

**MONEY 6**FUEL PRICES RESURGE  
AFTER 3-DAY BREAK**WORLD 7**BIDEN: STRIKES IN SYRIA SENT  
WARNING TO IRAN TO 'BE CAREFUL'**SPORT 8**BUMRAH RELEASED  
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## Cong getting weak, rues G-23

### Senior party leaders pitch for strong Cong leadership at Centre

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Pitching for a strong Congress leadership at the Centre in order to corner the Narendra Modi-led Government, the group of 23 Congress leaders, known in the party circles as "dissident" voices, on Saturday launched a fresh offensive questioning the top brass of the party why it failed to utilise the services of an "experienced" leader like Ghulam Nabi Azad when it needed him the most.

At least seven leaders belonging to this 'group of dissenters', assembled in Jammu to attend Shanti Sammelan organised by the Gandhi Global Family.

Interestingly, the "show of strength" was organised by these leaders a day after the announcement of the Assembly polls by the Election Commission of India (ECI) in five States, including Kerala, Assam, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal.

In one voice all these leaders sent out a clear message to the Congress leadership to start working towards strengthening the party before it's too late. The tone and tenor of the speeches made by these leaders clearly indicated the Congress party is headed for a major "shakeup" in the days to come. These leaders also made it clear they will not sit idle as the country was facing numerous challenges.



Congress leaders Ghulam Nabi Azad, Anand Sharma, Kapil Sibal, Bhupinder Singh Hooda and Raj Babbar during a Shanti Sammelan event in Jammu on Saturday

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Apart from Ghulam Nabi Azad, former Cabinet Ministers Kapil Sibal, Manish Tewari, Anand Sharma, former Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, parliamentarians Raj Babbar, and Vivek Tankha attended the event in Jammu.

Wearing saffron headgears, all these leaders also openly came out in support of the demand for restoring "statehood" to Jammu & Kashmir.

None of the office-bearers of the Jammu & Kashmir

Pradesh Congress Committee, including its chief GA Mir, attended the event. Only loyalists of Ghulam Nabi Azad from the Kashmir Valley and Jammu region attended the event in full strength.

Leading the charge from the front, one of the senior most members of the group Anand Sharma said, "The Congress has weakened in the last decade. Our voice is for the betterment of the party. It should be strengthened everywhere once again. New gener-

ation should connect (to the party). We've seen good days of the Congress. We don't want to see it weakening as we become older."

In a veiled attack on the party leadership, the former Union Minister went on to add, "All of us have covered a long distance to reach where we're today. Nobody among us has come through the window, all of us have walked through the door. We have come through the students' movement, the youth movement. I've not given

anyone the right to declare if we're people of Congress or not, nobody has that right. We'll build the party and strengthen it. We believe in the strength and unity of the Congress".

His Cabinet colleagues Kapil Sibal and Manish Tewari also battled for a strong Congress leadership at the top. Sibal said, "We had gathered together earlier too and we have to strengthen the party together".

Sibal questioned as to why the Congress was not utilising the rich experience of Ghulam Nabi Azad. "He is one such leader who knows the ground reality of Congress in every district of every State. We were saddened when we realised that he is being freed from Parliament. We didn't want him to go from Parliament".

Referring to the treatment meted out to Azad by the party high command, Sibal said, "What is the real role of Ghulam Nabi Azad? A person who flies an aircraft is an experienced person. An engineer accompanies him to detect and repair any malfunctioning in the engine. Ghulam Nabi ji is experienced as well as an engineer".

Echoing similar sentiments Anand Sharma also said, "There has never come such an occasion after 1950 when there is no representative of Jammu & Kashmir in the Rajya Sabha. This will be corrected".

## Centre caps Covid shot at ₹250 in pvt hospitals

### During phase-II of vaccination drive beginning from March 1

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Eligible Covid-19 vaccine aspirants in the country will have to shell out ₹250 per shot — ₹150 cost of vaccine plus ₹100 service charge — if they opt to get themselves inoculated at the designated private hospitals during the second phase of the vaccination drive beginning March 1 to cover people aged above 60 years and those over 45 with comorbidities.

However, the Government hospitals will be providing the jab free, the cost to be borne by the Centre. "The private hospitals can charge up to ₹250 per dose of Covid-19 vaccine. However, the jab will be given free of cost at Government hospitals across the States. The cost will be borne by the Centre," said Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan in a statement here.

"₹250 will be the ceiling — ₹150 cost of vaccine plus ₹100 service charge. This arrangement will remain effective till further orders," Bhushan said in a statement here following an interaction with Health Secretaries and MDs (NHM) of



States and UTs on the vaccination of age-appropriate groups through a video conference (VC) on Saturday.

"There would be Government health facilities which will be used as Covid vaccine centres such as medical college hospitals, district hospitals, sub divisional hospitals, CHCs, PHCs, Health Sub Centres and Health and Wellness Centres. Geo reference maps with GPS coordinates of all these health facilities have been prepared that will serve as CVCs and these Geo referenced maps are being shared with the States," a senior health official added.

To ramp up the Covid vaccination capacity manifold, significantly a large number of private facilities are being involved. "Around 10,000 pri-

vate hospitals empanelled under Ayushman Bharat PMJAY, over 600 hospitals empanelled under CGHS and other private hospitals empanelled under State Governments.

"Health Insurance Schemes can participate as CVCs. Health Departments of State Governments have already initiated dialogue with these private hospitals so that they can be encouraged to participate in this drive as CVCs. A list of all these private hospitals has been uploaded on the website of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and National Health Authority," said the official.

So far, 77 per cent of healthcare workers have been administered with the first dose and 70 per cent got the second dose, the official added.

## Assembly passes Resolution on Jagannath Heritage Corridor

### VOW TO COMPLETE SHRIMANDIRA PARIKRAMA YOJANA SOON

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Legislative Assembly on Saturday unanimously passed a Resolution on a 'Jagannath Heritage Corridor' project.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik presented three proposals in the Resolution in the House through a videoconference. The resolution was supported by both opposition parties, BJP and Congress.

The first proposal was to take a vow to complete the Shrimandira Parikrama Yojana with dedication at the earliest.

The second proposal was to have the participation and contribution of all Odias and devotees of Lord Jagannath for the project.

The third proposal was to extend gratitude to people of



Puri town who have sacrificed for the Shrimandira Parikrama Yojana.

"The greatest identity of Odia community is Lord Jagannath. Our history, culture, tradition and belief system are all centered on Almighty. He is the symbol of Odia esteem and pride," said the Chief Minister.

He said all devotees who come to the temple have a

desire to see the Lord in a peaceful, beautiful and spiritual environment.

"Millions of devotees pray to visit the Jagannath Temple once in a lifetime and get a glimpse of the Lord. It is the responsibility of all of us to ensure that all devotees return with a divine feeling," he said.

Patnaik said three objectives were considered for Shrimandira

Parikrama Yojana when the Justice BP Das Committee had recommended for a Shrimandir security corridor.

The recommendations were: safety of the temple, safety of millions of devotees visiting the temple and creation of a spiritual atmosphere for devotees.

"In general, the Government takes steps to

implement the plan. I firmly believe that this plan is not only for the Government or for the temple administration. It is the plan of 4.5 crore Odias. Therefore, I consider myself blessed to present the Corridor Plan of Shrimandira to the people of Odisha through you," said Patnaik.

"This is a historic moment for all of us. This moment

comes after ages. All of us, all the people of Odisha, have come together to share this unique moment today," he said.

"Shrimandira is the centre of our spiritual heritage. We have preserved this priceless treasure for our future descendants in the legacy," Patnaik said.

Supporting the proposals, Leader of Opposition Pradipta Kumar Naik (BJP) said his party wants that Puri is made a world-famous heritage site.

Congress Legislature Party Leader Narasingha Mishra said, "It's really an excellent work. Congress party supports the project for maintaining the culture and heritage as well as history of Odisha."

Mishra said the project would also boost economic activities and attract tourists to the State.

### 25 VSSUT students test Covid+

SAMBALPUR: Amid the Covid upsurge scare, as many as 25 students of the VSSUT (Veer Surendra Sai University of Technology), Burla here, have tested positive for coronavirus.

