based survey has been conducted and plans are afoot to permanently

resolve the flood problem and to undertake many projects to develop tourism and other infrastructures," he said.

The Batadrava Than in central Assam's Nagaon district is the birthplace of social reformer Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva, who was a 15th-16th century Assamese saint, scholar, poet, playwright, social-religious reformer and a figure of importance in Assam's cultural and religious history.

Shah on Thursday launched the work of a state-funded Rs 188-crore project for the beautification of Batadrava Than.

Saying that the Centre and state double engine governments of the BJP have undertaken a large number of steps for the all round development of Assam and protection of Assamese culture and traditions. He said the NDA government has awarded late famous singer and composer Bhupen Hazarika with Bharat Ratna; and the Padma Bhushan award posthumously to former Assam Chief Minister and Congress leader Tarun Gogoi.

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh represented Assam, the Congress ruled Assam for 15 years (2001-2016) but did nothing for the betterment of Assam and its people. "The BJP-led NDA gov-

ernment has constructed over 20,000 km road, bridges, airports, railway projects, approved a lot of gas and oil based projects, mega health institutions including AIIMS and many educational institutions," he pointed out.

The Home Minister said that the BJP government in Assam, to protect and promote the traditions and culture of Assam had provided Rs 2.5 lakh each to 8,000 'Namghars' (traditional Vaishnavite monasteries of Assam) under the Assam 'Darshan' programme.

"Namghars", literally meaning Prayer House, introduced by Srimanta Sankardeva, are places for congregational worship associated with the entire Assamese community and the Ekasarana sect of Hinduism, in particular, which is native to Assam.

Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, state's Finance, Education and Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma also addressed the gatherings.

Later in the day, Shah will visit the hill district of Karbi Anglong where he will address another public meeting at Dengaon and is expected to meet surrendered extremists.

Earlier, Shah visited Assam on February 11 and January 23, and addressed several public rallies.

'Without arms, violence, Modi Govt fulfilling all demands of North-East'

FIANS ■ GUWAHATI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday said that without peace in northeast no development is possible and without arms and violence, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led Government has been fulfilling all demands and requirements.

Addressing an impressive gathering in the hill district of central Assam's Karbi Anglong, Shah said that the Union and Assam government had already successfully convinced hundreds of extremists belonging to nine outlawed outfits to shun violence and just on Tuesday 1,040 more terrorists of five outfits led by wanted terrorist leader Ingti Kathar Songbigit surrendered to the Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal.

"The tribal guerrillas have deposited 338 sophisticated arms including AK series rifles, LMGs, rocket launchers and over 11,000 various types of ammunition," the home minister said, ensuring the surrendered militants to fulfil the promises given to them by the

Assam government within one year.

"If you want education, health and other sectors to develop then peace is the foremost condition. Development cannot happen at the cost of weapons. AWe have successfully signed agreements with Bodoland based militants, resolving decades old Reang ethnic community problems in Tripura. Bring BJP once again to power in Assam, Karbi Anglong would become the most developed region," Shah said.

While praising the surrendered extremists for their decision to lay down arms, who assembled in the gatherings, the home minister and senior Bharatiya Janata Party leader said: "You have the same rights in India as I am enjoying. Assam would be most developed state if you voted BJP for the second time."

Hitting out at Congress, he said the party (Congress) ruled Assam for so many years but there was no development and when the BJP came to power in Assam in 2017, it has progressed.

Kerala tense following murder of RSS leader

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The dawn-to-dusk hartal called by Sangh Parivar in Kerala's Alappuzha district on Thursday turned out to be total with most of the shops and business establishments remaining shut down and vehicles staying off the roads. The hartal call was to condemn the murder of 22-year-old Nandhu R Krishna, a district level RSS leader late Wednesday night. Two RSS activists who were injured seriously in the attack have been admitted to hospital.

Activists of SDPI, an Islamic extremist outfit, hacked to death in a gruesome manner Nandhu around 9 pm by Wednesday night. The murder of Nandhu is believed to be the continuation of the tension prevailing in the region between Sangh Parivar and SDPI following the visit of Yogi Adityanath, chief minister of Uttar Pradesh to Kasaragod last week.

Leaders of the SDPI, known as Sudapis, had reportedly delivered provocative speeches during a public meeting and this set off a chain reaction which culminated in the hacking of Nandhu.

COVID 19

No let up in spurt of cases in Maha, records 8,702 cases, 56 people die

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

With no let up in the continued increase in the number of Covid-19 infections, Maharashtra shot past 8700 cases for the second consecutive day to register 8,702 fresh cases on Thursday, while 56 people succumbed to the pandemic in various parts of the state.

A day after the state registered 8807 cases which was incidentally the second highest number of cases recorded in 129 days - after 9060 cases witnessed on October 18 last year, Thursday's infection tally of 8702 came close to the one registered on Wednesday.

However, the daily Covid-19 toll came down from 80 on Wednesday to 56 on Thursday. With 8702 new cases, the total number of infections jumped from 21,21,119 to 21,29,821. Similarly, with 56 new deaths, the total number of deaths rose from 51,937 to 51,993.

As 3,744 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the state after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March last year went up to 20,12,367. The recovery rate in the state

dropped marginally from 94.70 per cent to 94.49 per cent.

With five fresh deaths, the Covid-19 toll in Mumbai rose from 11,458 to 11,463, while the infected cases went up by 1145 to trigger a jump in the infections from 3,21,699 to 3,22,844.

Meanwhile, the number of "active cases" total cases in the state went up from 59,358 to 64,260. The fatality rate in the state dropped from 2.45 per cent at 2.44 per cent.

Pune district, which continued to be the worst-affected city-district in Maharashtra, saw the total number of cases increase from 4,03,782 to 4,05,307, while the total number of deaths in Pune went up from 8,044 to 8,048.

Thane district remained in the third spot - after Pune and Mumbai - after the total number of infections rose from 2,77,580 to 2,78,288 while the total deaths climbed from 5,795 to 5,803.

Of the 1,59,41,773 samples sent to laboratories, 21,21,119 have tested positive (13.31 per cent) for COVID-19 until Thursday.

Currently, 2,95,578 people are in home quarantine while 2,446 people are in institutional quarantine.

Tejashwi raises Sitamarhi encounter in Assembly, hits out at Government

FIANS ■ PATNA

The Bihar Government is on the backfoot after an encounter with the liquor mafia in Sitamarhi district on Wednesday claimed the life of a sub-inspector while a guard sustained grievous injuries.

Leader of Opposition and RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav raised this incident in the

Vidhan Sabha on Thursday. He said that the law and order situation in Bihar is in a bad shape. This is the reason why police officers are getting killed in broad daylight.

"Transfers and postings would be done for only those police officers who used to give 'RCP tax' (Bribe) to top bosses in the Nitish Kumar government," Tejashwi said.

Kerala caught between devil and deep sea?

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Allegations of massive corruption and illegal sale of deep sea fishing rights to a dubious firm from the United States have taken whatever sheen remained on the CPI(M)-led Pinarayi Vijayan Government in Kerala, says Oommen Chandi, former Chief Minister of Kerala.

Though Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and Fisheries Minister J Mercykutty claimed that the MoU with the US company for deep sea fishing off Kerala Coast was signed without the concurrence of the Kerala Government, neither the fishermen nor the general public are willing to believe the argument.

"The deal was signed by the State-owned Kerala State Industrial development Corporation and Kerala Inland Navigation Corporation with the US company which itself has dubious track records. It is certain that this is not a clean and transparent deal," said Hari S Kartha, widely respected political commentator in the State.

According to Kartha, the CPI(M) is fighting a losing battle against the UDF. "The Pinarayi Vijayan government had squandered all the good will it had among the people when it assumed office in 2016. Tuesday's UDF rally at Thiruvananthapuram should be seen in this context," he said. Oommen Chandi who presided over the meeting

which also saw the participation of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, turned out to be a run-away success, he said. "Chandi was the unquestioned star of the show and this is a warning signal to the LDF," said Kartha.

The LDF Government is in a fire-fighting mode and is issuing advertisements in all newspapers and TV channels claiming that "Kerala witnessed tremendous growth in number of industries in the past four and a half years." "Kerala has become a role model of progress. One of the departments that has added feather in its growth cap is the industries department," claims E P Jayarajan, minister of industries.

The industries department claims that NITI Aayog's India Innovation Index has ranked Kerala as one of the most investment friendly States in India. Vijayan and the CPI(M) had lambasted the Centre for disbanding the Planning Commission of India and introducing the NITI Aayog.

The NITI Aayog's India Innovation Index says the Ease of Doing Business (EDB) in Kerala is 3.57 while that of neighbouring Tamil Nadu and Karnataka are 53.57 and 42.86 respectively. Andhra Pradesh tops the Index with a score of 100. The EDB is the yardstick which entrepreneurs and investors use to measure the investment and industrial climate of a State or a country. The last four years saw four

entrepreneurs committing suicide in the State, citing harassment and tormenting by local political chieftains. Kochi, once known as the industrial hub of the State is now known as an industrial graveyard as many industrialists downed their shutters and left for other States.

"Though the Government claims that 1.5 lakh persons were employed by it during the last four years, as the appointments were based on recommendations of CPI(M) leaders. Only the relations and associates of party bigwigs have been appointed," said M S Giri, Thiruvananthapuram based entrepreneur.

Oommen Chandi, who restrained himself from using harsh comments said the State deserves a much better government and administration. "I have seen youth agitating for jobs in the past but the kind of agitation which we see in front of the secretariat is unseen in the past. This is proof of sheer irresponsibility," said Chandi.

The CPI(M) leaders and ministers are busy making the Kerala Yatra by the party's acting secretary A Vijayaraghavan a success. The secretary himself has courted controversy for getting his spouse employed as vice-principal of a government college though she does not possess the specified qualification. But a recent survey by a satellite news channel claimed that the CPI(M) would retain power in Kerala.

Didi protests petro price hike, rides e-scooty to office

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The poll-bound politics of Bengal rode the e-wheels with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday riding a too-and-fro to State Secretariat Nabanna on an electronic scooty to drive home the point on scorching fuel prices.

A day after hurling "Dangabaj" (rioter) and "Doitya" (Demon) abuses on Prime Minister Narendra Modi the Chief Minister on Thursday rode a battery-driven scooty instead of the usual Santro car that she uses to travel 8 km from her house at Kalighat to Nabanna.

While State Minister Firhad Hakim rode her to the secretariat in the morning, in the evening the Chief Minister rode back on her own with the security network in pursuit.

In her trademark white cotton sari, Banerjee put on a helmet and mask during the ride which was trailed by a group of other people from the ruling Trinamool Congress.

in petro prices."

Ridiculing the Prime Minister for giving free LPG gas connection and then charging Rs 800 per cylinder, Banerjee said "think about a family that needs two gases per month spending Rs 1,600 on that account ... then how will that family buy foods and spend on education and health."

At a time "when the price of crude has come down to half this Government has effected a 100 per cent rise in the price of cooking gas... It sold for Rs 400 with subsidy then and it is selling for Rs 800 now after Modi removed that subsidy that was a dire necessity for the people ... even yesterday it was increased by Rs 25," Banerjee said, adding how "even the subsidy on kerosene has been taken away."

She asked, "what the 2 crore people of my State who use kerosene oil will do? About 20 crore people of India survive on kerosene oil. They cannot buy gas for Rs 800, they cannot get subsidy on kerosene ... then what will they eat," demanding an immediate rollback on fuel prices.

"I want Modi ji either to tack back the prices or go back from power," Banerjee said adding she would continue her agitation in Bengal and would appeal to the opposition ruled states to do the same. "I will request Uddhav Thackeray,

MK Stalin, Kerala, Punjab, Rajasthan and all other Governments to take up the matter in a coordinated manner," Banerjee said.

"Modi is selling the country. This government is anti-people, anti-women, anti-farmer, and anti-young generation. We want this government to go," the Chief Minister said.

Attacking the Prime Minister for allowing a cricket stadium in Gujarat to be named after him, Banerjee said "this is height of dictatorship where the President of India is made to inaugurate a stadium named after the Prime Minister."

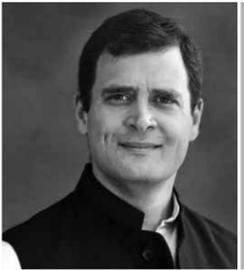
In an apparent reference to how the two ends of the stadium was named after two top industrialists of the country Banerjee, said "it is like a complete circle of events where there will be only 'Hum do ... humare do' apparently indicating at the Prime Minister, Home Minister Amit Shah and the two industrialists.

However, lampooning Banerjee for making the people's cause an election issue, Congress Lok Sabha leader said "she is making it an election publicity stunt instead of cutting taxes on her own end ... Why does she not lift her own taxes ... the Chhattisgarh Government has done it by reducing Rs 12 on fuel prices."

Slip of the tongue?

Rahul's remarks in Kerala, if made off the cuff, should not lead to a 'divisive politics' slugfest

Whether it was the heat of the moment or well-considered action, only the Gandhian would know. But the bullet has been fired and now it is for Rahul and the Congress to bear the recoil. At a recent rally in Kerala, Rahul said: "For the first 15 years, I was a Member of Parliament from the North, so I had got used to a different type of politics. For me, coming to Kerala was very refreshing because suddenly I found that people (here) are interested in issues, and not just superficially but in detail." Whether it will reap dividends or prove counterproductive to the 'Grand Old Party' in the forthcoming Assembly elections is best left to the wisdom of voters but Rahul's latest statement has provided the BJP with fresh fodder to attack the Congress. To be fair, Rahul is not



known for making statements that reek of divisive politics: He is straightforward, to the point and plain, and this is what makes him vulnerable. His statements often lend themselves to the creation of memes, courtesy Information Technology (IT) cells affiliated to other political parties who strive hard to prove that Rahul doesn't have the "potential" to be a leader, forget about becoming the Prime Minister in future. However, if the statement was made after due consideration, it's probably time for him to think about changing his advisors. What he said, could still have been conveyed without generating a controversy had he been a little more careful with his choice of words.

On the face of it, there is nothing inappropriate in the statement unless implied meanings are derived from it. But such derivations are common in politics and if Rahul is ignorant of it, it's his fault. Going by the adage that "politics is all about opportunity", senior BJP leaders jumped at the chance and accused the Congress leader of indulging in divisive politics for gains in the Kerala elections. In a country where leaders regularly stoop to new lows and then get away by claiming that they didn't actually mean what they said, Rahul's comment is nothing to make such a hullabaloo about. Our heads still drop in shame when we are reminded of remarks like "khaki underwear" by Azam Khan or when Mulayam Singh Yadav justified rape, saying "Boys err at times, wrong to hang rapists", or even Lalu Prasad's boastful remark that "Bihar's roads would be made like the cheeks of Hema Malini". Now, Rahul has cancelled his Left-Congress joint rally in Bengal, apparently to focus more on Kerala. It could be that the southern State seems more promising to him since the Congress' prospects are rather bleak in West Bengal where the fight is directly between the TMC and the BJP. Well, while Rahul is caught in a storm, the Congress old guard have come up with some sound advice, with Kapil Sibal saying the "wisdom of the electors" should be respected for they know "who to vote for and why". With leaders of such acumen, balance and maturity still serving the party, one wonders why Rahul doesn't seek their advice before making such foot-in-the-mouth remarks. Could it be something to do with the internal fault lines? Let's leave it for the Congress to decide.