The fresh cases were detected in three hostels of the university just in two days, informed university source on Saturday.

The infected students are currently undergoing treatment at different hospitals.

Following the detection of new positive cases in the VSSUT premises, the Vice-Chancellor has urged the students not to enter into the campus as part of precautionary measures.

Last year, one of the professors of the premier educational institution had lost her husband to the Covid-19.

Later, the woman professor was found positive for the virus. **PNS**

### 86 new Covid cases in State; total rises to 3,37,104

#### 56 MORE RECOVER, TOTAL RECOVERIES 3,34,519

**BHUBANESWAR:** The State registered 86 new Covid-19 cases in 21 districts and the State pool on Saturday, with which its total positive caseload increased to 3,37,104.

Of the new cases, 51 were from quarantine and 35 local contacts.

Sundargarh district reported the day's highest 10 cases. One case was reported from the State pool.

Currently, the number of total active cases in the State stood at 673 and the cumulative samples tested were 8,30,049.

However, 56 patients recovered on the day, taking the total recoveries to 3,34,519 in the State. **PNS**

## Centre owes Odisha ₹59,222 cr in 6 yrs

### EIGHT CENTRAL SCHEMES SCRAPPED

SUDARSHAN CHHOTORAY ■ BHUBANESWAR

Replying to the debate on the State Budget 2021-22 in the State Assembly on Saturday, Finance Minister Niranjan Pujari stated that Odisha has been deprived of ₹59,222 crore from the Centre during last six years. This amount consists of the State's legitimate claims based on the recommendations of Finance Commissions and tax share.

Pujari said that from the Divisible Pool, 58% goes for Consolidated Fund of India and remaining 42% distributed among the States.

He expressed concern over the Union Government's deliberate attempt to scrap eight special programmes with 100% Central assistance like Backward Region Development Fund, Integrated Action Plan, etc. Odisha is going to lose Rs 54 crore for this. These special plans and programmes were revised time and again with 90:10, 75:25 and 60:40 per cent sharing between the State and the Centre.

Pujari informed that the State Government also lost ₹732 crore

from normal Central assistance.

While raising paddy procurement issue, Pujari said that though the FCI is mandated to procure various crops, including paddy, but keeping in view its failure to do so, the State Government has taken initiative to purchase paddy bearing the subsidy cost. However, the Central Government is yet to provide ₹8,377 crore in this regard to the State.

On the increasing loan burden on the State, the Minister stated that the loan of the State this year is not ₹44,000 crore, but the Government has to bear a net loan burden of ₹20,000 crore. He assured that given the positive trends in the economy, Odisha would soon be on the recovery path.

Pujari pointed out that because of economic shrinkage everywhere in the globe for the Covid-19 pandemic, Odisha's growth had been hit, but the gap of the per capita income of the State and that of the national level is decreasing.

While members from the Treasury Bench highlighted the State's growth story, Opposition members cornered the Government on issues like the State's increasing loan burden.

## Centre: Enforce Covid appropriate behaviour

### States, UTs told to deal firmly with violations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Saturday advised States and UTs — Maharashtra, Punjab, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Telangana and Jammu & Kashmir — to enforce Covid-appropriate behaviour by dealing firmly with violations and ensure effective surveillance in case of potential super spreading events so as not to let the situation go out of hand.

These States and UTs have been reporting a high Covid-19 active caseload or an increasing trend in new cases in the last week, noted Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba while chairing a high-level review meeting with Chief Secretaries of States/UTs.

"They were advised not to lower their guard, enforce Covid appropriate behaviour and deal firmly with violations. It was strongly underlined that they need to follow effective surveillance strategies in respect of potential super spreading events," the Union Health Ministry said in a



Beds lined up at Nesco Covid care centre, amid concerns over surge in Covid-19 cases, at Goregaon in Mumbai on Saturday

PTI

statement.

The need for effective testing, comprehensive tracking, prompt isolation of positive cases, and quick quarantine of close contacts were also strongly emphasised.

During the review meeting, States were advised to undertake vaccination on priority in districts reporting higher cases and monitor strains and clustering of cases for early hotspot identification and control.

They have also been asked to improve the overall testing in districts reporting a reduction in testing, and increase RT-PCR tests in districts having high antigen testing.

The States and UT were directed to focus on surveillance and stringent containment in selected districts

reporting reduced tests/high positivity and increased cases.

They have also been advised to carry clinical management in districts reporting higher deaths and promote Covid-appropriate behaviour to ensure effective citizen communication to not let complacency set in, especially in light of the vaccination drive entering the next phase.

Maharashtra reported the highest daily new cases at 8,333, followed by Kerala with 3,671 while Punjab reported 622 new cases in the last 24 hours. In the last two weeks, Maharashtra has shown the highest rise in active cases from 34,449 on February 14 to 68,810 currently, the Ministry said.

## All 728 districts to become unique hubs to boost farm exports

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

As part of its effort to boost farm exports, enhance farmers' income and raise rural jobs, the Centre on Saturday finalised a list of products from agriculture and allied sectors under the "One District One Focus Product (ODOFP)", scheme that will be promoted in a cluster approach in 728 districts across the country.

For instance, Uttar Pradesh's Ballia district is to be promoted as Bindi (tikuli) cluster; Deoghar and Dumka in Jharkhand for Peda products hub; Rajouri for spices; Anantnag for trout fish; Ayodhya for Jaggery; Auraiya for food processing desi ghee; Srinagar for flowers; Budgam for exotic vegetables; East Delhi for namkeens, and South-west Delhi for milk-based products.

Similarly, Kupwara is to be developed for walnut; Ganderbal for honey; Bandipora for processed poultry/mutton; Durg and Koriya in Chhattisgarh for tomato-based products; Surguja for

litchi; Batod in Gujarat for guava; Porbandar for gram-based products; North Goa for jackfruit; Ambala for onion and Kinnaur for fruit wine under the ODOFP scheme.

According to the Ministry, the product chosen in the district for promotion, having export potential which will boost farm exports and enhance farmers' income. Besides, also help to provide jobs in rural sector.

The list includes 25 districts of Arunachal Pradesh; 38 districts of Bihar; 28 districts of Chhattisgarh; 2 districts in Goa; 22 districts of Haryana; 12 districts of Himachal Pradesh; 24 districts of Jharkhand; 20 districts of Jammu & Kashmir; 31 districts of Karnataka; 14 districts of Kerala; 52 districts of Madhya Pradesh; 36 districts of Maharashtra; 16 districts of Manipur; 30 districts of Odisha; 23 districts of Punjab; 4 districts of Sikkim; 36 districts of Tamil Nadu; 8 districts of Tripura; 75 districts of Uttar Pradesh, and 18 districts of West Bengal.



HOME THEATRE

Not a patch on the book or original movie



**THE GIRL ON THE TRAIN**  
**Netflix**  
**\*ing: Parineeti Chopra, Aditi Rao Hydari, Kirti Kulhari, Avinash Tiwary**  
**Rated: 5/10**

Let's talk about the positives first. It starts off on a good note. The opening scene tells you that there is more to come and it is bound to be interesting — murder-crime thrillers are definitely a treat to watch. And this latest Parineeti Chopra film is no different. A girl on the train who watches the life of another woman and reminiscing her own and wishing it was her in place of that girl is normal enough . More so when our life is in shambles and nothing is going right. So far so good. Unfortunately, as the movie progresses it starts to spiral out of control and goes off track. Of course the makers wanted to give a Bollywood feel to the film and hence the song and dance but there

was no need to let it deviate so much. If the makers had gone with the name and copied most of the scenes, they might have stuck true to the book by British author Paula Hawkins 2015 novel of the same name. One doesn't understand the need to go for a twist that doesn't make much sense because there are so many gaps that are difficult to fill. However, if can manage to watch it like any other B-town movie and not look for answers that need to be addressed, The Girl On The Train manages to hold your attention. But there is a condition— one should have neither seen nor read the book by the same or watched the 2016 movie starring Emily Blunt. The character in the Hindi version is played by Chopra. If by any chance one gas done either of the above, it will be a lost cause even if there is a deviation at the climax which is definitely a surprise. — Shalini Saksena

Guru-shishya parampara is what it's about

**AAVARTAN**  
**IMDB**  
**\*ing: Miroslaw Baka, Mateusz Banasiuk, Adrianna Chlebicka, Krzysztof Czeczot, Wojciech Kalarus, Tomasz Karolak, Jacek Knap, Anna Smolowik, Sebastian Stankiewicz**  
**Rated: 5/10**

The latest film by writer-director Durba Sahay, who had made her debut as a director with The Pen, is a take on the guru-shishya parampara and how one cycle ends and the next begins. With danseuse Shovana Narayan in the lead, the one-hour-and-56 minutes are spent exploring the beautiful relationship that a gurus have with their shishyas and how sometimes ego and pride cone in the way of this beautiful and sacred relationship. But the whole premise behind an art form is to surrender to the art and

there is no place for egos here. Through the four generations of passing on the tradition of who will lead the next generation of young dancers, Aavartan, which means a cycle, is interesting to watch — that a guru can be jealous of her pupil but manages to over come her insecurities via a story told to her by her guru. Narayan may not be a great actor but there is no doubt where her skills lie — a brilliant Kathak dancer. Those who love classic dance forms, this movie is a treat to watch. To see Narayan dance so beautifully even though she us 70 years old is magical. It just goes to show that one can never take the art form from the artist whatever be the age. The dual towards the climax where she performs is absolutely riveting. One can see clearly why she is still the queen of her art. Watch this one for some excellent footwork by Shovana Narayan. — Shalini Saksena



Plan Your Day



**Pupper Party 4.0**  
**Venue:** Cafe 27, Kailash Colony, New Delhi  
**When:** February 28, 2021  
**Time:** 1 pm onwards  
We are pumped and ready for yet another pupper party in our city! Join us for the Delhi Pupper Party 4.0. Enjoy a thrilling Sunday with your pups. Let your pets chomp on a yummilicious doggy buffet, play fun games & win super gift hampers worth ₹2,200! All pets at the event get a dazzling Just Dogs voucher worth ₹975 and humans get a complimentary FnB Coupon with ₹100 with each ticket!

Ultra Run

**Venue:** Delta 105, Village Pada,Manesar, Gurugram, India  
**When:** February 28, 2021  
**Time:** 6 pm onwards  
Run in the clean and green environs on the outskirts of Gurgaon. Choose your distances from short and sweet 10K to herculean 24hrs ultra run or an experiential night run inside a safe Military themed campus- Delta 105.  
**Race Categories**  
Note: Crew supporting participants & accompanying guests will have to buy Food-Coupons to order meals from the campsite kitchen.  
Race Categories (check route map)  
63.3Km Ultra Run (Feb 28 6 am start, cutoff 10hrs, Min age 18yrs): ₹2,000  
Full Marathon (Feb 28 6:15 am start, cutoff 7hrs, Min age 18yrs): ₹1,400  
Half Marathon (Feb 28 7am start, Min age 18yrs): ₹1,000  
10Km Run (Feb 28 7am start, Min age 18yrs): ₹1,000



TELLY TALE

**'I FEEL WAJID'S PRESENCE'**  
Zee TV has been a pioneer and a trend-setter in shaping television content over the past three decades and is all set to



change the face of music reality shows once again with its latest non-fiction property, the *Indian Pro Music League* (IPML). In what will be a clutter-breaking format innovation, Zee TV is all set to present audiences with the world's first-ever music league championship, starting February 26. While the world of sports has seen several league competitions, this unique music league will have six teams representing different regions of India, battling it out against each other in a musical championship. Each of these six teams supported by leading Bollywood and sports celebrities will have top playback singers as their captains, one reality show star and one fresh voice. The likes of Mika Singh, Kailash Kher, Sajid Khan, Shaan, Ankit Tiwari, Javed Ali, Asees Kaur, Bhoomi Trivedi, AkritiKakar, Payal Dev, Neha Bhasin, Shilpa Rao have been signed on to captain the 6 zonal teams. During the shoot of the grand premiere episode, everyone was ecstatic to kickstart the reality show. In fact, all the celebrities put their best foot forward and gave some splendid performances on the grand Indian Pro Music League stage. However, it was popular Bollywood composer, Sajid Khan's words that left everyone teary-eyed during the shoot. Sajid, his family, and the whole of Bollywood was dealt a huge blow last year when his brother Wajid Khan passed away suddenly. Participating in the *Indian Pro Music League* was actually Wajid's dream and not having him around made Sajid very emotional, after all, it was also his first reality show without him. On the stage, Sajid mentioned how he missed his brother but also felt his presence on the stage, and hence, he is looking forward to making this show a huge success. Sajid Khan who is the captain of Delhi Jammers mentioned on the stage, "Even when Wajid was hospitalized, he was

constantly concerned about the show. Whenever I visited him, he kept telling me that we must work hard for the *Indian Pro Music League* and make it a success. Till date, I have never done a show without Wajid, but this is the first time I am coming without him on such a big show with so many star singers. However, I feel his presence here, I think he is always with me and that makes me extremely comfortable. I feel I am no one without him and I will work really hard and make him proud."

**PACKAGE FULL OF MASTI**  
Get ready to witness showdowns in the upcoming episodes across &TV shows. In *Bhabiji Ghar Par Hai*, Manmohan Tiwari (Rohitashv Gour) finds himself at crossroads with his beautiful Anita Bhabi (NehhaPendse) who is fighting a court case against him. Either way, Manmohan is destined to lose! Whereas, Rajesh (Kamna Pathak) who tire to create a rift between her husband Happu Singh (Yogesh Tripathi) and Beni (Vishwanath Chatterjee) makes matters go out of hand in *Happu Ki Ultan Paltan*.



Bringing *aandhi* and *toofan* are the new visitors at Pappu's (Manmohan Tiwari) guest house in *Gudiya Humari Sabhi Pe Bhari* with an announcement that there is a pot full of gold hidden in the haveli, followed by an exhausting treasure hunt. In *Santoshi Maa Sunaye Vrat Katahyein*, a time warp takes place bringing Indresh (Ashish Kadian) back to life and Swati (Tanvi Dogra) to justice. But will Asur Rani Paulomi (Sara Khan) give up without a fight? Sharing more on the zesty details of the track, NehhaPendse aka Anita Bhabi shares: "If there is one woman who can influence Vibhuti Narayan Mishra (Aasif Sheikh) like Anita does, is Angoori Bhabi (Shubhangi Atre). When Tiwari ji tortures Tillu (Syed Salim Zaidi) under pandit ji's orders, Anita gets furious and files a case against him. When Angoori convinces Vibhuti to fight Tiwari ji's case against Anita herself,things get heated." Kamna Pathak aka Rajesh Singh says, "Beni and Happu's *dosti* is *pakk!* But Rajesh has triggered the two of them that will result in an ugly fight. The pair makes efforts to make each other feel jealous and ultimately refuse to talk. *Iss darar ke beech*, will Rajesh and

Kamlesh (Sanjay Chaudhury) be able to patch the two best buds? "Santa Sagar aka Sarla shares: "The Gupta family is used to Gudiya's frequent surprises. This time around she brings the previous owners of the house who got displaced a long time ago. They reveal that back in the day they hid a huge pot of gold in the house. After knowing about the treasure, Sarla is determined on finding the fortune." Sara Khan aka Asur Rani Paulomi shares: "Swati along with the help of Santoshi Maa (Gracy Singh) has always fought her battles. But will Indresh support her after being emotionally blackmailed by his father Singhasan Singh (Sushil Sinha)? Asur Rani Paulomi will not let Santoshi Maa win and to find out how, the audience must stay tuned!"