PICTALK



A gun store owner holds a rifle in Americana, Brazil

Blood on hands

Over 6,500 migrants, including 2,711 Indians, have died working on Qatar's World Cup-related projects

It's called "The beautiful game". The loftiest event of the sport, known as the World Cup, garners the maximum number of viewers in any discipline of any sporting contest across the globe. The "greatest spectacle on Earth" involves glamour, charisma, passion, super-human athleticism, national pride and, certainly not the least, zillions of dollars for the host country as well as for the Zurich-headquartered Federation of International Football Association (FIFA) in television broadcast and other rights. The FIFA World Cup taxes the host nation a lot in terms of manpower, infrastructure and other facilities, but the monetary returns far outweigh the cost input and the moolah raked in is a purse bigger than what you'd see from any other event, even the Olympics. And Qatar is the proud host of the next edition of the World Cup in November 2022. But behind all the glitz and razzmatazz of the shiny stadia and the spruced setup in the Persian Gulf nation, is a sordid tale of hardships, torture and human rights abuse, ending in death. According to *The Guardian*, thousands of migrant workers have died in Qatar since it was unexpectedly chosen as the host for the extravaganza in December 2010.

More than 6,500 migrant labourers from five South Asian countries — India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have died, on an average of 12 deaths each week, according to the British daily. While 2,711 of those who died hailed from India, Nepali workers accounted for 1,641 deaths, followed by Bangladesh at more than 1,000 and Pakistan 824. With inconsistent and imprecise records, it is difficult to assess the exact causes for the deaths but official records range from "blunt trauma" to "asphyxia" and "hanging", though the most common is "natural death". The actual toll is likely to be significantly higher given that the analysis did not include deaths from other countries known to send large numbers of workers to Qatar, such as Kenya and the Philippines. It is likely that a significant number of the total deaths occurred on projects related to the World Cup as Qatar has undertaken a massive construction programme to prepare for the tournament, including building seven stadiums, a new airport as well as broad additions to its public transportation network. It's time for the Indian Government, as well as the United Nations Human Rights Council, to finally take cognisance of the pitiable working and dwelling conditions of migrant workers in Qatar and censure it severely.

West Bengal and Bangladesh

There has been a major change in people's thinking ahead of State poll; even the most secular of them fear that Bengal might become another Bangladesh



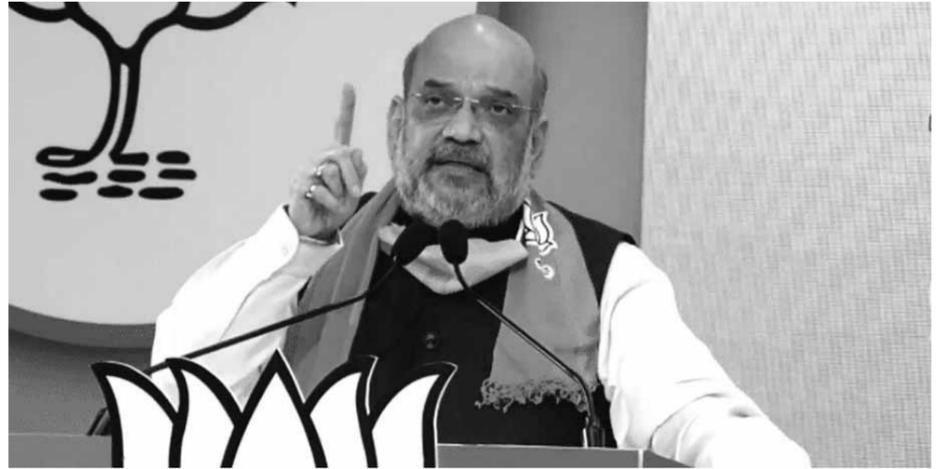
PRAFULL GORADIA

As lucidly brought out by Timur Kuran, a Turkish American economist who teaches at the Duke University, the practice of Islam inhibits business growth and, therefore, does not enable economic progress or development. The prohibition of usury is an example. This explains why Islamic societies have not been economically productive. Therefore, they had to become adept at the conquest of other lands in search of resources.

Bangladesh has an added handicap. For centuries, the Bengali elite was more land-owning than business-running. The Bengali culture took its cue from the Bengali elite. Islam is a comprehensive prescription for living, including politics, with the *Quran* as the ultimate reference point. No Muslim ruler could deviate from that path. Ideally, *jamhuriyat* (consensus) was the solution. Monarchy, autocracy and oligarchy were the only alternatives, which left democracy no space.

Sheikh Hasina Wazed somehow fights elections. She has won four terms in all, is relatively secular and grateful to India for the freedom of Bangladesh. Her predecessor, Begum Khaleda Zia, was not. Khaleda's husband Ziaur Rahman was almost pro-Pakistani, being a Muslim *ashraf* (a descendant of Prophet Muhammad). But what after Hasina Wazed retires or relinquishes power? Would not there be a change in the country's foreign policy, especially *vis-à-vis* India?

It is uncanny that the Bengali Hindu elite founded a Hindu political ideology. Raj Narain Bose is reputed to have coined the term "Hindutva", or at least used it for the first time in 1863. He was the grandfather of Yogi Aurobindo Ghosh. The Hindu Anushilan Samiti was founded and functioned only in Bengal, with even the great poet Rabindranath Tagore being its leading light. The movement against the partition of Bengal in 1905 was largely led by Yogi Aurobindo and actively supported by Tagore. The Bengal Renaissance was a Hindu phenomenon.



With the annulment of the partition of Bengal by Emperor George V in 1911 at the Delhi Durbar, the Hindu punch softened with the idea of having Hindu-Muslim cordiality. That was the inauguration of so-called secularism in Bengal. The Bengali elite began regretting their conduct towards Muslims. Say, inviting a Muslim co-villager to a wedding dinner, making him sit separately to eat and then expecting him to carry his *thali* to clean. This is just one example.

With the rise of Netaji Subhas, the Hindu-Muslim cordiality tended towards friendship. A moderate leader, Fazlur Rahman of the Krishak Party, became the Premier of Bengal; this secular trend continued. By early 1947, Netaji's elder brother Sarat Bose, Fazlur Rahman and Sir Abdul Rahim were discussing the prospects of a third dominion, namely, undivided Bengal in addition to Hindustan and Pakistan.

After Independence, the Nehruvian ethos and the appeasement of Muslims for their votes inflated this trend. The Partition, which displaced many Hindus, did not lead to any real antagonism against Muslims in Bengal in its immediate aftermath as well as later. So much so that being associ-



THE FIRST MAJOR SIGN OF WEST BENGAL'S CHANGING POLITICAL MOOD WAS THE 2019 LOK SABHA ELECTION IN WHICH THE BJP WON 18 OUT OF 42 PARLIAMENTARY SEATS. THE ASSEMBLY POLL IS THE BEGINNING OF A NEW CHAPTER IN WEST BENGAL'S POLITICAL JOURNEY

ated with the RSS, the Hindu Mahasabha or the Jana Sangh became infra dig. The Hindu political movement could not throw up a popular leader after Syama Prasad Mookerjee died mysteriously in Kashmir. Jana Sangh leader Haripada Bharati was respected but without mass appeal. The secular show persisted and infiltrators from Bangladesh were encouraged for their votes.

Yet, the Islamist penny dropped at last in the Bengali Hindu's mind. Clearly a revolutionary change is taking place that may well have a reaction across the border in Bangladesh. There has been a cataclysmic change in the thinking of people in West Bengal with the approaching Assembly elections. It is truly a metamorphosis because, for decades, West Bengal has both resisted the domination of what the *bhadralok* would call a "Hindi heartland party" and has prided itself on its avowedly secular outlook; the Bengali identity has been preponderant over the religious one.

However, the incessant molycoddling of the religious minority and even the most radical jihadist elements has slowly but surely brought on an about-turn in the Bengali mind. To the extent that even the most

secular among them have begun to fear that their State might become another Bangladesh. The first major sign of West Bengal's changing political mood was the 2019 Lok Sabha election in which the BJP won 18 out of 42 parliamentary seats. The rapidly shifting scenario with the approach of the 2021 Assembly election is the beginning of a new chapter in West Bengal's political journey, one that will have implications beyond the State.

West Bengal is very much in the news, especially because of the impending Assembly elections. The country is witnessing an acrimonious tussle where the ruling Trinamool Congress' incumbent Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is fighting to save her Government in the face of a determined assault by the BJP. The remarkable drama of the West Bengal elections is the by-now-discernible wave of discontent against Mamata — sitting Ministers and political heavyweights do not otherwise quit on poll eve to join the Opposition. But more significant is the change taking place in the Bengali psyche. There is growing willingness to be more integrally an arm of Bharat.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PROTECT COVID VACCINES FROM MAFIA

Sir — It is indeed great that the Government has decided to involve private hospitals in the vaccination drive. The step was much needed as it is almost impossible to vaccinate such a large population as ours through the Government machinery only.

The Government cares for the elderly population, that's why it took the decision that everyone above 60 years of age and those over 45 years with comorbidities will be able to get COVID-19 vaccines from March 1 for free in 10,000 Government medical facilities and for a charge at over 20,000 private hospitals. However, how much this charge will be is yet to be seen. The Government must ensure that private hospitals do not charge "too much" for the jobs.

It is often seen that corrupt employees of Government hospitals, often in collusion with private entities, create such a scenario that medicines are not available in hospital pharmacies or run out of stock while these are sold at exorbitant prices by private ones. If the COVID vaccine meets the same fate, it will be unfortunate and the ambitious programme will fall flat. Meanwhile, we must not be ready to dole out whatever cost the private hospitals quote for the job. The private hospitals often take undue advantage as we want to avoid long queues in Government hospitals just to save time. We must remember that they charge extra only because we are ready to pay it.

M Pradyu | *Kannur*

IT'S DO-OR-DIE SITUATION FOR INDIANS

Sir — It refers to the editorial 'Continuing travails' (February 25). With several States reporting a surge in COVID-19 cases, it is high time that the RT-PCR test should be made mandatory for entry into all States. There should also be reasonable restrictions over interstate movement while unnecessary movement should not be allowed at all.

The increase in Coronavirus cases is because many people have stopped follow-

Beat the stress but not on driver's seat



It's unfortunate that world-renowned golfer Tiger Woods got injured in a dramatic rollover crash involving his SUV. However, the American golfer was lucky to get immediate help from the authorities present nearby. Accidents can be avoided if necessary precautions are taken. In any accident, first aid and timely help matters a lot.

In India, we see that people are largely indif-

ferent towards road accident victims. This is because they don't want to land in any sort of trouble or unnecessary questioning by the police. They are not completely wrong, for the police often misbehaves with those who help road accident victims. Instead of commending or boosting their morale, the cops usually look upon them as suspects.

Many personalities from the fields of sports and films must be used to driving at high speeds to cope with the tension and stress they face in their daily lives. But rather than driving madly and crazily, there are several other ways to chill out and beat stress. Playing indoor games, spending time with children, taking water therapy like a deep plunge into water bodies, visiting natural vistas and watering a garden are some of these ways. People from all walks of life must visit natural places like pristine forests for getting rejuvenated. We wish good health and recovery to Tiger Woods!

P Senthil | *Mumbai*

ing the precautions and are lackadaisical in their approach. People are seen wearing masks improperly and are not sanitising their hands. Further, the Government also relaxed the norms as we have seen in Maharashtra, where all categories of commuters were allowed to travel in the local trains. This added to the problem which is now assuming gigantic proportions.

The situation is worse in villages and small towns where people don't even care to wear a mask. They have developed a self-conceived notion that "Corona has gone" and vaccines have been developed, hence there is no need to worry. Its time that the Government spread more awareness and told people that there is no substitute to the precautions. The situation is do-or-die but we are not ready to accept it.

Bal Govind | *Noida*

WHY DO WE HAVE CASINOS?

Sir — Why do we have casinos and why do Governments want them? What ben-

efit are they? Is it because of the great amount of money the Government receives from them? The casinos are involved in crimes like money laundering.

I would like to make just a short comment on casinos. Several Australian casinos have been accused of money laundering and generally poor control. The new one in Sydney cannot yet get a licence to operate until it changes its processes.

I must admit that I personally don't like casinos and the fact that most people will lose money, as is obvious by the fact they are profitable. I don't mind the occasional bet on horses and a lottery ticket even though I don't expect to win every week. But casinos are a lucrative business for the Government and the profits are high.

Dennis Fitzgerald | *Melbourne*

SOUNDBITE

Since the last three months, the price of domestic LPG has increased by ₹200 while petrol and diesel are inching towards ₹100. The Modi Government is battling for its billionaire friends from both ends while the common man is suffering.

Congress leader — Priyanka Gandhi

Law enforcement forces have prevented 72 terrorist crimes in the country in 2020, up from 57 a year earlier.

Russian President — Vladimir Putin

Bollywood producers neither have the money nor talent to cater to audiences who want something beyond the popular and the mainstream.

Actor — Abhay Deol

The IOC Future Host Commission recommended that the executive committee initiate a targeted dialogue with Brisbane and the Australian Olympic Committee for the organisation of the 2032 Olympics.

IOC president — Thomas Bach

The Assembly proceedings will not be conducted on notified Government holidays during the upcoming Budget session of the Assembly.

Goa Chief Minister — Pramod Sawant



FIRST COLUMN

COVID LESSONS FOR ENTREPRENEURS

It's vital to be calm, think rationally and make decisions that affect your work environment positively



PRITIKA SINGH

The year 2020, and the Coronavirus outbreak that dominated it, set everyone back, whether it was work or life. However, the contagion's economic impact was felt more than the social one. The financial implications of the pandemic had everyone in a tizzy, confused and thinking, will I make it? Will I survive? It took a toll on the global economy, businesses, work, personal affairs at home and made everyone question and rethink their priorities and then put them in survival mode. One of the key takeaways from the outbreak, especially for entrepreneurs leading organisations was: Invest in your mental health. That is and should be a priority. If you have peace of mind, in spite of everything else falling, crumbling around you, half the battle is won. It's important to be calm, think rationally and make decisions that affect your health and your work environment in a positive way.

The healthcare sector was overwhelmed when the pandemic hit the country. Doctors and nurses were overworked as was the other hospital staff. People were in a state of panic. However, there is no overcoming something if you are in a constant state of flux. This is especially true of leaders tasked with guiding an organisation. They have to come to grips with the reality that the pandemic will stay for a long time and the only way to work and move forward is to be transparent with staff, hear them out, value their inputs and look after them.



The biggest change that the outbreak brought to our lives was the need to maintain social distancing, which gave birth to the culture of work from home (WFH). Hospitals were overflowing with Coronavirus patients and medical professionals were in constant contact with people, other than patients. It was important for most medical facilities to cut down on administrative staff and allow WFH in order to curb the spread of the contagion. This move gave doctors and nurses free movement, enabled quick decisions and resulted in quicker turnarounds.

As the CEO of a hospital, it was amazing to see people adapt to two roles and the extra workload more efficiently and quickly. It made one realise that the biggest learning from the pandemic was WFH. It changed the way we function as human beings and value the time and effort that someone else puts in. It also increased efficiency and kept employees and their families safe.

There was a lesson for leaders as well. If you take tough but benevolent decisions when you are the head of an organisation, people value you more, respect you and put in that extra bit to make sure that the company succeeds. Cutting down on manpower and cost-cutting is never the solution. The mental health of staff is very important, not just good salaries and, employees run a company based on the top leadership's vision.

Another lesson that the contagion taught us was the fact that women, who have always been a stabilising and calming factor in society, are equally adept at dealing with an emergency. During this pandemic, women COVID warriors, frontline workers, office-goers, homemakers and Government employees rose to the occasion and in some cases were leading from the front.

Lastly, technology has come to the rescue of mankind as we have been forced to change the way we work, handle documents, process information, hold meetings, seminars and even deliver healthcare. One also has to realise that even though we are in this situation right now, it will change and things will go back to normal. But for now, we need to learn and adapt to this so-called new normal. Entrepreneurs, especially women leaders, have to learn and grow from this.

(The writer is CEO, Prayag Hospital. The views expressed are personal.)

Should the global debt pandemic worry us?