**WELCOME SARGAM ON SCREEN**  
Laughter is the best medicine to take stress away, and Sony Entertainment Television is making sure the audience gets a good dose, with the launch of its new show *Sargam Ki Sadhesatii*. The channel is all set to unveil a sitcom that encourages family viewing. Produced by Vipul Shah of Optimistix Entertainment, *Sargam Ki Sadhe Satii* brings forth the Awasthi household with Sargam as the *bahu*, and her unique *sasural* where she is the only woman among men. The shenanigans of the Awasthis from Ghaziabad will throw viewers into giggle-fits, while also warming the hearts with relatable situations. Altogether, the Awasthi family will be seen elevating the most mundane situation — ones that viewers will easily relate to — into a whole lot of fun. The makers have chosen an eclectic cast, led by *Mere Dad Ki Dulhan* actor Anjali Tatrari as Sargam and Kunal Saluja as Aparshakti Awasthi. The rest of the key cast members include names such as Darshan Jariwala, Sanat Vyas, Ojas Rawal, Yash Sehgal, Vishnu Bholwani, Akash Makhija, Yash Sehgal and Krish Chugh. Sargam Awasthi is empathetic, rational, intelligent, selfless and a leader in essence, but for someone who becomes a homemaker, she faces two key challenges. Firstly, she does not know to cook, a stereotype that is often associated with a good *bahu*. Secondly, in her earnest desire to balance everything and to be a Jack of all trades at home, she keeps faltering here and there. Comical twists in the story happen as Sargam tries her best to be The Sadhesatii men include Sargam's husband Aparshakti Awasthi aka Appu, who is a small-time influencer for the world, but a *jugaadu* hero of his house. An aspiring actor, he is unabashedly disorganised and takes pride in being a multi-tasker. 'Dadaji' Anandil Awasthi, also called 'sympathy seeker' due to his unending love for talking about his 'fake' ailments, is the oldest, but most youthful member of this mad-house. His favourite topic is his bowel movement!

'I waited for movies, got TV shows instead'

AYUB KHAN, who plays Guddu Mishra on Ranju Ki Betiyaan on Dangal TV speaks with SHALINI SAKSENA about his role in the series, how he got into acting and why he ventured into TV shows

**■ What is your role in Ranju Ki Betiyaan?**  
I play Guddu Mishra; he is from Muzaffarpur, Bihar. He is someone who is respectful of his father and because of his father's wish to get married to a particular person, even though he doesn't agree to this, he gets married to Ranju (played by Reena Kapoor). She is timid and has no voice of her own. Ranju has four daughters. But my character is of a patriarchal mindset, he yearns for a son who can take his family name forward. Even though he respects his father, he wants to break the norm and achieve what he has wanted to do, dreaming of doing. Even though he has a wife and daughters, he gets married to another with whom he has two sons. His situation is unconventional but with a conventional marriage. This is a bit of dichotomy.  
**■ How did you get this project?**  
I had earlier done a show for Rashmi Sharma Telefilms titled *Shakti-Astitva Ke Ehsaas Ki*. The show was about a eunuch child. The role that was offered to me was challenging. The show was quite progressive and hence had agreed to do this show. I liked that my role was strong and all the twists and turns that happen are because of me.  
**■ What made you play Guddu Mishra?**  
Of course, the fact that while my character finds himself in a conventional marriage, the situation is unconventional. Second, the more important one is that the show is about a single working mother; something that is becoming prevalent in our society. More and more people are breaking out and craving a life for themselves. It is encouraging people to believe in their dreams and to strike out and make a living.  
**■ Was the fact that the role different from what you had done in the past also the attraction of taking up Ranju...?**  
More than the character that I was essaying, it was the concept of the show that had me take up the project. The concept is very interesting. I felt that the show is extremely progressive, that it has something to say. The part that has been offered here, I have something to say, there was a certain amount of identifiability here. I thought that the audience would get something out of it.  
**■ Do you think that people get impacted by what a show wants to say?**  
Yes, it does. When you pick up a subject like *Ranju....* when one wants to break the mindsets of people, if one tries to approach this aggressively, there is a possibility that one may be rejected. At times, at the cost of looking regressive, you slowly and gently push a thought process



forward and steer him towards a path that is different from the present one. One has to achieve a balance where you don't lose your audience and yet cater them towards progressive ideas.  
**■ You started off with films, what was the attraction of venturing into TV?**  
After doing films like *Mrityudand*, whatever that came my way after that was not all that exciting. The roles offered were not doing anything for me. I waited for two years to get work. Then came a time when I needed to work and met a person who was making a show, he appeared to be progressive with his ideas. He made the show *Muskaan* (1999). Once I started doing TV I realised that the commitment to TV is very heavy especially with daily soaps. With weekly, one could still do films. Once daily started, it became difficult to do films and TV. But if your character was not pivotal, one could still manage but the minute your role became central to the show, doing anything else, it was unfair to not be committed to one platform.  
**■ Is that why you haven't done movies in the recent past?**  
The funny part is; it is ironic but the truth is that every time I waited for a movie to come my way and it didn't and I took up a TV show, the very next day of shooting of the TV, I would get an offer of doing a film. I don't know whether it is luck or fate. Also, once you commit to a TV show, it requires full attention and one cannot plan in advance.  
**■ You have a film background. Was there ever a time when you wanted to be something else besides an actor?**  
Yes, definitely. There was a time when I wanted to be a fighter pilot — the whole idea of having so much power under you! But then my mother threatened and bullied me, I am the youngest of the siblings and since she could not bully them, she did it with me. I agreed not to pursue flying. But I have no regrets.  
**■ Is it important for an actor to find a connection with the character he is essaying?**  
Actually, what an actor needs to have in his arsenal is to understand different facets of life and society. To be able to understand different thought processes. Also, to be able to understand characters of people. If one is unable to do this, one is just playing a part that people may or may not be able to identify with. One learns a lot from society and people and an actor needs to learn from them.  
**■ What next?**  
I am open to any form of medium to work in. It is just that whenever it comes my way, I hope I am in a position to take them up. Let's see what is in store.



# Opp attacks Govt over law and order situation

Minister says situation largely peaceful

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Government on Saturday came under attack from Opposition BJP and Congress over the deteriorating law and order situation across the State.

The opposition members raised issues like missing of children, rape cases and political killings and alleged involvement of Ministers in several crimes.

However, Minister of State for Home Dibya Shankar Mishra maintained that the law and order situation has largely remained peaceful in the State.

Initiating the debate on an Adjournment Motion, BJP MLA Mohan Charan Majhi

alleged that Bihar and Uttar Pradesh-like situations are now prevailing in Odisha.

“Children are not safe. BJP workers are being killed. In the Mahanga double murder case, an FIR has been registered against the Law Minister (Pratap Jena). But no action has been taken,” said Majhi.

“Why the Chief Minister, who is claimed to be clean, is silent on the issue? Will the Chief Minister ask the Minister to resign?” asked the BJP legislator.

Senior BJP MLA Jayanarayan Mishra said police are being used for political purpose and he became a victim of this.

Congress Legislature Party Leader Narsingha Mishra came down heavily on the State Government over the deteriorating law and order situation.

“There is no law and order in the State; there is only jungle raj. Cybercrimes have become a nuisance in the State and it's a matter of concern. Detection in cybercrimes is absolutely zero,” said Mishra.

Congress MLA Santosh Singh Saluja demanded resignation of the Law Minister in the Mahanga double murder case.

Replying to the debate, Minister Dibya Shankar Mishra said law and order situation has largely remained peaceful in the State in 2020 and this year so far.

Stating that the Maoist situation has improved in the State, he said as many as 17 Red rebels were killed in 2020 including 16 during faceoff with security forces and one in people's attack.

While 34 Maoists were arrested, 21 Red ultras surrendered last year, he added.

# World Philosophy Day celebrated at IIT BBS

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The World Philosophy Day, a UNESCO event, was celebrated at the IIT Bhubaneswar on Friday with Prof Ramesh Chandra Sinha, Chairman, Indian Council of Philosophical Research (ICPR), New Delhi as chief guest and presided over by Prof RV Raja Kumar, Director, IIT Bhubaneswar.

Prof Raja Kumar said the day is celebrated to promote an international culture of philosophical debate respecting human dignity and diversity. He emphasised the need to teach philosophy at all levels, especially to the students of science and technology, as has been done at the IIT Bhubaneswar. He presented an overview of the various courses being offered at the School of Humanities, Social Sciences and Management (SHSSM) at



IIT Bhubaneswar.

Prof Sinha said that for centuries, in every culture, philosophy has given birth to concepts, ideas and analyses, and, through this, has laid the foundation for critical, independent and creative thoughts.

He added that philosophy should not be restricted to eminent scholars but should be

used for upliftment of the downtrodden, the marginalised, paving the path for building a better society of tomorrow.

The programme also included a thought-provoking session addressed by distinguished professors from different universities in the country.

# CM blesses newly wed HIV+ couple



PNS ■ BRAHMAMUR

In an unprecedented event, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Saturday joined a videoconference to bless a newly-wed HIV positive couple in Gopalpur of Ganjam district.

Patnaik talked to the newlyweds and extended his best wishes on the occasion.

The wedding of Ravindra and Padma was solemnised by the Ganjam district administration at the Gopalpur Shradha Sanjivani Daycare Home. Earlier, the two were

**THE WEDDING OF RAVINDRA AND PADMA WAS SOLEMNISED BY THE GANJAM DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION AT THE GOPALPUR SHRADHA SANJIVANI DAYCARE HOME**

staying at the daycare home for their education in the district and are currently doing their jobs in Hyderabad.

Collector Vijay Amruta Kulange was present at the event among others and performed the Kanyadaan ritual. He also presented a bank cheque to the couple.

# IN BHADRAK Failing to sell paddy, farmer takes poison

Admitted to hosp in critical condition

PNS ■ BHADRAK

Failing to sell paddy even after having a token, a farmer consumed poison in front of Bandhagaon panchayat at office under the Bhadrak Rural police limits in Bhadrak district on Saturday.

However, he was rushed to the District Headquarters Hospital in critical condition.

As per reports, the Rameswar Self Help Group

(SHG) was entrusted to procure paddy from farmers in the panchayat. One Rama Krushna Panda had received a token to sell his paddy to the SHG. Even after repeated requests made by Rama Krushna, the SHG did not procure his produce. Depressed over not being able to sell his crop, he attempted to end his life by consuming poison.

“Panda, a large-scale farmer, has over 50 quintals of paddy,” informed a local.

Earlier in the day, a group of farmers blocked NH-53 near Basantia Chhak in Anandpur of the district alleging irregularities in paddy procurement.

# Odia wonder kid Ishan tops IGKO

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Wonder kid Ishan Debata has done Odisha proud yet again. Ishan has topped the International General Knowledge Olympiad (IGKO). Organised by the Science Olympiad Foundation of India every year for school children, the IGKO is conducted across 40 countries in various geographies across the world.

As part of the felicitations, Ishan will be awarded the coveted International Gold Medal for General Knowledge, Citations, Certificate of Merit and a cash award.

Out of 40 questions which traversed diverse areas like science, sports, history, geography, economy, technology, current national and international affairs, Ishan managed to



obtain a perfect 40 out of 40.

Son of Delhi-based media entrepreneur Manash Debata and Swagatika Mishra, Ishan is a student of class 4 at Kendriya Vidyalaya, Sec-8, RK Puram, New Delhi. “This wouldn't have been possible without the blessings of my parents, grand parents and all my teachers.

Our HM sir Subhash Chandra Tripathi and class teacher Manju Rani have been very inspiring and motivating,” says Ishan crediting his teachers for the success. An elated Ishan rates this achievement as ‘very special’ for him. However, Gold rush is not new to this wonder kid. Earlier, he had won another International Gold Medal in Math Olympiad and a silver in Science Olympiad in standard 2.

Last year, he was the only boy from Delhi zone to have successfully contested in all five categories of Olympiads i.e., Math, Science, English, Cyber and General Knowledge as well as National Level Science Talent Search Examination (NSTSE).

Ishan's family hails from Tikanpur village of Kendrapara District in Odisha.

# 9,665 junior teachers regularised

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Government has regularised as many as 9,665 eligible junior teachers as elementary teachers in Grade-V (A) after completion of their six years continuous service.

School and Mass Education Department Additional Secretary Raghuram R Iyer has written a letter to the Director of Elementary Education in this regard.

“As there is no existing vacancy in Level-V(A) grade of the cadre, the Government has been pleased to allow regularisation of 9,965 Junior Teachers as Assistant Teacher, Level-V (A) in 30 districts of the State under non-plan scheme of respective Zilla Parishads by invoking the provision of Rule 62 of Odisha General Financial Rules (OGFR) to adjust the said Junior Teachers against the vacancy available for Graduate Teacher posts for drawal of regular salary as a temporary measure for six months with effect from the day following the date of completion of six years of continuous service as Sikshya Sahayak/Junior Teacher,” the letter reads.

# Huge cache of explosives seized by BSF



PNS ■ KORAPUT:

Border Security Force (BSF) personnel recovered a huge cache of explosives from the Pindamali-Bhitrapara forest in the Narayanpatna area of Koraput district on Saturday.

During a combing operation,

jawans of the BSF's 155 Battalion recovered 60 gelatin sticks, 50 electric detonators, 30 small iron pellets, electric wires and 2.5 kg of gun powder from the forest.

It was suspected that Maoists had stored the explosives to target security personnel.

On February 23, BSF personnel, while on a routine combing operation in a forest of Malkangiri district, had recovered a huge cache of explosives, including five kg of tiffin bombs, two pressure IEDs, wires and batteries. Besides, a Maoist uniform was also recovered.

# State modifies home isolation order

Returnees from 5 States to be under watch

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Government has revised the week-long home isolation order announced for travellers coming from other States.

Health and Family Welfare ACS Pradipta KumarK Mohapatra in partial modification to the instructions issued on Friday has clarified that at present, the precautionary measures may be limited to passengers from five high-risk States (instead of 12), namely, Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Mohapatra said

the situation is under watch; and surveillance may be extended to other States in future if the situation so warrants.

He said the seven-day mandatory home isolation for arrivals from the five high-risk States can be dispensed with for asymptomatic passengers who have RT-PCR negative reports (done not more than 72 hours before boarding) or a Covid vaccination final certificate.

Earlier, the Odisha Government had made the seven-day home isolation mandatory for returnees from Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, West Bengal, Punjab, Delhi, Chandigarh, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh to Odisha.

# IN BRAHMAMUR Fake liquor unit busted; 5 held

PNS ■ BRAHMAMUR

The Excise Department Intelligence unit busted a fake liquor manufacturing unit at Truptinagar under the Bada Bazar police station here on Saturday.

Acting on inputs, excise officials conducted a raid at the duplicate liquor production unit and seized huge quantities of liquor, spirits, essence, fake stickers of reputed India Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) brands, empty bottles and other machinery.

Five persons were arrested in connection and they were forwarded to court later in the



day, said sources.

The busting of the fake liquor unit is part of a series of raids on adulterated food manufacturing units which were sealed by the district administration. Earlier, units manufacturing adulterated sauce, soft drinks and packaged drinking water were unearthed in Brahmamur.

# State to recruit outside doctors, amends service rules

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

**As per the amendments, if a candidate has not passed higher secondary-level examination with Odia as a subject, he/she must qualify in this exam within four years of joining the job**

vice rule of doctors, eligible doctors from outside the State were deprived of getting job in Odisha.

With the increasing need of doctors due to the growing number of patients, the Government felt to amend the service rule, he said.

“At present, we are short of 2,330 doctors in the sanctioned posts of 8,719. Now,

6,389 cadre doctors are working; so, the remaining posts need to be filled up,” Das said.

As per the amendments, if a candidate has not passed higher secondary-level examination with Odia as a subject, he/she must qualify in this exam within four years of joining the job. Secondly, if a candidate from outside the State has not registered in the Odisha Medical Council, he/she would have to register before appointment.

The Government has urged the Odisha Public Service Commission (OPSC) to start a process for recruitment of 2,452 doctors this year.

# ‘NTPC Kaniha committed to clean energy’

PNS ■ KANIHA (TALCHER)

NTPC Kaniha Chief General Manager Sudip Nag spoke about the execution of Flue-Gas Desulfurization (FGD) work, mine-void filling and various performances of the unit. He addressed media-persons during a Power Sector Familiarisation Programme on Saturday.