As long as primary Budget deficits are not too large, the main problem is to stabilise public debt, independent of the size of the economy so that it may not go beyond control



GOVIND BHATTACHARJEE

The previous decade saw the fastest increase in debt in emerging economies in the last 50 years. The IMF estimated that global public debt at the end of 2020 would touch 98 per cent of the GDP, and India's gross Government debt would be at 90 per cent of the GDP. According to the IMF's *Fiscal Monitor*, the debt-to-GDP ratio exceeds 100 per cent in most OECD countries and close to 100 per cent in emerging ones. Among the major economies, only China (66.5 per cent), Australia (70 per cent) and Germany (72 per cent) have fared better. The problem economies of Italy and Greece have seen debt levels rising to 158 per cent and 200 per cent of the GDP, respectively, while Japan's debt is 264 per cent. From 2021 onwards, global debt will rise higher than in the pre-COVID times. A credible medium-term fiscal framework is essential to combat rising debt, but with the pandemic still out of control, additional revenue mobilisation necessary for public spending on health and infrastructure is now more difficult than ever before in most developing countries. The saving grace is that borrowing is now cheap, thanks to the interest rates falling to exceptionally low levels and is expected to remain lower than the growth rates in most countries. According to S&P Global, in 2023, growth will outpace interest rates not only in all rich countries, but also in 53 out of 60 emerging economies. The "growth-corrected interest rate", the differential between interest and nominal growth rates, will be -3.6 per cent in India, -6.5 per cent in China and -33.8 per cent in Argentina.

This legitimately raises the question, should emerging economies also rethink their fiscal limits? *The Economist* quoted India's budgeted fiscal deficit of 9.5 per cent of the GDP this fiscal year with no road map to bring it below the three per cent limit prescribed by the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, while it noted that the latest *Economic Survey* had also highlighted that India's interest rate has been below its growth rate "by norm, not by exception", and its assertion that higher debt and fiscal spending during an economic crisis should not cause unnecessary worries. But Fitch Ratings, noted that in the last decade, the average interest rate had fallen from four per cent to two per cent in developed economies, while across emerging markets, it had increased from 4.3-5.1 per cent. Thus the benefits of lower rates are mostly available to rich nations.

The classical Domar Model lays down two conditions for sustainability of Government debt: First, the nominal growth rate should exceed the interest rate on public debt and, second, the primary account of the Government, which means taking out the interest payment, should not have any deficit. If both conditions are satisfied, the debt stock in GDP will decrease fast, and even if the primary account has a deficit, it will ultimately converge to a sustainable level. But if the growth rate lags behind the interest rate, then public debt will increase indefinitely to be unsustainable. Thus public debt can stabilise at a higher level but this would render a country vulnerable to economic shocks. However, since this model does not consider the interdependencies existing between the interest rate, the structure of public spending, the degree of public indebtedness and the growth rate which influence each other, economists Hamilton and Flavin suggested another model. According to it, the inter-temporal Budget constraint must be satisfied to make the debt



AS THE PANDEMIC NOW TESTS THE RESILIENCE OF ECONOMIES, A GLOBAL RECESSION WHICH WAS ALREADY RAGING, IS NOW PUSHING THE WORLD INTO A DEEP DEBT CRISIS, WHICH MARKED THE END OF EACH PREVIOUS WAVE. LIKE IN THE CASE OF PREVIOUS WAVES, NOW ALSO DEEPER STRUCTURAL REFORMS ARE CALLED FOR

The writer is a former Director-General of the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India and an academic. The views expressed are personal.



stock sustainable, which requires the present value of future primary surpluses to cover the size of the current public debt. The uncertainty of future values of projections, interest rates and inflation remains the weakness of this model, but whatever model is used, increasing public debt does not necessarily imply its unsustainability, especially when a country needs additional finance to carry out structural forms or for making capital investments on infrastructure.

As long as primary Budget deficits are not too large, the main problem is to stabilise public debt, independent of the size of the economy so that it may not go beyond control. This is simple budgetary arithmetic. If the debt was stable at 60 per cent of the GDP with a primary deficit of three per cent, to stabilise it at 80 per cent would require the primary deficit to be limited to four per cent. *The Economic Survey* points out that GDP growth in India has always exceeded interest rates in the last 25 years, though the primary account has often been in deficit, but less than the maximum limit defined by the debt sustainability equations. The survey concludes that even in the worst case scenario, with real growth being only four per cent for the next 10 years and high primary deficits 6.8 per cent of the GDP (Centre plus States), five per cent inflation and a nominal interest rate of six per cent, public debt will still be sustainable. This scenario is not peculiar to India. The IMF says that emerging economies have experienced growth rates exceeding interest rates 75 per cent of the time. Of course, there is an element of risk in

case of high prevalence of external debt in the overall debt portfolio because if the exchange rate weakens, the debt-to-GDP ratio will rise sharply even if the interest rate remains modest. But for India, this risk is minimal as external debt constitutes only about six per cent of our total liabilities (₹5.85 lakh crore in 2019-20).

Government debt amounted to 73.8 per cent of the GDP in 2019-20, before the pandemic pushed it much higher. As per the road map prescribed by the 15th Finance Commission, India's debt should decline marginally from 89.8 per cent to 85.7 per cent of the GDP over 2020-26, but the decline will practically take place in the last three years. Thus we need to stabilise our debt around that level provided these projections hold. This may not be the case as additional spending will be required on health and infrastructure.

But the moot question is whether the high debt level is desirable even if it is sustainable, as public borrowing generally crowds out private investment and hurts the economy. Perhaps the answer lies in how the borrowed funds are used. If the Government spends on investment, like the 26 per cent increase in capital spending budgeted for the next fiscal, this risk would be less, especially when the economy is operating below capacity as is the case now; public spending can then bring in additional private investment by improving incomes and profitability.

However, this is not the first time a debt pandemic has hit the world and there were three earlier waves of debt

accumulation during 1970-89, 1990-2001 and 2002-09, all of which began during periods of low real interest rates and easy access to borrowing from the financial markets. Each caused global recessions in 1982, 1991 and 2009 and economic downturns in 1998 and 2001, and were followed by structural reforms designed to lower vulnerabilities, with greater reserve accumulation and strengthening of policy frameworks. Controls like inflation targeting, fiscal rules and more robust financial sector supervision became the norm.

We are now riding the crest of the fourth wave that began in 2010 but peaked during the pandemic with the slowing of economic growth in most countries. The conditions were remarkably similar to those after the 2008 meltdown, when interest rates were low and access to financial markets for capital was easy due to the banks having extended their outreach remarkably. As the pandemic now tests the resilience of economies, a global recession which was already raging, is now pushing the world into a deep debt crisis, which marked the end of each previous wave. Like in the case of previous waves, now also deeper structural reforms are called for. In the Indian context, this will mean many more reforms of the factor markets, along with reform of agriculture and financial sectors while strengthening the overall regulatory mechanisms. Appropriate policy choices are crucial because once recovery gets underway, only reforms and the accompanying institutional mechanisms can help restore our fiscal and debt sustainability.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

FOR ME, COMING TO KERALA WAS REFRESHING AS I FOUND THAT PEOPLE ARE INTERESTED IN ISSUES. NOT SUPERFICIALLY BUT GOING INTO DETAILS.

—CONGRESS LEADER

RAHUL GANDHI



INSULTING INDIANS IS A FAVOURITE PASTIME OF RAHUL GANDHI. INDIANS ARE NOT SUPERFICIAL BUT YOU ARE, MR RAHUL GANDHI.

—UNION MINISTER

PRAKASH JAVADEKAR

India needs a standard metric for the social cost of GHG

We must also develop a metric for quantifying the social cost of other components so that the impact of local air pollution, too, can be monetised for policy formulation

Actions on the climate change front are again in the news in the US after President Joe Biden took charge. One of his first executive orders pertained to reassembling a federal, cross-Government team to figure out the "social cost of carbon."

So, what is the social cost of carbon (SCC) or of Green House Gases (GHG)? SCC is the present value of future harm caused by an incremental ton of carbon dioxide emissions.

It is difficult to estimate SCC because carbon emissions, climate change, and economic harm are related through complex processes that are not fully understood. Additionally, the rate at which to discount future harm is contentious and critical to the magnitude of the present value.



AMIT KUMAR

The writer is Senior Director, Social Transformation, TERI. The views expressed are personal.

As per the Interagency Working Group on Social Cost of Carbon, the US Government's technical support document 2010: "The SCC is an estimate of the monetised damages associated with an incremental increase in carbon emissions in a given year. It is intended to include (but is not limited to) changes in net agricultural productivity, human health, property damages from increased flood risk and the value of ecosystem services due to climate change."

It is a well-established fact that consequent to climate change, countries face a slew of adverse impacts; damages that are not adequately quantified while assessing these impacts. Developing economies like India are going to bear an unduly larger share of such

impacts. An analysis of the *Climate Risk Index (CRI)*, 2021, shows India to be among the top 10 most affected countries in 2019 on account of climate change-induced extreme weather events.

India's annual monsoon season continued for a month longer than usual. From June to the end of September 2019, 110 per cent of the normal rainfall occurred, a record since 1994.

According to the CRI, the floods caused by the heavy rains were responsible for 1,800 deaths across 14 States and led to the displacement of 1.8 million people. Overall, 11.8 million people were affected by the intense monsoon season with the economic damage estimated to be \$10 billion.



Furthermore, with a total of eight tropical cyclones, 2019 was one of the most active Northern Indian Ocean cyclone seasons on record. Six of the eight cyclones intensified to become "very severe." The worst was Cyclone Fani that occurred in May 2019 and impacted a total of 28 million people, killing nearly 90 people in India and

Bangladesh and causing economic losses of \$8.1 billion. Then, there are other consequences in terms of impacts on human health and on food security, to name a few. The relation between fossil fuels and climate change, too, is now accepted beyond any doubt. However, while carrying out the cost-benefit analysis of different options to replace fossil fuels, these damages — also known as "externalities" — are either not taken into account or remain fuzzy. And that is where a tool like the SCC may help.

As per the Institute for Policy Integrity, the SCC is "a metric designed to quantify and monetise climate damages, representing the net economic cost of carbon dioxide emissions."

In a country like ours that is trying to transition to

clean energy through its ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in terms of emission-intensity reductions and quantum increase in non-fossil electricity; it is imperative that policymaking and regulatory frameworks are informed by scientific evidence.

This, in turn, demands a methodology to quantify the impacts that are based on verifiable numbers and are standardised across sectors. But even more importantly, it is developed in an academically rigorous, transparent and peer-reviewed process so as to have universal acceptability.

And that is where an inter-agency or an inter-ministerial approach helps in forging a joint ownership. Given that this is not a one-time exercise, a formal mech-

anism needs to be put in place.

The Apex Committee for Implementation of Paris Agreement (AIPA) constituted by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MoEFCC) may very well provide such a unified platform. The mechanism must also provide for engaging with the public and other stakeholders in an ongoing fashion.

Going forward, we should aim at not only developing a metric for quantifying the social cost of GHG but also of other components so that the impact of local air pollution, too, can be holistically monetised from a policy formulation perspective. It is time that such complex matters attract a more science-based approach, thereby obviating any kind of biases.

Junta supporters attack anti-coup demonstrators

Yangon: Supporters of Myanmar's junta attacked protesters demanding the end to the military government that took power in a coup, using slingshots, iron rods and knives Thursday to injure several of the demonstrators.

The violence complicates an already intractable standoff between the military and a protest movement that has been staging large rallies daily to demand that Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government be restored to power. She and other politicians were ousted and arrested on February 1 in a takeover that shocked the international community and reversed years of slow progress toward democracy.

Facebook, meanwhile, announced that it would ban all accounts linked to the country's military as well as ads from military-controlled companies — a reflection of international outrage over the takeover.

On Thursday, tensions escalated on the streets between anti-coup protesters and supporters of the military. Photos and videos posted on social media showed groups attacking



A woman helps an unidentified man lying on the sidewalk of Sule Pagoda Road after he was attacked by a group of Junta supporters in Yangon, Myanmar on Thursday. AP

people in downtown Yangon as police stood by without intervening. The number of injured people and their condition was not immediately clear.

According to accounts and photos posted on social media, hundreds of people marched Thursday in support of the coup. They carried banners in English with the slogans "We Stand With Our Defense Services" and "We Stand With State Administration Council," which is the official name of the new junta.

When the marchers were

jeered by bystanders near the city's Central Railway station, they responded by firing slingshots, throwing stones and then chasing down the bystanders. One band that broke away stabbed and kicked a man they had chased. Video shows there had been both pro and anti-coup crowds near the station Thursday.

Supporters of the military have gathered in the streets before, especially in the days immediately before and after the coup, but had not used violence so openly. AP

Facebook bans all Myanmar military-linked accounts, ads

Yangon: Social media giant Facebook announced on Thursday it was banning all accounts linked to Myanmar's military as well as ads from military-controlled companies in the wake of the army's seizure of power on February 1.

It said in a statement that it was treating the post-coup situation in Myanmar as an "emergency," explaining that the ban was precipitated by events since the coup, including "deadly violence."

Facebook already has banned several military-linked accounts since the coup, including army-controlled Myawaddy TV and state television broadcaster MRTV.

The bans are also being applied on Instagram, which is owned by Facebook. Facebook and other social media platforms came under enormous criticism in 2017 when right groups said they failed to act enough to stop hate speech against Myanmar's Muslim Rohingya minority. AP

Xi claims complete victory in eradicating poverty in China

Beijing: President Xi Jinping on Thursday declared that China has scored a "complete victory" in its fight against poverty by lifting over 770 million people out of it in the last four decades, calling it another "miracle" created by the country that will go down in history.

Absolute poverty has been eradicated in the world's most populous country, Xi announced while addressing a gathering held here to mark the country's accomplishments in poverty alleviation and honour its model poverty fighters.

China has a population of around 1.4 billion. "No country has been able to lift hundreds of millions of

people out of poverty in such a short time," Xi said.

Xi said that all poor people in rural areas have been lifted out of poverty.

With this, China has achieved the UN goal of poverty eradication 10 years ahead of the 2030 deadline, he said.

Over the past eight years, the final 98.99 million impoverished rural residents living under the current poverty line have all been lifted out of poverty. All the 832 impoverished counties and 1,28,000 impoverished villages have been removed from the poverty list, he said.

Since the launch of the reform and opening up in the

late 1970s, 770 million impoverished rural residents have shaken off poverty when calculated according to China's current poverty line, he said.

China has contributed to more than 70 per cent of global poverty reduction over the same period, Xi, also General Secretary of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC), said.

With such achievements, China has created another "miracle" that will "go down in history," he said.

Xi said since he assumed power, China has invested accumulative fiscal funds of nearly 1.6 trillion yuan (about \$246 billion) into poverty alleviation

over the past eight years.

He said according to the World Bank's international poverty line, the number of Chinese people lifted out of poverty over the past 40 years accounts for more than 70 per cent of the global total.

China considers extreme rural poor are those with annual per capita income of less than \$620, or about \$1.69 a day at current exchange rates, which compared closely with the World Bank's minimum standard of \$1.90 a day.

Complete eradication of poverty in China was the main goal announced by Xi when he came to power towards the end of 2012. PTI

China denies subjecting US diplomats to coronavirus anal tests

AP ■ BEIJING

China on Thursday denied subjecting US diplomats to COVID-19 anal tests following reports from Washington that some of its personnel were being made to undergo the procedure.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian told reporters at a daily briefing that "China has never asked US diplomats in China to go through anal swab tests."

A US State Department spokesperson said Washington was "committed to guaranteeing the safety and security of American diplomats and their families while preserving their dignity, consistent with the

Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations as well as other relevant diplomatic law provisions." The Washington Post reported last week that some US personnel had told the department they had been subjected to the anal tests.

The procedure has been applied in China because it is reportedly more accurate than nasal or mouth swabs.

China has not reported a new local case of Covid-19 in more than a week, but has maintained strict testing, especially for people arriving from abroad. Diplomats and other foreigners with special status are exempted from a ban on most foreigners entering the country.

Countering Chinese Propaganda Act introduced in US Congress

Washington: A legislation has been introduced in the US Congress for countering the Chinese propaganda by creating a new sanctions authority against state-backed disinformation networks.