“With the commitment of



providing clean energy in a sustainable manner, the FGD work is under full progress at the sta-

tion,” Nag said.

He also shared NTPC Talcher Kaniha's long term fuel security plan to fulfill its coal requirement and stated that the latest introduction of the Wagon Tippler has accelerated the coal unloading process and resulted in increasing productivity of the station.

Speaking on the station's performance, Nag said, “The NTPC Talcher Kaniha has per-

formed exceptionally well in this Financial Year and is on its way to achieve turn-out performance with several milestones in operation.”

He mentioned the station's increased focus on safety and the measures taken to ensure safe practices such as safety training for all workers, mass pep-talk along with Covid-related awareness messages. Nag further highlighted the sta-

tion's initiatives of enhancing ash utilisation by providing dry ash to NHAI for construction of roads and highways and the MoU it recently signed with MCL for the mine-void filling of Jagannath quarry-8.

GM (O&M) Shivam Srivastava, GM(TS) S Murugan, GM (Ash Dyke Management) Sarit Maheswari and GM(HR) Rajnish Rastogi were also present.

# Sarangi lauds FM Tech Business Incubator

PNS ■ BALESWAR:

A Technology Business Incubator (TBI) was established at the Fakir Mohan University here in the presence of Union Minister for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) and Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Pratap Chandra Sarangi and Vice-Chancellor, FM University Prof Dinabandhu Sahoo.

“I am happy that the FM University is the first among the State-funded universities in the State to establish a Technology Business Incubator and my Ministry will help in all possible manners to the newly established TBI,” said Minister Sarangi.

He said MSME can play a major role in boosting the employment potential of the country. He urged the students to rediscover their hidden talent and use this for not only



their personal career development but also for development of the society.

He also said Odisha has a lot of scope in the field of fishery and animal husbandry, where value addition and innovation can be made to create more employments. Thus, the TBI would play a major role in this direction, he said.

VC Prof Sahoo said establishment of the TBI was long overdue. The unit will help the students and youth in building entrepreneurship, incubating

new innovations and nurturing big ideas, he said.

Professor Sahoo said, “Our students will visit different industries and innovative hubs in the country and then will be guided at the TBI. A Section - 8 Company will be formed to facilitate and procure funding from public and private sectors.”

On the occasion, the Minister and Vice Chancellor dedicated Krishna Residential Complex in the name of river Krishna inside the campus.

FRESH COVID NORMS

# State allows open air Jatras with 2,000 people

➤ 500 allowed at marriages, funerals  
➤ SOP to be formulated for Primary Schools

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Government on Saturday issued fresh Covid-19 guidelines for March, according to which opera parties and open air theatres can perform their shows adhering strictly to the norms.

“Open air Jatra, operas would be permitted by the local authorities subject to compliance of Covid-19 safety protocols such as mandatory wearing of face masks, physical distancing, provision of thermal scanning. Keeping the size of the ground or space in view , appropriate number of persons (subject to a ceiling of 2,000 persons) will be allowed,” an official order stated.

For Jatra and open air events, the organisers have to arrange multiple ticket counters and ensure online booking to avoid crowd. The organisers will be held responsible for violation of any of the norms prescribed by the government,



SRC letter stated.

Ailing audiences having respiratory disease, influenza and Covid-19 symptoms would not be allowed to enter the Jatra ground.

However, the Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) has empowered the local administration to take a call on all entertainment activities in their respective areas.

Besides, hosts of marriage and funeral events would have to provide masks to the participants who should not exceed more than 500. They would ensure proper use of masks by the guests during the entire duration of the function.

The guidelines further said that the School and Mass

Education Department has been authorised to develop a detailed SOPs for the reopening of Primary Schools. The department may allow examination for Classes-IX and XI giving an option to the students for online examinations.

The new guidelines have empowered local administration to take a call on worship in religious places, based on the assessment of Covid-19 status in their respective area.

Cinema halls, theaters, parks and swimming pools are allowed to open amid strict adherence to SoPs issued by the Government. Large gathering and congregation would continue to be prohibited across the State, the SRC stated.

# State staffs submit memo for CM, PM



## With several demands

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha State Government Employees' Coordination Committee, Bhubaneswar unit, while supporting the all-India Protest Day on Saturday, submitted a memorandum for CM Naveen Patnaik and PM Narendra Modi with several demands to the ADM here.

The demands include regularisation of jobs of Workcharge, NMR, outsourcing and contractual employees, implementation of the old pension scheme, pay revision every five years, payment of increased DA pending since January 2020 and dues in lieu of leave surrender, release of 50 per cent of arrear of increased salary, stopping sale of nationalized

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assets like PSUs and Government Departments, controlling price rise, hiking minimum salary to Rs 18,000, paying HR hike money besides uniting secular forces against communalism.

Prasant Kumar Mohanty, Asila Kumar Brahma, Kshetramohan Das, Saroj Nayak, Bijaya Nayak, Akshaya Kumar Jena and Kailash Kumar Behera were preset.

# Gajapati kids rescued from Coimbatore



PNS ■ PARALAKHEMUNDI

Two minor boys aged 4 and 6 years of Gajapati district were rescued from Coimbatore of Tamil Nadu by a team of police and Child Protection Unit officials of the Gajapati administration.

They were identified as sons of Sudarsan Nayak of Bhalia Sahi of Mohana block.

Sudarshan who was staying in Coimbatore was recently arrested in a domestic violence case. Sudarsan's father Karana Nayak sought the help of the district administration to rescue the children. On February 21, a team of police and officials from Gajapati after keeping contact with their counterparts in Coimbatore left for the place and rescued the children

from roads. For the rehabilitation of the kids, the Collector and the SP Gajapati meanwhile have taken initiatives and the two boys are now under the custody of the Child Welfare Committee, Gajapati. For their upbringing and studies, the district administration will make necessary arrangements, said DCP O Arun Kumar Tripathy.

# 1 lakh people in 13 tribal dists infected with Covid

## Lesser incidence due to inaccessibility

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Over 1 lakh people have been infected with coronavirus in 13 tribals-dominated districts in Odisha, informed ST & SC Development, Minorities & Backward Classes Welfare

Minister Jagannath Saraka in the State Assembly on Friday. Replying to a query of MLA Soumya Ranjan Patnaik, the Minister said that by February 23, 2021, total 3,28,432 persons have been infected with the Covid-19 in the State, of which 1,05,480 were from 13 tribal districts. Explaining the reason behind less number of Covid

infections among the tribal communities, the Minister pointed out that very fewer people in the tribal areas come in contact with public due to inaccessibility. The people have complied with the Covid rules in their areas. The awareness campaigns have been effectively carried out by health workers, Anganwadi Workers and panchayat-level officials.

# Pvt hosps to be in vaccination drive under BSKY

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In the second phase of vaccination, the Central Government has allowed private hospitals empanelled under the Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY) to be part of the vaccination process.

Accordingly, the Odisha Government has brought out the list of private hospitals empanelled under the BSKY. These 183 hospitals across the State would be allowed as Private COVID Vaccination Centers (PCVC) for vaccination of eligible citizens.

ACS Health and Family Welfare PK Mohapatra has brought out the list of hospitals across the State and Nodal Officers have been listed out with their contact numbers.

In fact people over the age of 60 years and those below 60

but above 45 and have some comorbidities would be vaccinated.

While the list is out these healthcare organisations have been advised to immediately take steps to verify that the facility has the minimum requirements of sufficient cold chain equipment and capacity.

Arrangements for sufficient rooms and space for waiting area, vaccination and observation post vaccination are to be done, said the order.

Private Hospitals are advised to keep sufficient number of trained vaccinators and verifiers.

These hospitals are advised to built in the ability to manage adverse events following immunisation as per norm and guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

# Woman held for thrashing in-laws

PNS ■ KENDRAPADA

The Sadar police here arrested a woman for assaulting her octogenarian father-in-law and septuagenarian mother-in-law with the help of her husband following a family feud.

The arrestee was identified as Minati Geru, wife of Akhaya Geru of Sujanagar.

According to Kendrapada Sadar police station IIC Pramod Kumar Mallick, on Friday, Minati's father-in-law, Rabindra Geru had invited some persons to repair the thatched roof. But his son Akhaya allegedly opposed it, resulting in an altercation between them.