Republican Study Committee Chairman Congressman Jim Banks and Senator Tom Cotton on Wednesday introduced the Countering Chinese Propaganda Act.

The bill requires the Secretary of State to examine whether or not the United Front Work Department meets the criteria to be sanctioned under this new authority.

The legislation is based on recommendations from the Republican Study Committee's National Security Strategy and authorises sanctions against the United Front Work Department

(UFWD), which is an overseas influence arm of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC). The United Front participated directly in the Uyghur genocide and the oppression of Christians in China, but its ultimate goal is to spread those prosecutory tactics around the globe, Banks said.

"The leadership in Washington may have changed, but China's political warfare hasn't. It's fallen to Congress to expose and counter Communist Party disinformation. We can't back down now," he said.

"The Chinese Communist Party expands its disinformation campaign each day — concealing information on the origin of Covid-19, lying about its oppression of Uighurs and other religious minorities, and infiltrating American universities and businesses," Cotton said. PTI

GOP rallies solidly against Dems' virus relief package

Washington: Republicans rallied solidly against Democrats' proposed \$1.9 trillion Covid-19 relief bill as lawmakers awaited a decision by the Senate's parliamentarian that could bolster or potentially kill a pivotal provision hiking the federal minimum wage.

Despite their paper-thin congressional majorities, Democratic leaders were poised to push the sweeping package through the House on Friday. They were hoping the Senate, where changes seem likely, would follow quickly enough to have legislation on President Joe Biden's desk by mid-March.

By late Wednesday, not one Republican in either chamber had publicly said he or she would back the legislation. GOP leaders were honing attacks on the package as a job killer that does too little to reopen schools or businesses shuttered for the coronavirus pandemic and that was not only wasteful but also even unscrupulous.

"I haven't seen a Republican yet that's found something in there that they agree with," said House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif. "I think all



House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy

Republicans believe in three simple things: They want a bill that puts us back to work, back to school and back to health. This bill is too costly, too corrupt and too liberal."

The hardening opposition suggested that Biden's first major legislative initiative could encounter unanimous GOP opposition. That was a counterpoint to the new president's refrain during his campaign about bringing the country together and a replay of the Republican wall that new President Barack Obama encountered in 2009 and most of his administration.

Democrats showed no signs of backing down, citing

the assistance the measure would spread to people, businesses and state and local governments.

"If congressional Republicans want to oppose all that, my response is: Good luck," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said on the Senate floor.

By Wednesday evening, the most suspense was over a decision anticipated from Elizabeth MacDonough, the Senate's nonpartisan arbiter of its rules, that promised enormous political and legislative consequences.

The relief bill includes a provision that over five years would hike the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour. The parliamentarian is involved because Democrats are pushing the overall \$1.9 trillion measure through Congress under special rules that will let them avoid a Senate filibuster by Republicans.

Those same rules prohibit provisions with only an "incidental" impact on the federal budget because they are chiefly driven by other policy purposes. The parliamentarian decides if a provision passes that test. AP

Republicans push back on Pelosi proposal for riot commission

Washington: Republican leaders in the House and Senate say a proposed plan for an independent commission to study the Capitol insurrection is overly tilted toward Democrats, arguing that the panel should have an even party split like the one formed to study the September 11 terrorist attacks.

House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy and Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell said Wednesday that a legitimate commission would be comprised of an equal number of Republicans and Democrats. A draft proposed by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi would create an 11-member commission with four Republicans and seven Democrats, three of whom would be chosen by President Joe Biden, according to one of multiple aides who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the details under negotiation.

Pelosi has not commented on the draft or said why there should be more Democratic members. AP

Haldwani Rudrapur Cluster SWM Society (HRCSSWS) (Nagar Nigam Haldwani -Kathgodam)

Reference No. 31 **Corrigendum** Date 25/02/2021
E Tender Notice (Reference No.29, Date 12/02/2021) for Request for proposal are invited for the development of "Integrated Municipal Solid Waste Processing & Disposal Facility, SLF & Bio-mining of legacy waste on site for HRCSSWS Haldwani Distt-Nainital"
The changed dates of Proposal Due Date & Opening of Pre-qualification & Technical Bids for above mentioned E Tender as follows:
Proposal Due Date : 15-03-2021 Till 13.00 hours.
Opening of Pre-qualification & Technical Bids: 15-03-2021 14.00 hours.
There will be no change in the remaining dates. Pre Bid Meeting related corrigendum will be available in www.uktenders.gov.in from 26/02/2021 14.00 hours onward.
(Chandra Singh Martolia) (Dr.Jogendra Pal Singh Rautela)
Member Secretary HRCSSWS/ Honourable Chairman HRCSSWS/
Nagar Aayukta Nagar Nigam Haldwani Mayor Nagar Nigam Haldwani

AXIS BANK Retail Asset Centre, Delhi: Lower Ground Floor and Upper Ground Floor, Himalaya House, K.G. Marg, Delhi-110001.
Also at: Axis Bank Ltd., Axis House, Tower T-2, 2nd Floor, I-14, Sector-Retail Asset Centre, Ghaziabad: BF-1A-2.3, 1st Floor, Aditya City Centre, Niti Khand-1, Indrapuram, Ghaziabad-201012. Retail Asset Centre Faridabad: Axis Bank Ltd. SCO-8, Huda Shopping Centre, Sec. 16, Faridabad, Haryana-121002. Retail Asset Centre Gurgaon: Axis Bank Ltd -ASC Gurgaon, SG-107, DLF Galleria Complex, Near Post Office, DLF City Phase 4, Gurgaon-122009
Corporate Office: Axis House, Block-B, Bombay Dyeing Mills Compound, Pandurang Budhkar Marg, Work, Mumbai-400025. Registered Office: "Trishul", 3rd floor, opposite Samartha Temple, Law garden, Ellorabridge, Ahmedabad-380006

POSSESSION NOTICE UNDER SARFAESI ACT 2002
Whereas
The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of Axis Bank Ltd. under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13(1)(2) read with Rule 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notice upon the Borrower(s) Co-Borrower(s) Guarantor(s) Mortgagor(s) mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.
The Borrower(s) Co-Borrower(s) Guarantor(s) Mortgagor(s) having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower(s) Co-Borrower(s) Guarantor(s) Mortgagor(s) and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates:
The Borrower(s) Co-Borrower(s) Guarantor(s) Mortgagor(s) in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of Axis Bank Ltd.
The Borrower(s) Co-Borrower(s) Guarantor(s) Mortgagor(s) attention is invited to provisions of subsection (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Name of Borrower / Co-borrower	Description of Property	1. Date of Demand Notice
M/S Unnati Engineers & Fabricators, Plot No.8,Gali No.8/B Sarapur Industrial Area, Sohana Road, Faridabad-Haryana -121005, Through its Proprietor Sh Giridhar Sehrawat.	IMMOVABLE ASSETS Property comprising in khasra No. 11/8, 13, 18, 23, khasra No.14/3/1, situated at Mauza Sarapur, Tehsil-Balalgarh, District Faridabad, Haryana	2. Date of Possession 3. Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)
2. Sh Giridhar Sehrawat, Proprietor of M/S Unnati Engineers & Fabricators, Plot No.8, Gali No.8/B, Sarapur Ind. Area, Sohana Road, Faridabad-121005 Haryana.	(Identified as Plot No.8, Gali No.8/B-W, Sarapur Industrial Area, Tehsil Balalgarh District Faridabad)	1. 9-NOV-2020 2. 20-FEB-2021 & Rs.11,75,715/- Plus further interest, incidental expenses and cost
3. Ms. Suman Devi W/O Sh Balram, Guarantor of M/S Unnati Engineers & Fabricators, Plot No.8, Gali No.8/B, Sarapur Ind. Area, Sohana Road, Faridabad-121005 Haryana.	admeasuring 1200 sq. yards owned by Smt Suman Devi With Boundaries of the Property as follows :- North - Plot no 7 South - Plot no 9 East - M/s Reva West - Road	

The above-mentioned Borrower(s) Co-Borrower(s) Guarantor(s) Mortgagor(s) are hereby given a 30 days' Notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days' from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.
Date : 26-02-2021
Place : Delhi
Sd/-
Authorized Officer,
Axis Bank Ltd.,

Public Notice

To be known to all that my client, Pradeep Kharbanda S/o Late Sh. Harbans Lal Kharbanda, R/o Flat No.75, Gali No.5, Madangir, New Delhi Allottee/Mutatee of Plot No.12, Pocket-C-1, Sector-35, meas. 60.00sq.Mtrs. Under MIG Category, in Rohini Resid Scheme, Delhi. The original documents, i.e. Demand-Cum-Allotment Letter, Possession Letter and Site Possession Slip of the above said plot has been lost. An F.I.R./NCR/R. NO.172114/2021 dated 24/02/2021 to this effect has been lodged in P.S. Crime Branch, Delhi. Any person(s) claiming any right, interest having any objection or found in possession of original documents, may write/contact with above named person at above Address/Phone 9999354545 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. The person claiming any right, interest, objection with respect to this property, can personally inform or write to Deputy Director (L&I) Rohini or Director (R.U.C Block, 3' floor, ODA, Vikas Sadan, New Delhi

PROPERTY FOR SALE

Commercial Building for Sale, In Sector-18, Noida Area Approx 6500 Sq. Ft., Nine Floors with basement, Prime Location Opp. to GIP Mall Noida. Interested Parties can send their offers at propertysector18@gmail.com Seller has right to accept or decline the offer without assigning any reasons thereof. The offers shall be valid for 7 days only from the date of publication of this notice.

EASTERN RAILWAY

Abridged Tender Notice No. HWH-104-20-21 (Open Tender) for e-tendering
Dated : 22.02.2021. Sealed Tender Notice for e-tendering is invited by Dy. Chief Engineer (Con)-I Eastern Railway, Howrah for the following work : Name of work : Supply of 75000 cum of 50 mm size machine crushed track stone ballast in any types of Railway Wagon including all sorts of incidental charges for Bakudri quarry under the jurisdiction of Construction Department of Eastern Railway. Tender Value : Rs. 9.18.75.000/- Earnest Money: Nil. Date of opening : 05.04.2021 at 12.00 hrs. The Tender document and other details can be obtained from the website : www.reps.gov.in. The bidding for the tender is to be submitted through the e-tendering on above website. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any manual offer if submitted shall not be accepted and will be summarily rejected.
CON-38/2020-21
Tender Notice is also available at Website www.e.r.in.dianrailways.gov.in/www.reps.gov.in

German police raid suspected Islamic extremists in Berlin

AP ■ BERLIN

Hundreds of German police officers conducted coordinated raids early on Thursday in Berlin and the surrounding state of Brandenburg in the investigation of an organisation banned over allegations of Islamic extremism.

Some 850 police, including SWAT teams, were involved in the raids of apartments linked to members of the organisation known as Jama'atu Berlin, the state Interior Ministry said.

The organisation, whose name translates literally as the "Berlin Group," was banned by Berlin's state Interior Minister Andreas Geisel ahead of the raids on the grounds it was a "very radical" group that followed the Islamic State group's ideology.

"The ban is another clear signal to all religious extremists," Geisel said. "We will tolerate no place where terror is preached and the so-called Islamic State is glorified."

Notice Inviting Re-e-Tender

No.SSA/MDMS/Plates & Glass/20/2020/4630 Date: 25.02.2021
Mission Director, Axom Sarba Siksha Abhiyan Mission cum State Nodal Officer-MDM, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, Assam invites re-tender through e-Tendering process from manufacturer/Supplier of Steel Utensil for supply of Stainless Steel Plates and Stainless Steel Glass for Mid Day Meal.
To participate in this tender process through e-procurement document, bidder should have valid Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) and have to register in the portal <https://assamtenders.gov.in> by themselves.
The Bidder who have downloaded the tender schedules containing the tender details, terms and conditions, from the website shall submit their tender on-line on the website <https://assamtenders.gov.in>, with proof of payment of non refundable tender fee of Rs. 5000/- (Rupees five thousand) only in the form of demand draft/Bankers Cheque drawn in favour of Mission Director, Axom Sarba Siksha Abhiyan Mission, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, Assam, from any nationalized/scheduled Bank and payable at Guwahati. The tender should be submitted on-line as per date and time of submission as per prescribed schedule.

Sd/-Executive Director,
SSA,Assam,Kahilipara, Guwahati-19
Janasanyog/ICF/5360/20

Medical oxygen scarce in Africa

AP ■ DAKAR

A crisis over the supply of medical oxygen for coronavirus patients has struck nations in Africa and Latin America, where warnings went unheeded at the start of the pandemic and doctors say the shortage has led to unnecessary deaths.

It takes about 12 weeks to install a hospital oxygen plant and even less time to convert industrial oxygen manufacturing systems into a medical-grade network. But in Brazil and Nigeria, as well as in less-populous nations, decisions to fully address inadequate supplies only started being made last month, after hospitals were overwhelmed and patients started to die.

The gap in medical oxygen availability "is one of the defining health equity issues, I think, of our age," said Peter Piot, director of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, who said he survived a severe coronavirus infection thanks to the oxygen he received.

Doctors in Nigeria anxiously monitor traffic as oxygen deliveries move through the gridlocked streets of Lagos. Desperate families of patients

around the world sometimes turn to the black market. Governments take action only after hospitals are overwhelmed and the infected die by the dozens.

In Brazil's Amazonas state, a pair of swindlers were caught reselling fire extinguishers painted to look like medical oxygen tanks. In Peru, people camped out in lines to get cylinders for sick relatives.

Only after the lack of oxygen was blamed for the deaths of four people at an Egyptian hospital in January and six people at one in Pakistan in December did governments address the problems.

John Nkengasong, director of the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said medical oxygen is a "huge critical need" across the continent of 1.3 billion people and is a main reason that Covid-19 patients are more likely to die there during surges.

Armenian PM faces military's demand to resign, talks of coup

Yerevan: Armenia's prime minister accused top military officers on Thursday of attempting a coup after they demanded he step down, adding fuel to months long protests calling for his resignation following the nation's defeat in a conflict with Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

The demonstrations began immediately after Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan signed a November 10 peace deal that saw Azerbaijan reclaim control over large parts of Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding areas that had been held by Armenian forces for more than a quarter-century.

Those protests have gathered pace this week, and the feud with his top military commanders has weakened Pashinyan's position. The immediate trigger for the standoff was Pashinyan's decision to oust the first deputy chief of the military's General Staff, a group of the armed forces' top commanders.

In response, the General Staff called for Pashinyan's resignation — but the prime minister doubled down and dismissed the chief of the General Staff.

He described the military's statement as a "military coup attempt" and urged troops to only listen to his orders. He also called on his backers to come to the streets and then later walked among them, using a loudspeaker to rally support. "We need a conversation, not a confrontation," he said.

Pashinyan denied rumors that he was preparing to flee the country. Supporters of Pashinyan and the opposition engaged in sporadic scuffles on the streets of Yerevan on Thursday. AP

जल संसाधन विभाग
कार्यपालक अभियंता का कार्यालय
बाढ़ नियंत्रण प्रमण्डल, बख्तियारपुर
शुद्धि-पत्र
पत्रांक-239 बख्तियारपुर
इस कार्यालय के पत्रांक 166 दिनांक 10.02.2021 द्वारा निर्यत निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना संख्या-07 एस.बी.डी. /2020-21 जो विभिन्न समाचार पत्रों में पीओआर सं-012669 (WRD)2020-21 द्वारा प्रकाशित हुआ है एवं जिसका निविदा विवरण विकी हेतु www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in पर उपलब्ध है। उक्त निविदा में अपरिहार्य कारणवश निम्नलिखित संशोधन की जाती है जो इस प्रकार है :-
क्र. सं. विवरण पूर्व निर्धारित तिथि एवं समय Extended तिथि एवं समय
1 निविदा कागजात डाउनलोड एवं अपलोड करने की अवधि दिनांक-19.02.2021 से दिनांक-23.02.2021 के 03:00 बजे अपराह्न तक दिनांक 06.03.2021 को 03:00 बजे अपराह्न तक
2 प्री-बीड मीटिंग का समय स्थान एवं तिथि (निविदा सूचना में उल्लिखित कार्यालय में) दिनांक-20.02.2021 समय 03:00 बजे अपराह्न दिनांक-01.03.2021 के 03:00 बजे अपराह्न
3 Physical Mode/Manual Payment System के तहत अग्रधन की राशि को निविदा सूचना में उल्लिखित कार्यालयों में जमा करने की अन्तिम तिथि एवं समय दिनांक-24.02.2021 के 03:00 बजे अपराह्न तक दिनांक-08.03.2021 के 03:00 बजे अपराह्न तक
4 तकनीकी बीड खोलने की तिथि एवं समय दिनांक-25.02.2021 समय 03:30 बजे अपराह्न में दिनांक-09.03.2021 समय 03:30 बजे अपराह्न में
इसे इस हद तक संशोधित कर समझा एवं पढ़ा जाय। निविदा की अन्य नियम एवं शर्तें पूर्ववत् रहेंगे।
कार्यपालक अभियंता
बाढ़ नियंत्रण प्रमण्डल,
बख्तियारपुर
PR. No. 13377 (WRD) 2020-21
नौक्स कॉलेज के संघ में विस्तृत जानकारी हेतु सहाय्यक हेतु Toll Free No. 104 पर संपर्क कर सकते हैं।

Budget tilted towards supporting growth: Moody's

FY22 FISCAL DEFICIT TARGET OF 6.8 PC REALISTIC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's Budget is tilted towards supporting growth and the fiscal deficit target of 6.8 per cent for 2021-22 is realistic, Moody's Investors Service said on Thursday.

With regard to India's finances, Moody's said weak fiscal position will remain a key credit challenge in 2021.

It said the government's fiscal deficit for 2020-21 and 2021-22 should be lower than projected, supported by stronger revenue generation in ongoing March quarter and higher nominal GDP growth in the next fiscal year.

"India Budget tends to tilt a little bit in favour of support for growth. The deficit in Budget for FY'22 was above what we expected, but nevertheless we think that the deficit

target is a realistic one. "The government has incorporated a conservative assumption of nominal GDP growth and we think most revenue assumptions conservative, with the possible exception of monetisation expectations pegged in Budget," Moody's Associate Managing Director (Sovereign Risk) Gene Fang said.

Wide fiscal deficits combined with lower real and nominal

GDP growth over the medium term will constrain the government's ability to reduce its debt burden, Fang said in an online conference organised by Moody's and its affiliate ICRA on 'India Credit Outlook 2021'.

Moody's said the prospects for fiscal consolidation remain weak particularly given the government's mixed track record of implementing revenue-raising measures.

Retail loans to remain most affected due to pandemic: Moody's

New Delhi: Moody's Investors Service on Thursday said loans to retail customers, especially those to low-income borrowers, will remain most affected due to the shock caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Despite the pandemic challenges, asset quality at Indian banks has performed better than expected at the start of the outbreak, Moody's said. "Corporate loans, in particular, have performed well because banks prior to the pandemic had largely provisioned for legacy problem loans and tightened underwriting standards," Moody's Vice President and Senior Credit Officer Srikanth Vadlamani said.

Govt accords top priority to startups, wants to create congenial atmosphere for growth: Minister



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government accords top priority to startups and wants to create a congenial atmosphere for them to grow through various incentives and schemes, Union Minister Som Parkash said on Thursday.

Addressing the 'Assocam Startup Finale' event virtually, the Minister of State for Commerce and Industry highlighted that a number of incentives are being provided by the government for startups, ranging from how to form a busi-

ness to income-tax exemption and relaxation in labour laws.

He also observed that the credit guarantee scheme and a Fund of Funds with SIDBI have also been initiated.

"So, the government is giving top priority to these schemes. I assure from the government side whatever help is required, we all should work together to make India strong, to make India Aatmanirbhar," Parkash said, adding that he sees the future of India in these startups.

Subsidised, non-subsidised LPG price hiked by ₹25 per cylinder

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Cooking gas LPG price on Thursday was hiked by ₹25 per cylinder across all categories, including subsidised fuel and those availed by Ujjwala scheme beneficiaries.

This is the third increase in rates this month on the back of spiralling international rates as demand recovered.

A 14.2-kg cylinder in Delhi now costs ₹794 as against ₹769 at which they were supplied on Wednesday, according to a price notification from state-owned fuel retailers. The increase is applicable across all categories including subsidised and non-subsidised users. LPG is available only at one rate, market price, across the country. The government, however, gives a small subsidy to select customers. However, this subsidy has been eliminated in metros and major cities through successive price increases over the past couple of years.

IN BRIEF

NORTHERN RAILWAY BARAT & SCOUTS GUIDES CELEBRATES THE WORLD THINKING DAY

On the occasion of 164th Birth Anniversary of Lord Baden Powell (founder of Scouting) and the 132th Birth Anniversary of Lady Baden Powell, Northern Railway Barat & Scouts Guides celebrated the World Thinking Day on 22.02.2021 across all Districts of Northern Railway Barat & Scouts Guides.

The day offers and opportunity for the scouts & guides to think about others and focus on a wider issue that impact the others within the guiding and scouting moments. The day aims to bring together the young people around the world to celebrate in international fun and friendship and focus on the global theme of the year. The World Thinking Day 2021 is "Peace Building".

NORTHERN RAILWAY GM INSPECTS THE BHATINDA - JIND RAIL SECTION OF DELHI DIVISION

General Manager, Northern Railway, Ashutosh Gangal conducted extensive inspection of Bhatinda - Jind Rail Section today. He was accompanied by SC Jain, Divisional Railway Manager, Delhi, Principal Head of Departments of Northern Railway and Senior Divisional Officers of Delhi Division. Ashutosh Gangal, General Manager inspected Katar Singh Wala Railway Station and small track machine display was also organized. He also inspected Level Crossing No.237-C, Turnout No. 88 & 89, Long Welded Rail (LWR) No. 17 DN & Switch Expansion Joint (SEJ) No. 33 DN. In Kot Fateh - Maisar Khana section, GM inspected Bridge no. 345-A and Maur - Sadda Singh Wala Section, GM Inspected Curve No. 38 DN.

SBI, SHAPOORJI PALLONJI REAL ESTATE SIGN MOU

Mumbai: State Bank of India and Shapoorji Pallonji Real Estate on Thursday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to enable faster processing of home loans, approvals and to provide other benefits. The lender's head and chief general manager (Real Estate & Housing Business Unit) Shreekanth said the collaboration will create win-win business opportunities for all stakeholders.

RBI's asset purchases did not dilute its balance sheet: Guv

Mumbai: Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das on Thursday said the central bank's asset purchases, aimed at mitigating Covid-19-related liquidity stress in the system, did not dilute its balance sheet or compromise on core principles of central banking.

In the wake of the pandemic, the RBI undertook several conventional and unconventional measures.

"Unlike many central banks, the RBI's asset purchases did not dilute its balance sheet and hence, did not compromise on core principles of central banking," Das said while addressing an event organised by the Bombay Chamber of Commerce.

These purchases were confined to risk-free sovereign (government) bonds including state government securities only, he said. Other than conventional measures, RBI introduced long term repo operations (LTROs) and targeted long term repo operations (TLTROs) to augment the system as well as sector-specific liquidity to meet structural credit needs and alleviate stress, he said.

Special refinance facilities were provided to select All India Financial Institutions (AIFIs), while a special liquidity facility for mutual funds (SLF-MF) was introduced to ease redemption pressures, he added.

The central government was willing to create additional courts under Article 247 for speedy disposal of cases under Negotiable Instrument Act (NI

Cheque bounce cases: SC asks Centre if it can set up additional courts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In order to reduce pendency of cheque bounce cases which have reached 35 lakh across courts, the Supreme Court on Thursday asked the Centre whether it can create additional courts for expeditious disposal of such matters.

A bench of Chief Justice S A Bobde and Justices L Nageswara Rao and S Ravindra Bhat asked Additional Solicitor General Vikramjit Banerjee to inform it by next week whether the central government was willing to create additional courts under Article 247 for speedy disposal of cases under

ACT). Banerjee said he would seek instruction and inform the court by next date of hearing.

Article 247 of the Constitution gives power to Parliament to establish certain additional courts for the better administration of laws made by it or of any existing laws with respect to a matter enumerated in the Union List.

The top court was hearing a suo motu case to work out a mechanism for expeditious and just adjudication of cases relating to dishonour of cheques, fulfilling the mandate of law and reduce high pendency.

The bench told Banerjee

and senior advocate Siddharth Luthra, appointed as amicus curiae in the matter, that there are certain judgements which say the legislature is duty bound to conduct an impact assessment before creating of a new offence under the law.

It sought to know whether the government was under obligation for establishing additional courts to deal with cases under the NI Act, which is a central law.

Luthra gave certain suggestions to the court for evolving a mechanism for speedy disposal of such cases including sending of summons electronically through e-mail or social media.

Benchmarks build on gains amid F&O expiry

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Sensex surged past 51,000 points while the Nifty reclaimed the 15,000-mark on Thursday as indices started up for the third straight session amid expiry of monthly derivative contracts and bullish global equities. A whopping increase in FPI inflows also boosted risk appetite, traders said. Foreign institutional investors purchased shares worth a net ₹28,739.17 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data. Global markets followed Wall Street higher after US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said policy rates could remain low for years, calming inflation concerns.

Petro products in India getting costlier as crude-producing nations hiking prices: Pradhan

PTI ■ MATHURA

Union Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Thursday said petroleum products in the country are getting costlier due to rising prices of crude by oil-producing nations.

"In order to earn more profit in the interest of their countries, crude-supplying countries are increasing the prices of crude," said Pradhan while speaking to reporters here on the rise in the prices of petroleum products like petrol and diesel in India.

He said crude-supplying countries have been requested to desist from the hike in crude prices as it directly affects consumers.

They have created an artificial increase in the interest of their own country, he added. "Arbitrarily, you cannot hike the prices as it affects consuming countries," Pradhan said in reference to oil-producing countries. Owing to bad weather, the

production in the US has slowed in the past two-three weeks, Pradhan said.

The minister said he expects an improvement in the situation in some time. Now, the basic problem before the government is to provide relief, employment, save the jobs of the employed, make efforts so that people get money as well as improve health services, the minister said.

He added that the government has planned to provide free vaccine to poor senior citizens by investing ₹35,000 crore.

Pradhan said finances are required to develop rail, roads and ports, among others.

Directorate of Technical Education Uttarakhand, Srinagar (Garhwal)
Govt. Polytechnic Campus, Srinagar Garhwal
Ph. No. & Fax No. : 01346-250169/251937, 250168
www.ukde.in E-mail: dtet@ukde.in@gmail.com

E-Tender Notice
The Directorate of Technical Education Uttarakhand invites E-Tender for Computers, UPS and Integrated Classroom Solution for various Government Polytechnic Institutes situated in Uttarakhand in conformity with the detailed terms and conditions as specified in the document. Detailed tender documents will be available on Uttarakhand Government e-tender portal www.uktenders.gov.in from 26 February, 2021 onwards.

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NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, BOOK CLOSURE AND E-VOTING INFORMATION
Notice is hereby given that the Forty Ninth Annual General Meeting of the members of Technofab Engineering Limited will be held on Thursday, the 18th day of March 2021 at 11.00 A.M. through Video Conferencing/Other Audio Visual Means ("VCO/AVM") to transact the business as set out in the notice of the 49th AGM.

In view of the massive outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, social distancing is a norm to be followed and pursuant to the Circular No. 14/2020 dated April 08, 2020, Circular No. 17/2020 dated April 13, 2020 issued by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs followed by Circular No. 20/2020 dated May 05, 2020 including relevant circular of SEBI, physical attendance of the Members to the AGM venue is not required and annual general meeting (AGM) be held through video conferencing (VC) or other audio visual means (OAVM). Hence, Members can attend and participate in the ensuing AGM through VCO/AVM. The Members can join the AGM in the VCO/AVM mode 15 minutes before the scheduled time of the commencement of the Meeting by following the procedure mentioned in the Notice. The facility of participation at the AGM through VCO/AVM will be made available for 1000 members on first come first served basis. This will not include large Shareholders (Shareholders holding 2% or more shareholding), Promoters, Institutional Investors, Directors, Key Managerial Personnel, the Chairpersons of the Audit Committee, Nomination and Remuneration Committee and Stakeholders Relationship Committee, Auditors etc. who are allowed to attend the AGM without restriction on account of first come first served basis.

In accordance with above circulars, only electronic copies of the Notice of the 49th AGM and the Annual Report for the Financial Year 2019-20 have been sent to all the Shareholders as on 19 February, 2021 whose email IDs are registered with the Company's Registrar and Share Transfer Agent, M/s. Link Intime India Pvt. Ltd. (Depository Participant(s)). The Notice of the 49th AGM and the Annual Report for 2019-20 are also available on the Company's website www.technofabengineering.com.

The instructions for joining the AGM are provided in the Notice of AGM and attendance of shareholders attending the AGM through VCO/AVM will be counted for the purpose of Section 103 of the Act.

Further, notice is also given that pursuant to Section 91 of the Companies Act, 2013 the Register of Members and Share Transfer Books of the Company will remain closed from **March 12, 2021 to March 18, 2021** (both days inclusive) for the purpose of 49th AGM of the Company.

As per Section 108 of the Companies Act, 2013 read with Rule 20 of the Companies (Management & Administration) Rules 2014, the Company is pleased to provide its Shareholders the facility to cast their vote by electronic means on all the resolutions set forth in the Notice. The details pursuant to the provision of the Companies Act, 2013 and the Rules are given here under:

(i) Date of completion of sending of Notices: **24.02.2021**
(ii) The cut off date for E-Voting is **11.03.2021**
(iii) Date and time of commencement of voting through electronic means: **15.03.2021 at 9.00 a.m**
(iv) Date and time of end of voting through electronic means: **17.03.2021 at 5.00 p.m**
(v) The procedure for e-Voting on the day of the AGM is same as the instructions mentioned above for remote e-voting.
(vi) Only those Members / shareholders, who will be present in the AGM through VCO/AVM facility and have not casted their vote on the Resolutions through remote e-Voting and are otherwise not barred from doing so, shall be eligible to vote through e-Voting system in the AGM.
(vii) Members who have voted through Remote e-Voting will be eligible to attend the AGM.
(viii) The Notice of 49th AGM is available on www.technofabengineering.com and www.bseindia.com and on the e-voting website, www.evoting.nsdl.com
(ix) For electronic voting instructions, Shareholders may go through the instructions in the Notice of 49th AGM and in case of any queries/grievances connected with electronic voting, please refer to 'Frequently Asked Questions' ("FAQ") and "user manual for shareholders to cast their votes" in help Section at www.evoting.nsdl.com or write an e-mail to evoting@nsdl.co.in or contact NSDL at Toll Free No. 1800-222-9990.
(x) The Company has appointed Mr. Suresh Gupta, Practicing Company Secretary, to act as scrutineer for conducting the electronic voting process in a fair and transparent manner and can be accessed through email id cs@technofabengineering.com

PUBLIC NOTICE
To be known to all that my client SMT. PUSHPA BANERJEE D/O SRI. S.N. BANERJEE R/O HOUSE NO. 2-29, GROUND FLOOR, HALDI KHAS, NEW DELHI-110016, is the owner of BSA MIG FLAT NO.102-A, GROUND FLOOR, POCKET NO. A-11, SITUATED AT KALANI EXTENSION, NEW DELHI-110019, VICE: VOA FILE NO. 1083/19/15, and my client has applied for Substitution and Conversion of leasehold to freehold in respect of said flat. The original document (i.e. ALLOTMENT CARD DEMAND LETTER, POSSESSION LETTER, NOC FOR WATER SUPPLY CONNECTION, SITE POSSESSION SLIP AND ALL BANK CHALLANS ETC. of the above said property have been set or equipped by my client and is not transferable except by her best efforts. An F.I.R./NCR to this effect has been lodged in the Police Station, Crime Branch, Delhi U.R. No. 171952/2021 dated 24.02.2021. Any person claiming any rights, interest, having any objection or found in possession of original documents, may write/contact with above named person at above Address/Phone No. 5213102/15 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. The person claiming any right, interest, objection with respect to this property, can personally appear or write to Deputy Director, IAB (Housing) or Director (Housing), Vikas Sadan, New Delhi.