However, irate Akhaya and wife Minati went on assaulting Rabindra and his wife later. Rabindra lodged an FIR against his son and daughter-in-law. The police registered a case and nabbed Minati, while Akahaya fled the village. Minati was produced before a local court.

# OPGC production grows; 4 units operational

PNS ■ JHARSUGUDA

Power generation from the Odisha Power Generation Corporation (OPGC) at Banharhali here is on a growth trajectory owing to the continuous rectification of ash handling system of Unit 3 and Unit 4 and better coal quality.

As per data received, the OPGC Unit 1 and 2 are generating more than 350 MW combined on an average while Unit-3 and Unit-4 are clocking average generation of 1,000 MW combined. Unit 3 is averaging a generation of 400MW while Unit 4 is clocking 600 MW on an average against a capacity of 660 MW.

Energy generation could not be done satisfactorily from Unit-3 and 4 in last few months due to ash handling problems in these two plants.

Due to constant efforts of experienced Engineers and Government machinery, the generation from the two units is showing improvements. The OPGC has entered Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with Gridco to supply 928 MW of power from Units 3 and 4. Therefore, the OPGC management is also making arrangements to sell surplus energy generated from these two units in open market.

By this, the State Government is expected to earn more revenue from the power plants.

# After HP Guv heckling by Cong MLAs, Dy Speaker calls on Dattatraya

PNS ■ SHIMLA

A day after Congress MLAs heckled Himachal Governor Bandaru Dattatraya in the Assembly complex, Deputy Speaker of Himachal Pradesh Vidhan Sabha Hans Raj called on the Governor at Raj Bhavan, here. It was described as a courtesy call.

Later, Director General of Police Sanjay Kundu, along with other senior officers of the Police Department called on the Governor. In view of development occurring in the premises of the Legislative Assembly, the Governor reviewed the security arrangements with DGP.

The DGP expressed grief over the inconvenience caused to the Governor and said that it was unexpected and unfortunate. He said that as a first citizen of the State, the police administration has decided to take extra precaution and provide a high security system to the Governor in their future activities. He said that he would be provided

'Professional Advice' and a Road Clearing System to be developed.

At present there was only one Personnel Security Officer (PSO) deputed during the functional activity or in the movement of the Governor but now, the system would be changed and 'Close Protection Team' would be deployed in which more professional police Commandos would be engaged and the current PSO system would be changed.

He said that Advance Security would be provided in important and big programs and efforts would be made in such programs that both the Add-de-Camp (ADC) of the Governor would move together. He said that in the event of any adverse situation, the officer posted under the protection of the Governor could make the call for backup and the police administration was determined to provide strict security to the Governor and would not allow any lapse in this regard.

DGP said that the police

administration will try to provide DSP security facility in Raj Bhavan also.

A day before, in the budget session of Himachal Pradesh Assembly on Friday, five Congress legislators including Leader of Opposition Mukesh Agnihotri were suspended for allegedly jostling the Governor when he was leaving the Assembly complex after his address. The Congress MLAs - Mukesh Agnihotri, Harsh Varhan Chauhan, Sunder Singh Thakur, Satpal Raizada and Vinay Kumar, were suspended for the entire session till March 20. No Congress MLA was present in the House at the time of suspension of the five MLAs.

The Congress MLAs had allegedly tried to stop the Governor in front of the Speaker's chamber when he was going towards his cavalcade, accompanied by Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur after addressing the Assembly on the opening day of the budget session.

# U'khand CM launches 'Gharoki Pechan, Chelik Naam' scheme from Nainital

PTI ■ NAINITAL

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat on Saturday launched "Gharoki Paachan, Chelik Naam" (daughter's name is a home's identity) programme and development schemes worth Rs 42 crore in Nainital.

Nainital MP Ajay Bhatt, along with various other officials, was present to welcome the chief minister in the town. During a programme organised at TRC Dhartaal, Rawat launched "Gharoki Paachan, Chelik Naam" (daughter's name

is a home's identity) scheme. The scheme has been launched in Nainital and will be extended to entire Uttarakhand in the coming weeks. Rawat said the government is working towards women empowerment and 32,000 women groups of the state are being linked with self-employment to make them self-reliant.

The chief minister also expressed concern about revitalising the catchment area of Sukhatal Lake. He said the lake will be revitalised and will undergo beautification. Not only will this serve as a recharge to Nainital Lake, but will add

towards tourist attraction at Nainital. Rawat said the government is working sincerely for the overall development of tourism in the town.

He said the problem of lack of adequate parking space will also be resolved soon.

Addressing the issue of employment, the chief minister said today it is necessary that we move forward in the direction of self-employment and leave the fascination for government jobs. For this, the government has implemented various public welfare schemes, which are beneficial to the youth of the state.

# Fire at factory in Delhi's Pratap Nagar, one dead

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The charred body of a 22-year-old labourer was recovered after a fire broke out at a warehouse in north Delhi's Pratap Nagar area in the early hours of Saturday, police said.

A 37-year-old man has been detained in connection with the incident, they said. The deceased has been identified as Upchand, a native of Bihar. Another labourer, named Sushil Kumar (22), a resident of the state's Kishanganj sustained minor injuries, they said.

One of the firemen also suffered minor injury on his finger during the fire-fighting operation and was given first aid at the spot, a fire official said.

A call about the blaze was received around 3.47 am and 18 fire tenders were pressed into service, he said. Later, 10 more fire tenders were rushed to the spot and the flames were

doused and the cooling process was carried out, he added. The fire broke out on the first floor of the warehouse and spread to the second floor. Plastic and nail polish materials stored in the warehouse caught fire and a charred body was recovered from the first floor, said Atul Garg, Director, Delhi Fire Service. The cause of the blaze is being ascertained, he said. According to the police, nail polish, lipsticks, gift packing and several other materials were stored in small rooms of the warehouse. A senior police officer said a case has been registered under sections of Indian Penal Code -- 435 (Mischief by fire or explosive substance with intent to cause damage), 436 (Mischief by fire or explosive substance with intent to destroy house), 304 (Punishment for culpable homicide not amounting to murder), and 308 (Attempt to commit culpable homicide).

# Ambala Jail in Haryana now has 'Jail-Radio'

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana Additional Chief Secretary, Home, Rajeev Arora on Saturday inaugurated the third 'Jail-Radio' of Haryana in the Central Jail, Ambala.

In his address, Arora, said that the main objective of starting Jail-Radio is to promote art, creativity and harmony among the inmates. On this occasion, DGP (Jails) K.K. Selvaraj was also present. Earlier, jail-radios have also been started in Panipat and Faridabad in collaboration with 'Tinka-Tinka Foundation'.

Arora said that the Central Jail at Ambala is considered as a historic jail in India and is among the three Central Jails of the state. He said that though a Jail has a restricted environ-

ment but with the introduction of radio, its inmates will be interacting with the outside world. He said that there are a total of 19 jails in Haryana and the state government plans to start Jail-radio in almost all the jails in order to initiate the process of Jail reforms for inmates. He also shared that the authorities concerned have been in dialogue with the founders and office-bearers of various NGOs regarding introducing more jail reforms.

Selvaraj said that the first phase of installation of Jail-Radio in Jails has been completed with the introduction of radio in Ambala Jail and now Jail-Radio will be started in four other jails of the state under the second phase. He said that he was satisfied with the improvement in behaviour of inmates in state jails.

# Nainital resident avails more than five lakhs in the Ayushman Bharat scheme

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Nainital resident Mohammad Hasim became the first person in the state to get treatment costing more than five lakhs in the Ayushman Bharat scheme. There is a limit of ₹5 lakhs in a year for the golden card holders under the scheme but the limit can be increased in exceptional cases.

Hasim, 62 years old, was suffering from a type of heart failure. He was admitted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Rishikesh recently. The associate professor at

department of cardiology, Dr Barun Kumar said that to save the life of this patient of heart failure, it was very important to install a CRT-D device in his body.