Naaveen Aggarwal (Advocate)
Ch. No. M-7, Near SBI, Western Wing, Tis Hazari Court, Delhi-54

BEFORE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL - II, DELHI 4TH FLOOR, JEEVAN TARA BUILDING, PARLIAMENT STREET, NEW DELHI-110001.
OA No. : 235/19 Date: 10.11.2020
ICICI BANK LTD. - Applicant
Versus DSH Fashion & Ors. - Respondents
To, Defendant
2. Hamang Dhir S/o. Sh. Harsh Dhir (Co-Borrower & Partner)
3. Sanjay Dhir S/o. Sh. Harsh Dhir both at: R/o. House No. 14, Navjeevan Vihar, Malviya Nagar, New Delhi-17

Whereas the above named applicant(s) has/have instituted a case for recovery of Rs. 20,85,803/- (Rupees Twenty Lakh Eighty Five Thousand Eight Hundred Three Only) against you and whereas it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in ordinary way, therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance in the Tribunal on 10.03.2021 at 10.30 A.M.

Take notice that in default of your appearance on the day before the mentioned, the case will be heard and determined in your absence.

By Order of the Tribunal
For Registrar DRT-II, Delhi

Date: 25/02/2021
Place: Faridabad

For Technofab Engineering Limited
Suman Kumar Verma
Company Secretary

Notice Inviting Re-e-Tender
No SSA/Esst/Pre Primary/Furniture/405/2020/4614 Date: 25.02.2021

Mission Director, Axom Sarba Siksha Abhijan Mission, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, Assam invites re-tender through e-Tendering process from Manufacturer /Authorized Dealer/Distributor of manufacturer of plastic moulded furniture for supply of Low Height Plastic Table and Chair.

To participate in the tender process through e-procurement document, bidder should have valid Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) and have to register in the portal <https://assamtenders.gov.in> by themselves.

The Bidder who have downloaded the tender schedules containing the tender details, terms and conditions, from the website shall submit their tender on-line on the website <https://assamtenders.gov.in>, with proof of payment of non refundable tender processing fee of Rs. 5000/- (Rupees five thousand) only in the form of demand draft/Bankers Cheque drawn in favour of Mission Director, Axom Sarba Siksha Abhijan Mission, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, Assam, from any nationalized/Scheduled Bank and payable at Guwahati. The tender should be submitted on-line as per date and time of submission as per prescribed schedule.

Sd/-Executive Director,
SSA, Assam, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19

Janasanyog/CF/5363/20

TECHNOFAB ENGINEERING LIMITED
Regd. Office: 913, Hemkunt Chambers, 89 Nehru Place, New Delhi - 110 019, CIN : L74210DL1971PLC005712
Tel : +91-11-2641-1931 / 2641-5961, Fax: +91-11-26221521
Email: cs@technofabengineering.com
Website: www.technofabengineering.com

EXTENSION OF CANCELLATION/REDUCTION IN FREQUENCY OF TRAINS
This is notified for the information of all concerned that in continuation to Public Notices published in various newspaper on 16.12.2020 and 31.01.2021 regarding cancelled/Frequency Reduction/Partial cancellation of special trains during foggy weather 2020-21 from 16.12.2020 to 31.01.2021 and 01.02.2021 to 28.02.2021 respectively, now Railways have extended the Cancellation/ Frequency Reduction of the following Mail/Express Trains upto the dates shown against each:-

Train No.	Train Name	Frequency/Day	Date of Cancellation (from originating station)
05483	Alipurduar-Delhi Jn. Express Special	Daily	01.03.2021 to 31.03.2021
05484	Delhi Jn. - Alipurduar Express Special	Daily	03.03.2021 to 02.04.2021

REDUCTION IN FREQUENCY

Train No.	Train Name	Frequency/Day	Trip Cancellation Day	Date of Cancellation (from originating station)
02179/02180	Lucknow Jn.-Agra Fort-Lucknow Jn. Special	Daily	Sat, Sun	06.03.2021 to 28.03.2021
01803/01804	Jhansi-Lucknow-Jhansi Intercity Express Special	Daily	Sat, Sun	06.03.2021 to 28.03.2021
02397	Gaya-New Delhi Special	Daily	Mon, Fri, Sun	01.03.2021 to 29.03.2021
02398	New Delhi - Gaya Special	Daily	Mon, Tue, Sat	02.03.2021 to 30.03.2021
02367	Bhagalpur-Anand Vihar (T) Special	Daily	Tue, Thu	02.03.2021 to 30.03.2021
02368	Anand Vihar (T) - Bhagalpur-Special	Daily	Wed, Fri	03.03.2021 to 31.03.2021
02393	Rajendra Nagar - New Delhi Sampooona Kranti Special	Daily	Wednesday	03.03.2021 to 31.03.2021
02394	New Delhi - Rajendra Nagar Sampooona Kranti Special	Daily	Thursday	04.03.2021 to 01.04.2021
02561	Jaynagar-New Delhi Special	Daily	Thursday	04.03.2021 to 25.03.2021
02562	New Delhi - Jaynagar Special	Daily	Friday	05.03.2021 to 26.03.2021
02549	Kamakhya-Anand Vihar Terminal Express Special	Daily	Wed, Fri, Sun	03.03.2021 to 31.03.2021
02550	Anand Vihar Terminal-Kamakhya Express Special	Daily	Fri, Sun, Tue	05.03.2021 to 02.04.2021

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"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE" 429/21



TRENDBLAZER



SUSHMITA SEN CONFIRMS AARYA 2

Bollywood actress **SUSHMITA SEN** on Thursday confirmed a second season of her web series *Aarya*, which marked her digital debut last year. "She sees a storm coming...in the mirror. #Aarya #season2. Your wish is our command. Let's do this," the actress wrote on Instagram. Sushmita made her comeback on screen with the Ram Madhvani web series. The series was a hit and fans have been waiting for a second season. The series marked the actor's return to the screen five years after her last release, the 2015 Bengali film *Nirbaak*.

fairtalk

KRITI SANON



"I don't think you can be scared and cautious and still move ahead in your career. Fear pulls you back. Once I know why I am doing a project, there is no fear. You like the film, the storyline, the scene. You know you are doing something slightly different. Yes, it can be experimental but that's your reason for doing it. I believe in all the films I am doing right now."

dailytalk

ABHAY DEOL



"OTT platforms are a limited space for content, not at the mercy of multiplexes and single screen cinemas that get taken over by bigger films and producers that don't allow space for newer ideas. While the OTT platforms have to make popular cinema as they should, they have the ability to cater to those who want something outside the mainstream."

THERON OPENS UP ON RELATIONSHIPS

Academy Award winning actress **CHARLIZE THERON** opened up about men and past relationships in a show hosted by Hollywood star **Drew Barrymore**.

Theron says she thinks back how she made herself smaller for a guy or in a relationship.



LIVE LIFE TO THE FULLEST

Adventure sports help to discover ourselves and overcome fears. **NIHARIKA NIGAM** shares the change in perspective in the last decade towards this field

Experiential travel has gained momentum over the years. People want to spend on experiences and creating memories more than ever, and this has become a favourable trend for the adventure sports industry. Comprising of various diverse activities services and experiences, it has created a niche for itself in all holiday packages and itineraries, be it budget trips or luxury vacations.

The term 'extreme sports' is associated with high-adrenaline activities like bungee jumping, skydiving, scuba diving, surfing, rock climbing, etc. They are different from our usual sporting activities, in the sense that they are more mentally challenging and about overcoming fears. They consciously establish equanimity amidst 'perceived chaos' or usually fearful situations, rather than a test of skill and stamina. This is why standing at the edge of the bungee bridge, you can have an athlete back off, while someone at 110 kgs could not only attempt it but accomplish as well. It's an entirely different ball game and we love seeing people face their fears and rise above them.

Why indulge in adventure sports?
 They offer thrill, excitement and adrenaline rush of accomplishing a milestone by overcoming fears. By indulging in these action-packed activities, people get to have their once-in-a-lifetime experiences and memories to be cherished forever. Needless to say, it's a great de-stressor too.

Discover yourself
 Adventure sports are also a way towards self-discovery. Extreme sports such as mountain biking, scuba diving, kayaking, rafting, and bungee jumping are life-changing experiences that demand extreme courage



and mental strength. Those who step out of their comfort zone for leisure are considered to be extremely audacious.

Research published in the Journal of Humanistic Psychology reveals that adventure sports lead to a positive transformation in courage and humility. Bane, one of the research participants discussed his experience of windsurfing in storm conditions and admitted that it triggered an absolute life transformation, making him better and stronger.

Test your limits
 People participating in adventure sports go beyond their limits to overcome the anxiety and negativity in their lives. Moreover, they acquire self-reliance, improved self-esteem, and confidence to face challenges and situations more optimistically. Such experiences often result in better well-being and improved life expectancy, reveals the researches.



Joy of living

It is a common misconception that adventure sports are for fitness/adventure enthusiasts or 'experts'. Just like any other activity in life, while better fitness levels improve the experience, it is definitely not a prerequisite. In fact, one must experience these activities to generally improve their joy of living.

Find your calm

When the pandemic struck us, tourism was the worst hit. However, once everything started getting unlocked, people found solace in traveling and adventure sports to satiate their wanderlust.

Pushing your mental confines, adventure sports often put you in extreme situations which naturally make you handle it maturely and calmly. Flying in the open air after jumping out of the plane is not a cakewalk. Being in such a situation triggers chemical reactions in your mind but keeping your cool is what it demands. Such epiphanies develop you into a more matured and composed personality.

Broaden your horizons

Meeting new people and visiting new places introduce you to a new world every time. It expands the range of your knowledge and perception. New culture, habits and lifestyle help you become adaptive to the environment. You get the opportunity to indulge in unexplored terrains of life and perpetually gain better perspective. Involving in adventurous activities is an ideal getaway from the anxious life. This is a self-realisation journey that welcomes you to an entirely different world of thrill and positivity.

(The writer is Director-Business Development of an adventure sports company, Jumpin Heights.)

Vaani gears up for 3 releases



Actor **Vaani Kapoor** is gearing up for three back-to-back releases in three months. With *Bell-Bottom* locking May 28 as its release date, *Shamsher* releasing on June 25 and *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui* on July 9, Vaani will be in an intensely hectic promotional schedule starting April. She is thrilled that all her films are slated to be big screen entertainers.

Vaani says, "It is remarkable that I have three back-to-back releases in three months. So, I'm mentally preparing myself for an intensely hectic work schedule. I don't think I will have a single minute for myself for the next five months and I'm not complaining about that."

The actor is excited to present herself in three different and diverse avatars in a span of three months. "It is exciting that the audience will see me in three extremely diverse ways through these projects. I'm only hoping that all these three films are accepted by audiences and play an instrumental role in making people come back to the theatres," she says.

Vaani expects the audience to come back to the theatres to watch good cinema that gives them an unforgettable experience. She says, "I have shot for these films during the pandemic. The industry has shown its intent to only entertain audiences when COVID-19 subsides. So, I'm really looking forward to how the audience will support our films and the industry. We will offer them some of the best films and I'm hoping people will appreciate the content and head to the theatres."

A JAB OF EXCITEMENT

Sacre bleu, the Kiger is actually good



Later today, the Indian Car Of The Year (ICOTY) jury will announce the ICOTY for 2021. There are some very strong contenders this year and with the diverse jury, of which I am a member, will take a measured decision about which car will win. It will be a close contest I am sure. But I recently drove a car which is already a strong contender for next year's award, the Renault Kiger.

Despite recent events in Japan, the arrest and subsequent escape of Carlos Ghosn — which have shaken the Renault-Nissan alliance to its core, the two companies continue to work together in India. They share a large manufacturing facility South of Chennai and also share several vehicle platforms. The latest shared platform is the CMF-A modular platform, that allow for vehicles of different purposes to be built sharing common mechanicals. The first car from this was 2019's Renault Tribler, which was quite a good car. Now the Nissan Magnite and the Renault Kiger go head-to-head in the rather unique to India, 'subcompact' Sports Utility Vehicle (SUV) or what some describe as the 'beefed up' hatchback segment.

I'll get to the battle between the Magnite and the Kiger soon, but first a bit about Renault. The French carmaker has been moderately successful in India. They came into the market with

their eyes open, realised that India was a price-sensitive market and entered with the Duster, a built-to-a-price vehicle from Renault's Dacia stable in Romania. As we all know, the Duster was a hit. Yes, Renault's alliance with Mahindra was an ill-fated one which likely hit the success of the Logan sedan, but so did India's bizarre four-metre rule for cars. The Fluence and the Kaptur were commercial failures, possibly because Renault India did not have the pricing power that management thought they did, but conversely that is why the Kwid was a hit. Renault is clearly viewed as a value-for-money carmaker that doesn't make bad cars.

Honestly, the Kiger is a good car for the money that you are paying for it. Prices

start at ₹5.45 lakh for the base model with the 72PS naturally-aspirated engine. The RXZ variant powered by the 100PS turbocharged engine that I was driving had an ex-showroom price of ₹8.55 lakh and had been specified with features like a wireless charger and a two-tone colour scheme which would have brought up the price a bit, but even at eight and a half lakh, you are flabbergasted at just how good the value on the car is.

Let me get one thing straight up front, is this the best car in its class? No, it is not as nice inside and to drive as the Korean twins, the Sonet and Venue. The handling is not as sharp and while this turbo-engine responds faster and sounds smoother than what you experience on its rivals, the

overall ride comfort, handling and interiors, particularly the quality of the seats and plastics are better on the Korean cars. That said, you will be paying almost two lakh more for a properly specified variant compared to this manual turbo Kiger. And it isn't as if you don't get some nice features, you can specify wireless charging as an accessory which allows for wireless smartphone integration. The Renault infotainment operating system feels simpler than those on its rivals, but its simplicity means it is easier to navigate. The seven-inch digital display for the instrument cluster is well laid out and can be changed depending on which of the three drive modes (Eco, Urban or Sport) you select. Sport mode does

really does sharpen the engine and on the narrow winding roads of Goa's interiors, if you are willing to deal with some slight floatiness when you corner hard. My biggest gripe about the Kiger was actually the stitching on the steering wheel that isn't flush and when your hands need to move about a bit can be irritating.

Between the Magnite and the Kiger then, which one should you choose? Keep in mind that these two cars have far more in common than the Sonet and Venue, not least because unlike Kia and Hyundai they have their own separate factories. While the Sonet and Venue as well as the Creta and Seltos are built on the same platform, the vehicles don't only look very dif-

ferent, they have noticeable differences in the way that they drive and handle. The Kiger and Magnite are built on the same production line by the same assembly workers and honestly, I would probably be nitpicking if I really wanted to find ride and handling differences.

The main differences are in the looks and interiors. Now, I heard a comment that called the Kiger 'a Kwid on steroids' but, that said, I actually like the Kwid's looks particularly after the refresh. Personally, I think the Renault looks smarter because while the Magnite is not bad-looking, I really do not like the grille. But aesthetics are a personal choice. But, I do prefer the interiors of the Kiger, things feel a bit better laid out, and while the interiors are similar to the Tribler, the Tribler does have a nice passenger cabin. So, for me, it would be the Kiger, but things are marginal here as well, you are more than welcome to disagree with me on this.

But the biggest difference is between the two brands, as I wrote earlier, Renault is well-established. The Duster, Kwid and Tribler have all done relatively well in the Indian market, there is a trust about the brand, you know that the product will be good and sales and service should not be worries. Nissan has not had that success over the years, and while the new management of the company is trying to make a difference, in the short run, I'm pretty sure the Kiger will outsell the Magnite even though both cars pretty much cost the same.

Notice Inviting Re-e-Tender

No.SSA/Pre Primary/FM/411/2020/4618 Date: 25.02.2021
 Mission Director, Axom Sarba Siksha Abhijan Mission, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, Assam invites re-tender through e-Tendering process from reputed manufacturer of manufacturer of Eva Sheet for supply of Floor Mat.

To participate in the tender process through e-procurement document, bidder should have valid Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) and have to register in the portal <https://assamtenders.gov.in> by themselves.

The Bidder who have downloaded the tender schedules containing the tender details, terms and conditions, from the website shall submit their tender on-line on the website <https://assamtenders.gov.in>, with proof of payment of non refundable tender processing fee of Rs. 5000/- (Rupees five thousand) only in the form of demand draft/Bankers Cheque drawn in favour of Mission Director, Axom Sarba Siksha Abhijan Mission, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, Assam, from any nationalized/Scheduled Bank and payable at Guwahati. The tender should be submitted on-line as per date and time of submission as per prescribed schedule.

Sd/-Executive Director,
 SSA, Assam, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19
 Janasanyog/ICF/5366/20

CLASSICS IN CONTEMPORARY FORM

Each dish at The House of Celeste is centered around one core ingredient and is created to perfection with contrasting textures, colours and flavours, says AYUSHI SHARMA



Mixologist Dhawan Singh Jeena



Corporate chef Valice Francis



Sous chef Ishan Ahluwalia

How would you define good times? Rather, how would you describe that I am really "into" the food? For me, it's when a dish lands at my table and 'just one bite' turns into five... The next thing I know is I am overeating just to hit that single moment of satisfaction over and over again. Doesn't it happen with you too? Well, tucked away in Gurugram's upmarket 32nd Milestone, THC — The House of Celeste is an Indian restaurant that triggered this feeling of contentment.

You know what they say, "The best chefs don't merely prepare food, but they serve memories." And it makes so much sense because once your belly is full, your sense of taste has been stimulated and your craving mitigated, what lives on are the memories. You may not remember all that you ate for a particular dinner but you will consistently recall the fulfillment you felt toward its end, perhaps, because of the freshness of the ingredients or the aroma of a specific dish. And that's why I think my visit to The House of Celeste was worth it!

Walking past the exteriors, through a hallway, I made my way into the cafe, which was segregated into different parts. The interiors were done up with round mirrors. The ambience — replete with solid colours, peppered with floral upholstery — seemed to be tailor-made for experimentation. As I ran my eyes over the menu, I realised that the cafe's USP was to offer a sense of familiarity and nostalgia. For instance, the very first dish corporate chef Valice Francis brought to the table was *Puchka Pebbles*. He asked me to have it in one go, which I did, and later to my surprise, I found out that they were a modern take on *pani puris* aka *gol gappas*. The 'pebbles' were made of white chocolate and had a chilly shell with a filling of tamarind chutney, mint and coriander water, and saffron tart. This sweet-salty, not so spicy treat was a great way



to start the meal. "This idea actually came from a molten choco lava cake," chef Francis shared. The cafe presents 'borderless cuisine with Indian elements'. The main endeavour was to provide rich and flavourful food made with local ingredients and vegetables, which have been sourced with highest safety standards in mind. It presented an innovative and contemporary menu offering small plates, large plates, sides and desserts with the season's finest ingredients. Each dish was centered around one core ingredient and was created to perfection with contrasting textures, colours and flavours.

Next in line was the *THC Papadi Chaat*. It was prepared using crisp fried dough wafers known as *papadi*, along with the boiled chickpeas, boiled potatoes, *dahi* (yogurt), tamarind chutney, and topped with *chat masala* and *sev*. The dish had sweet, sour, tangy and spicy flavours blended in one. I can still feel its creamy and crunchy texture in my mouth.

The next dish that caught my fancy was *Calcutta Beat*

Balls. Yes, it very much resembles the non-vegetarian meat balls. It was a unique entirely vegetarian creation that imitates non-vegetarian flavours. The tiny red balls were made of beetroot with a filling of smoked goat cheese cream to give an illusion of the meat balls — both visually and in taste. The flavours were impeccable, but the way it was presented was what stole the show. The chef rightly said as he chuckled, "It's an ideal option for a vegetarian who wishes to know what meat tastes like."

Typically, people, especially the more gastronomically experienced ones, concur that being a vegetarian is "out of place" with being a foodie. However, I can proudly say that I am both — a vegetarian and a foodie. And the menu bore witness to it too as it had a delectable list of vegetarian dishes.

Just like the food, the specially-curated cocktails were nothing short of indulgent. The cocktail menu aimed to elevate pleasure to a celestial level, where the familiar takes on a new sparkle, where the comfort-

ing becomes playful, and where classics find a contemporary form. Mixologist Dhawan Singh Jeena shared that they had an absolute-zero-waste bar. "For instance, fruit peels, dry flowers, coffee powder, leftover mint stems, squeezed limes, orange shells or other freeze-dried items are usually used in syrups and concoctions," said he. He believes that small steps can result in big changes.

To accompany the delectable food, the mixologist made a few cocktails like *Coffee Colada*, *Bittle Blush*, *Celest Mule* and more. Mixologist Dhawan shared that they haven't finalised their cocktail menu yet as they are still testing and poking around in the bar to create something refreshing and new. They would continue to add drinks to the menu, which seemed like a bonus for me to return.

The cafe had an inviting, comforting and laidback atmosphere. As I was still sampling food, *Paneer Khurchan* made its way to my plate. Apparently, the idea of the dish was derived from

the Hindi word '*khurchna*' which means 'to scrape'. So it was basically scraped paneer in a semi-dry gravy with some *achar* cream in it. The filling was stuffed in a steamed bun, which looked similar to a mini *kulcha*. I can bet one could eat this not so spicy and creamy delicacy even on a full stomach.

As I neared a saturation, the main course was in line, which included *Paneer Pasanda*, *Soya Keema Chettinad*, *Dal Moradabadi* along with *Gobi-Matar Kulcha* and traditional *Jodhpuri Chur Chur Naan*. The sous chef Ishan Ahluwalia's approach towards *Paneer Pasanda* was a little European and hence, he engineered the dish in the form of Ravioli. The cherry on top was that the *paneer* was baked instead of fried. The chef explained, "The authentic one is usually shallow fried. The stuffing has a lot of variations, but people prefer adding *khoya* and chopped nuts to it." It was served with parmesan crisp as garnish. Its gravy was a modification of *Makhani* gravy with the addition of onion paste. Well, full marks to the presentation as well as for setting my tongue on fire.

I am sure you would agree that *Keema* recipes are a popular element among all the meat lovers. THC's *Soya Keema*, prepared in a very Chettinad way, is a bonus for vegetarians like me. It had South-inspired flavours. They garnished it with *Malgapudi*, a South Indian spice mix, traditionally served with *idlis*. When you have travelled approximately 45 kms on traffic-stuffed streets that too on a weeknight with very little expectations from the food, but are welcomed with something marvelous, it is bound to win hearts.

With all this and more, what made my visit to THC priceless was the care and attention that chef Francis, sous chef Ishan and mixologist Dhawan put into every element, from the flavours, texture, presentation to the smell and the taste.



You are what you eat

Ahead of Protein Day, nutrition expert

Dr JAGMEET MADAN shares that issues around this important nutrient need to be constantly discussed and propagated

While a number of socio-economic issues hound us today, our right to basic nutrition and health is one that should be demanded across the globe, especially in India. It is, therefore, not surprising that the second goal in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals is 'Zero Hunger', which aims to reduce malnutrition in India. It is estimated that the pandemic will lead to a rise in hunger, with approximately 270 million people facing food insecurity as opposed to the 149 million during pre-COVID times. These findings are not only grave but a serious cause for alarm — India ranks 94 out of 107 countries on the Global Hunger Index 2020; in addition to grappling with an advanced protein deficiency issue with more than 70 per cent of our population at a risk of protein deficiency across age groups. A recent survey indicated that every second household in India has experienced a reduction in their intake of cereals, pulses and vegetables, even months after lockdown restrictions were lifted in most parts of the country.

It is, therefore, important — nay critical — to tackle the pressing issue of malnutrition and protein deficiency in specific head-on by not only creating awareness of protein-rich food sources but also dispelling misconceptions around accessibility, affordability, cultural nuances, and inherent hyperlocal habits. And this Protein Day, celebrated on February 27, with its theme of *Powering With Plant Protein*, lets delve into everything protein.

WHY PLANT PROTEIN?
 We are perhaps the country with the single largest vegetarian population in the world with also a sizable population of flexitarians i.e. those who prefer a vegetarian diet while still enjoying meat (animal protein) in moderation. One of the key myths affecting the protein deficiency debate in India is the perception that not only are protein-rich foods expensive but that there is limited variety for those who don't eat meat — over 76 per cent recently surveyed shared this sentiment. Moreover, when presented with a number of protein-rich sources, a large segment of Indian mothers could only identify three out of 11 protein-rich foods correctly; thereby eliminating several key protein-rich sources completely.

This lack of knowledge coupled with the misconceptions that plant-protein is nutritionally inferior is myth to dispel as we continue in our quest to educate Indians about the role of proteins, especially plant-based protein rich diets that will help bridge the protein based nutrition and affordability gap.

IS IT FOR EVERYONE?
 The quantity, quality and timing of protein consumed throughout the day across one's life span together play a role

in determining the health benefits of dietary protein. While one needs different levels of protein across different phases of life, the underlying key fact remains — protein is a key micronutrient that is essential for one's growth and development throughout life.

It begins with pregnant women and lactating mothers. A woman's diet during and immediately after pregnancy is pivotal for both, mother, and child, with proteins playing a key role in overall health and the baby's development. Diversity of diet and adequate quantity and quality of protein through variety of sources like pulses, dals, millets, whole grain cereals, milk and milk products, variety of beans and nuts and oilseeds are pertinent to be included in daily diet. For babies, the immunoglobulin of the breast milk derived from the colostrums adds to the benefits accrued from exclusive breast feeding of a baby for a minimum of six months which needs to be emphasised to all lactating mothers. The good quality protein based weaning foods with plant protein diversity should be an integral part of an infant's weaning foods.

For growing children, the need for protein intake is even more augmented as it not only helps in muscle and bone growth but also adds significantly to strengthening their immunity. Be it the usual routine at school, extra-curricular activities and cognitive development, protein plays an important role. The variety can be obtained from pulses and legumes, nuts and oilseeds, millets, oats, soybeans, almond or soy milk and peanut butter.

For healthy adults, who go about their day-to-day life, it is much required to continue to build immunity, maintain a healthy gut and repair of muscle wear and tear. In fact, it is believed that we may begin to naturally lose as much as eight per cent of overall muscle mass every decade after we turn 40, making it more important than ever to consume more protein as we age. Be it increased amounts of nuts, seeds, tofu, soy chunks, plant-based milk, beans such as edamame, green vegetables, jackfruit and pulses and legumes, adequate protein consumption based on one's requirements and lifestyle is crucial.

And while one may believe that protein's role with age might diminish, it is quite the contrary: With reports suggesting that one in three adults over the age of 50 experiences advanced muscle and strength loss, and thus, adequate protein intake is recommended for aging adults to support muscle and strength requirements.

Even as we recognise and act this Protein Day, it is important to make note that this cannot be a one-time or one-day discourse. Protein-related issues are very much an ongoing concern that need constant discussion, dialogue and education to continue on India's journey in becoming a healthy nation with sustainable well-being at its core.

(The writer is the National President of Indian Dietetic Association and supporter of the Right To Protein initiative.)

R E C I P E S

GULAB JAMUN CHEESECAKE

WHAT YOU NEED

- Plain digestive biscuits: 350 gm
- Ghee or unsalted butter: 120 gm
- Cream cheese: 600 gm
- Jaggery: 350 gm
- Gulab Jamun: 8
- Sour cream: 1 cup
- Thickened cream: 200 ml
- Eggs (lightly beaten): 4
- Cornflour: 1/3 cup
- Lemon juice: 2 tsp
- Blueberry compote: 50 gm

METHOD

● Preheat the oven to 180 C. Grease a round 20 cm springform cake pan and line the base. Side with baking paper.

● Place biscuits in a food processor and whiz to crumbs. Add ghee and whiz to combine. Press into the base of prepared pan and chill until needed.



● Place cream cheese and 250 gm jaggery in a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment and beat until smooth. Beat in sour cream. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in

cornflour and lemon juice. Cut the *gulab jamuns* into halves and place them on the biscuit base. Then pour the cream cheese mix over it. Wrap the outside of the pan in three layers of foil and place in a large roasting pan. Add enough boiling water to come halfway up the sides of the cake.

● Reduce oven to 150 C and bake cake for one hour 40 minutes or until just set with a gentle wobble in the centre.

● Turn off oven and cool for three hours approximately or until cold. Remove from pan and place on a serving plate.

● When ready to serve, melt remaining 100 gm jaggery in a small saucepan over medium heat with two tablespoons of water, stirring to dissolve the jaggery. Cool completely, then pour over the cake.

● Garnish with blueberry compote and fresh mint leaves.

Courtesy: Chef Anas Qureshi at Molecule.

YAM FISH CURRY IN GOA ORGANIC MASALA

WHAT YOU NEED

- Yam: 3 cup
- Red pepper
- Coconut milk: 5 cup
- Onion (medium): 1
- Salt to taste
- ORCO hand-ground organic fish masala
- Organic ginger powder
- Organic cinnamon powder: 1/4 tsp
- Garlic: 4
- Organic Kashmiri chilli powder: 3 tsp
- Organic paprika powder:
- Balsamic or apple cider vinegar: 1/4 cup

METHOD

● In a steamer or pressure cooker, cook the yam pieces for 10 to 15 minutes until tender. Pierce the yams with a fork on all sides to allow the organic



masala to be absorbed. Keep aside.

● While the yams are steaming, grind together all the organic masala ingredients into a fine paste.

● This paste can stay for three months so if you like, you can make a large batch and store in the fridge.

● In a pan on medium flame, add one cup of water, the organic masala and the onion and stir. Cook until the water is almost gone and you are left with a thick paste.

● Add the cooked yam pieces, coconut milk and salt. Stir

thoroughly to mix and boil it.

● Once boiling, lower the heat, add the red pepper slices and turn off the heat.

● Serve hot with rice or millets.

Courtesy: ORCO

Pitch was good, quality of batting wasn't: Kohli

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

India captain Virat Kohli on Thursday said poor batting and not the pitch was responsible for the day-night third Test against England winding up inside two days and described the performance of batsmen on both sides as "bizarre".

Kohli insisted there were no demons in the pitch, which has been called "not ideal" by several former players like Michael Vaughan and Harbhajan Singh. Kohli said the track was absolutely fine at least in the first innings and only the odd ball was turning in the game which India won by 10 wickets on Thursday.

"To be honest, I don't think the quality of batting was up to standards. We were 100 for 3 and bowled out for less than 150. It was just that the odd ball turning and it was a good wicket to bat in the first innings," the India skipper said in his defence of the pitch.

Kohli said batsmen of both the sides did not apply themselves enough. Only Rohit Sharma (66 and 25 not out) and from England Zak Crawley (53 in first innings) managed to bat with ease.

"It was bizarre that 21 of the 30 wickets fell to straight balls. Test cricket is about trusting your defence. Lack of application ensured it was a quick finish," Kohli said.

Left-arm spinner Axar Patel stole the limelight in only his second Test along side veteran Ravichandran Ashwin by returning with match figures of 11 for 70 to earn the player-of-the-match award as India decimated England by 10 wickets to take an unassailable 2-1 lead in the four-match series.

Off-spinner Ashwin (15-3-48-4) also became the fourth Indian bowler and second fastest in the world to complete a commendable milestone of 400 Test wickets on Thursday.

Kohli showered praise on his two spinners for their match-winning efforts.

"A bizarre game which got over in 2 days. A lot of people were relieved when Jaddu (Ravindra Jadeja) got injured. But then this guy (Axar) comes in. Bowls it quicker and from a bigger height as well. If the wick-



et has something in it, Axar is very lethal. "I think we need to stand up and take notice of what Ashwin has done. In Tests, he is a modern day legend. As a captain, I am so pleased he is in my team," he said.

England skipper Joe Root was in no mood to give excuses for the heavy defeat, saying the tourists failed to capitalise on a decent start in the first innings after opting to bat.

"We were 70 for 2. But we didn't really capitalise on it. 250 on that wicket would have made it different. We will come back using this hurt and come back as a better team," he said.

Instead of blaming the pitch, Root said it was India's "high quality bowling" that made the difference.

"The plastic coating on the ball gathered

pace of the wicket. It was high quality bowling as well. Both sides struggled to get that wicket. We don't define ourselves on a performance like this," he said.

"We shouldn't have any baggage from the previous games going into the last game. We have seen with the ball in hand, we can pick up wickets. I think it sums up the wicket, if I am getting a flier."

He also congratulated Ishant Sharma for playing his landmark 100 Tests and Ashwin for his 400 Test wickets.

Man-of-the-match Axar said his focus would remain on bowling wicket-to-wicket, a plan which has reaped him rich dividends so far in his nascent Test career.

"When it happens, it feels so easy, not so much when it doesn't," he joked.

"I am not thinking much. I want to con-

Kohli eclipses Dhoni's record

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Virat Kohli on Thursday surpassed Mahendra Singh Dhoni's record of winning maximum number of Test matches as captain on home soil after leading the side to a 10-wicket victory over England in the day-night third Test.

Kohli now has 22 victories at home in 29 Tests as captain which is one better than Dhoni, who had 21 wins in 30 Tests. Kohli already is India's most successful Test captain with 35 wins.

Sourav Ganguly and Mohammed Azharuddin have 21 and 14 victories to their credit as captains.

continue this form. I am happy that if I am not contributing with the bat, I am doing it with the ball.

"My strength is to bowl wicket-to-wicket and not give any room...I just want to bowl as many dot balls as possible and make life difficult for batsmen," he said.

It's for ICC to decide whether Motera pitch is fit for purpose: Root

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

England skipper Joe Root on Thursday said it is up to the ICC, and not the players, to decide whether the "difficult" Motera pitch is suitable for Test cricket after his side was crushed inside two days by India in a low-scoring day-nighter here.

Root refused to blame the surface for England's batting woes after the team folded for 112 and 81 in its two innings. But he said it is the ICC that should consider the suitability of the pitch for Test cricket.

"I think that this surface, it's a very challenging one, is a very difficult one to play on. It is not for players to decide whether it is fit for purpose or not and that is upto the ICC," said Root, who took a career-best five-wicket haul during India's first innings.

"As players we are going to try and counter what is in front of us as best as we can," he added.

Root said his team missed the opportunity to get a big first innings total, which seemed possible when it was 70 odd for just two wickets.

"We are disappointed, I feel we have missed an opportunity, more so in the first innings than anything. The position we found ourselves in at 71/2, we had a real chance to (score big).

"In hindsight, if we would have got 200, that would have been a very good score on that wicket and the game would have looked completely different," Root said at the virtual post-match press conference.

Indian left-arm spinner Axar Patel (6/38 and 5/32) and Ravichandran Ashwin (3/26 and 4/48) wreaked havoc on the surface. "We have got to get better and we are going to keep looking to find a way to scoring runs on surfaces like this," Root said.

England out of WTC final race

Ahmedabad: India knocked England out of contention from the ICC World Test Championship (WTC) final in June with their 10-wicket triumph which propelled the hosts to the top of the standings.

India now have to either win or draw the final game here starting March 4 to claim the right to take on New Zealand at the Lord's. The Black Caps have already qualified and are placed second in the latest list.

"England have dropped to 64.1 percentage points on the points table, which is now led by India with 71 percentage

points," the ICC stated.

"England are out of the race for a place in the final of the ICC World Test Championship after losing the third Test against India in Ahmedabad," it added.

England, who are now 2-1 down in the four-match series, needed to win the four-match series 3-1 to play the June 18-22 final.

New Zealand are assured of a place in the final with 70 percentage points. If India lose the final Test then Australia, who are in third place with 69.2 percentage points, will sneak in to make the final. PTI

Guptill finds form in run fest

AFP ■ DUNEDIN

Veteran batsman Martin Guptill returned to form with a blistering 97 as New Zealand held on for a nail-biting win over Australia in the second T20I in Dunedin on Thursday.

Guptill's Black Caps set Australia a challenging target of 220 after losing the toss but were made to sweat as Australia came within four runs of victory.

Both sides took advantage of University Oval's short boundaries in a thrilling match that featured 30 sixes and 434 runs at an average of 10.9 an over.

Marcus Stoinis starred for the Australians with 78 from 37 balls but Guptill's 97 from 50 laid the foundation for New Zealand's win.

Black Caps spinner Mitchell Santner also shone amid the batting fireworks, taking four for 31, while Australian paceman Kane Richardson managed Kane for 43.

New Zealand allrounder Jimmy Neesham was another exceptional performer, taking two wickets in the final over when a rampant Australia needed 15 runs for victory. Neesham also scored an undefeated 45, including six sixes.

The result puts New Zealand 2-0 up in the five-match series, on the brink of a win over the world's second-ranked T20 team.

Guptill's innings gave him the record for the most sixes in T20 Internationals with 132, taking him past India's Rohit Sharma on 127.

The 34-year-old clubbed the ball over the boundary eight times, bludgeoning all comers in the Australian attack. He fell just short of his third Twenty20 century after being caught trying

to hit a Daniel Sams delivery out of the ground.

Guptill averaged only 17 in the recent series against the West Indies and Pakistan, then managed just 11.5 in the domestic competition before picking up a hamstring injury.

Pressure on the opener intensified when he made a duck in the first match against Australia on Monday, with calls for uncapped Finn Allen to join the squad. But he answered his critics with a return to his big-hitting best, bringing up 50 off 27 balls, with eight boundaries, including four sixes. Guptill insisted he had not changed his approach during the game-turning innings.

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Captain Shaw creates Vijay Hazare history

Prithvi slams unbeaten 227 as Mumbai make record 457-4 against Puducherry



PTI ■ JAIPUR

Mumbai captain Prithvi Shaw on Thursday became the highest individual scorer in Vijay Hazare Trophy national 50-over championships as he smashed an unbeaten 227 off just 152 balls to help Mumbai beat Puducherry by 233 runs in their Elite Group D game here.

The 21-year-old Shaw, who has played in five Tests and five ODIs, broke the earlier record of the highest individual score held by Sanju Samson (212 not out against Goa in 2019).

This was the maiden List-A double

hundred for Shaw, which he got in 142 balls. Shaw hammered 31 fours and five sixes during his onslaught. He also became the eighth Indian to score a List A double hundred.

This was the fourth double hundred in the history of the Vijay Hazare Trophy.

Also, this was Prithvi's second century of the tournament after his unbeaten 105 in the lung-opener against Delhi.

This was also the highest score by a captain in List A cricket in the world after the youngest surpassed the unbeaten 222 by Graeme Pollock versus Border in East London.

HIGHEST LIST-A TOTALS OF ALL TIME					
Team	Score	Opposition	Ground	Date	
Surrey	496/4	Gloucestershire	The Oval	29 Apr 2007	
England	481/6	Australia	Nottingham	19 Jun 2018	
India A	458/4	Leicestershire	Leicester	19 Jun 2018	
Mumbai	457/4	Pondicherry	Jaipur	25 Feb 2021	

HIGHEST INDIVIDUAL LIST A SCORES OF ALL TIME (MEN'S)					
Player	Runs	Team	Opposition	Ground	Date
Alistair Brown	268	Surrey	Glamorgan	The Oval	19 Jun 2002
Rohit Sharma	264	India	Sri Lanka	Kolkata	13 Nov 2014
D'Arcy Short	257	West Aust	Queensland	Sydney	28 Sep 2018
Shikhar Dhawan	248	India A	South Africa A	Pretoria	12 Aug 2013
Martin Guptill	237*	New Zealand	West Indies	Wellington	21 Mar 2015
Prithvi Shaw	227*	Mumbai	Pondicherry	Jaipur	25 Mar 2021

For the record, the existing highest individual List A score is 268 by Ali Brown.

Puducherry's decision to put Mumbai in to bat backfired badly as Shaw and Suryakumar Yadav (133 off 58 balls) toyed with their bowling attack at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium and post a mammoth 457/4.

Leg-spinner Prashant Solanki (5/48) then picked a five-for as Mumbai bundled out Puducherry for 224 to register their third win on the trot.

The diminutive right-handed Shaw and Yashasvi Jaiswal (10) added 58 runs for the first wicket to lay the foundation. After Jaiswal was dismissed, Shaw found an able partner in Aditya Tare (56, 7x4) as the duo stitched a 153-run stand for the second wicket. Tare played the perfect second fiddle to Shaw.

Suryakumar, who came in at No. 4, was in his elements, hitting 22 fours and four sixes. He and Shaw added 201 runs for the third wicket stand and helped Mumbai go past the 400-run mark.

SINGLES

BOORA IN STRANDJA MEDAL ROUNDS

NEW DELHI: Naveen Boora (69kg) assured himself of at least a Bronze by advancing to the semifinals while Manjeet Singh (+91kg) entered the quarters on an all-win day for Indian boxers at the 72nd Strandja Memorial Tournament in Sofia, Bulgaria. Boora defeated Brazil's Eravio Edson in his quarterfinal bout, prevailing 5-0 in the contest. Manjeet, on the other hand, got the better of Ireland's Gytis Lisinskas in his last-16 stage bout.

INDIA SKEET SHOOTERS IN LINE FOR MEDALS

CAIRO: Indian skeet shooters, including Olympic quota holders Mairaj Ahmad Khan and Angad Vir Singh Bajwa, were in line for medals in the team events at the Shotgun World Cup. On Wednesday, both the men's and women's three-member teams ended the first three qualification rounds in medal winning positions, with two more qualification rounds to go before the finals.

HEWITT NAMED TO TENNIS HALL OF FAME

LONDON: Two-time Grand Slam winner Lleyton Hewitt was named to the International Tennis Hall of Fame class of 2021 on Wednesday, along with the Original 9 of the women's professional tour. The honor for former world number one Hewitt came on his 40th birthday. Hewitt, who amassed 30 tour-level singles titles in his 18-year career, will be inducted in the Player Category.

GAUFF ADVANCES TO ADELAIDE SEMIS

ADELAIDE: Coco Gauff and Jil Teichmann advanced to the Adelaide International semifinals on Thursday after three-set wins on the Memorial Drive hard courts. The 16-year-old Gauff beat Shelby Rogers 2-6, 6-4, 6-4, and Teichmann defeated Anastasija Sevastova 6-4, 6-7 (8), 7-5. Gauff will next face second-seeded Belinda Bencic, who beat Storm Sanders 6-2, 6-4.

MASHAL SPORTS INVITE BIDS FOR MEDIA RIGHTS

NEW DELHI: Mashal Sports, the co-owners of the Pro Kabaddi League have issued a tender for the auction of the media rights for the next five editions of the league. The document can be purchased online at ₹2,50,000 plus taxes for entities incorporated in India and \$3,500 plus taxes for entities incorporated outside India. The shortlisted, eligible bidders can subsequently place bids for one or more of the following media rights packages, through an e-auction process. Star India was the broadcaster of the first seven editions of the league and were also the majority stakeholders in the league since the second edition of the competition. AGENCIES

Messi's brace helps Barca close gap on top



Barcelona: Lionel Messi soared past Luis Suarez to become La Liga's top scorer on Wednesday by adding his 17th and 18th goals of the season in a much-needed 3-0 victory for Barcelona over Elche.

Barca had followed up last week's crushing Champions League loss to PSG by drawing at home to Cadiz on Sunday but eased the strain with a comfortable win at the Camp Nou.

Messi's double owed much to a pair of superb assists, with a supreme dribble by Frenkie de Jong coming after a sublime flick from Martin Braithwaite, who also set up Jordi Alba to score a third.

After failing to take full advantage of league leaders Atletico Madrid's defeat by Levante on Saturday, this victory puts Barcelona back in third, five points off the top, having played a game more than Atletico.

Just as importantly, it puts Ronald Koeman's side back on track after two disappointing results threatened to extinguish momentum gained in recent weeks.

Even if Atletico prove too far ahead to catch, a positive performance was important, especially with a semi-final second leg to come next week against Sevilla in the Copa del Rey, which may be their only chance of winning a trophy this term.

Messi's return to top form comes as a huge boost too. This was his fifth and sixth goal in his last four games while no player from the top five European leagues has scored more than his 13 this year in all competitions. Bayern Munich's Robert Lewandowski is closest on 12. AFP

Job done for Zizou

Late Mendy goal gives Madrid 1-0 win over 10-man Atalanta



AP ■ BERGAMO

Real Madrid struggled to break down 10-man Atalanta before Ferland Mendy netted an 86th-minute winner to give the Spanish giant a 1-0 win in the first leg of the round of 16.

Madrid entered the game as the big favorite despite a slew of injuries, and Atalanta's chances diminished further when midfielder Remo Freuler was sent off in the 17th minute after being adjudged to have denied a scoring opportunity.

"The match was ruined," Atalanta coach Gian Piero Gasperini said. "I don't know what the result would have been, we might have still lost, but

it would have been a much different and better match."

Madrid — playing without Karim Benzema, Eden Hazard and captain Sergio Ramos — still found it difficult to test Atalanta goalkeeper Pierluigi Gollini until the end of the first half, when he pulled off a great reaction save to keep out Casemiro's header from Toni Kroos' free kick.

Just as it looked as if Atalanta would hold on for a draw, Mendy received the ball

outside the area after a corner and curled a shot into the right side of the net from 20 yards.

"Yes, we'd practiced that play, but it wasn't supposed to be Ferland who took the shot," said Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane with a smile. "We didn't have a great game tonight but what was most important was the result. Scoring away from home was important for us."

The second leg will be on March 16 in Madrid. Atalanta can take comfort from the fact it has won all its European matches away from home this season, including a 2-0 victory over Liverpool at Anfield.

"We just have to win in Madrid," Gasperini said. "It's easy, we just have one possibility. We must win."

Man City take control of Gladbach tie

AFP ■ BUDAPEST

Premier League leaders Manchester City closed in on the Champions League quarter-finals after cruising past Borussia Moenchengladbach with a comfortable 2-0 win last 16, first leg tie in Budapest.

A first half header from Bernardo Silva and a Gabriel Jesus strike in the second extended a winning streak by Pep Guardiola's

high-flying side to 19 games in all competitions.

With six changes from the side which started Sunday's win over

Arsenal City camped inside the Gladbach half for most of the game.

Although clear favourites City took time to break down a stubborn German defence however, often foiled by the interceptions of Algeria left-back Ramy Bensebaini.

The loss in the Puskas Arena leaves Gladbach, who managed just one shot on target throughout the game, needing a near miracle in the return leg scheduled for March 16 in Manchester.

Spurs through in Europa



London: Dele Alli scored with an overhead kick and set up two other goals as Tottenham beat Wolfsburg 4-0 in the Europa League to become the first team to qualify for the last 16.

Alli, handed a rare start by Jose Mourinho, flicked the ball up after meeting a right-wing cross by Matt Doherty then leapt with his back to goal and directed an acrobatic effort into the bottom corner in the 11th minute of the second-leg match in the round of 32.

The midfielder crossed for Carlos Vinicius to head in the second goal in the 50th then played in substitute Gareth Bale to curl a powerful 73rd-minute shot into the top corner.

Vinicius added a fourth for Tottenham, which completed an 8-1 victory on aggregate. AP