"This device functions like a pacemaker. After all tests found that the patient has breathing problems and his heart function is not functioning properly and the heart size has also become larger. It was decided to install CRT-D devices to save the life of the patient.

This process of installing the device has been done without making the patient unconscious," he said.

# Road accidents killed 3 times more people than Covid-19 in 2020 in Jharkhand

PNS ■ RANCHI

Road accidents claimed almost three times more lives than Covid-19 virus in Jharkhand in 2020 despite several months of lockdown causing a drop in traffic movement in cities as well as highways, figures compiled by Government agencies reveal.

The latest report from the Road Safety Authority states that as many as 3044 people died in road accidents in Jharkhand from January 2020 to December 2020.

As per figures compiled by the NHM, Covid-19 virus claimed as many as 1025 lives - around one-third of the number of road accident fatalities - in the state until December 31.



In 2020, as many as 4377

road accidents occurred in the State, highlights data with the Road Safety Authority. While

3044 people died in these accidents, as many as 3303 people sustained injuries, the data further reveals.

At least 39 per cent of the accidents involved two wheelers, 18 per cent involved four wheelers and 16 per cent involved heavy vehicles. While Covid-19 caused the highest number of deaths in East Singhbhum, Khunti reported the highest number of road accident fatalities in 2020. Ranchi was the second worst-affected in terms of fatalities caused in road accidents and also the second worst-hit in terms of Covid casualties. The Covid mortality rate in Jharkhand on Saturday was 0.90 per cent against the

national average of 1.40 per cent. The state has reported 62 more Covid fatalities in 2021, taking the total count of Covid deaths in Jharkhand to 1087, reveals NHM data. As per data compiled by the Road Safety Authority, at least 92 per cent of the road accidents in Jharkhand occurred due to over-speeding, 2 per cent occurred due to drunk driving, 4 per cent due to driving on the wrong side while 1 per cent accidents occurred on traffic signals.

The Government has taken several initiatives recently to put a check on road accidents and save lives of people who sustain injuries in such

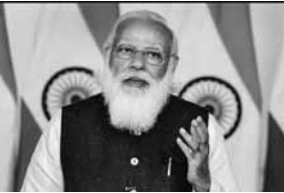
mishaps.

The state Cabinet last month launched a Good Samaritan Policy, which aims at rewarding life savers in cases of road accidents and allows them to take accident survivors to hospital without having to disclose their own identity to the hospital authorities or the police.

"We are regularly working on new measures to reduce road accidents and fatalities. New policies are also being framed to support families of accident victims through compensation," said Disaster Management Minister Banna Gupta. Besides, the Hemant Soren-led government is also planning to set up trauma centres in all the 24 districts.



# National action plan to boost toy industry: PM



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said the Government has prepared a 'National Toy Action Plan' that includes 15 ministries and departments to make the industry competitive and provide it with a global platform.

The Prime Minister said the ancient toy culture of the country reflects the practice of reuse and recycling, which is part of the Indian lifestyle.

He said India has the potential to take the world back to eco-friendly toys.

The fair that will continue from February 27 to March 2 aims to bring together all stakeholders including buyers, sellers, students, teachers, designers, etc on a virtual platform to create sustainable linkages and encourage dialogue for the overall development of the industry, according to a Government statement.

Speaking at the India Toy Fair 2021 here that he also inaugurated, the Prime Minister said the Government has prepared a National Toy Action Plan. It includes 15 ministries and departments to make the industry competitive, 'Aatmanirbhar', and to provide it with a global platform.

"This first Toy Fair is not just a business or economic event. This programme is a link to strengthen the country's age-old culture of sports and gaiety. India toy culture is as old as the Indus Valley



Civilisation. The world has studied the toys of the Mohenjo-Daro and Harappan era," he said.

Prime Minister had in his 'Maam ki baat' radio programme also stressed the role played by the toys in shaping mind and reflected on the rich and varied Indian tradition of toy Making.

Addressing the Toy Fair that he inaugurated, the Prime Minister said that India has given the world some of the most popular games like Chess and ludo.

"Chess, which is so popular in the world today, was earlier played in India as 'Chaturanga or Chaduranga'. Modern Ludo was played as 'Pachisi'. In our scriptures too, there are descriptions of young lord Ram, and lord Krishnas toys," he said.

Modi said that even today Indian toys are simpler and cheaper than western toys and appealed to the manufacturers to make toys that are better for both ecology and psychology. "Try to use less plastic in toys. Use such things that can be recycled," he said.

Indian toys, he said, contain elements of science, enter-

tainment and psychology.

"Take Lattu (top) as an example. When children learn to play with Lattu, they learn about gravity and balance. In the same way, a child playing with a slingshot inadvertently starts learning basics about kinetic energy and potential energy. Puzzle toys develop strategic thinking and problem-solving thinking," Prime Minister sight to explain.

Modi said that the new National Education Policy also incorporates play-based and activity-based education.

"This is an education system in which logical and creative thinking can be increased in children through riddles and games. Special attention has been given to this," he said.

The Prime Minister asserted that in the field of toys, India has tradition and technology coupled with concepts and competence.

"We can take the world back towards eco-friendly toys. The National Toy Action Plan has been prepared which includes 15 ministries and departments to make the industry competitive, Aatmanirbhar and take India's toys to the world," he said.

## India, B'desh agree to finish early completion of border fencing, tackle terrorism

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and Bangladesh on Saturday decided to finish the early completion of border fencing and tackle the menace of cross-border terrorism. At the virtual Home Secretary level talks, headed by Union Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla and Bangladesh Mostafa Kamal Uddin, Senior Secretary, Public Security Division, it was reiterated that either country should not be used for any activity inimical to each other's interests.

"The 19th Home Secretary Level Talks (HSLT) between India and Bangladesh were held virtually today in the backdrop of 'MujibBarsho' and 50 years of Bangladesh Liberation War and establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries. The Indian delega-

tion was led by Shri Ajay Kumar Bhalla, Union Home Secretary.Sh. Mostafa Kamal Uddin, Senior Secretary, Public Security Division, Ministry of Home Affairs of Bangladesh led the Bangladesh delegation.

"India and Bangladesh attach highest importance to their bilateral relations. Both Secretaries reiterated their commitment to further expand and strengthen mutual cooperation in the security and border related issues. Both sides reaffirmed not to allow the territory of either country to be used for any activity inimical to each other's interests. Both sides discussed early completion of pending fencing along the Indo Bangladesh Border (IBB) as agreed by the Prime Ministers of the two countries," said Union Home Ministry in a statement.

## ED attaches ₹84.40 cr assets of Kanva group of companies

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached immovable assets (agricultural and non-agricultural land, buildings, residential flat and factories) worth ₹84.40 crore held by Kanva Group of companies) and related entities besides those of Founder Director and President of Bengaluru-based Sree Kanva Souhardha Co-Operative Credit Limited (SKSCCL), Harish S.

The accused individuals and the entities had collected ₹ 650 crore from the public and total attachments in the case is about ₹340 crore.

The attached assets are situated at Nelamangala, Koratagere, Chikkabalapura, Srirangapatana and Bengaluru in Karnataka and at Madakasira in Andhra Pradesh.

The ED initiated investigation on the basis of a complaint received from the Office of the Registrar of Cooperative Societies, Bengaluru and various registered FIRs wherein it was alleged that the entity has collected ₹650 crore deposits from the members of public, assuring high rate of interest through commission agents, without maintaining required liquidity.

## EC freezes Assam Govt order on transfer, posting of police officers

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) has decided to keep in abeyance Assam Government's decision of transferring and posting over a dozen police officers after the announcement of poll schedule.

The poll body has written to chief secretaries and chief electoral officers of five States—West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Assam and Puducherry—going for the polls, drawing the particular provisions of model code of conduct to the party in power and immediate enforcement of the MCC.

According to the EC, the Assam Government ordered the transfer of 12 IPS and 6 APS officers on the day the election schedule was announced. The Commission, therefore, decided to keep the transfer/posting of these police officers in abeyance till further orders. In West Bengal, the poll body replaced the top cop in charge of law and order for the State. Jag Mohan, who was previously DG (Fire Services), has been named as the new ADG and IGP (Law and Order), replacing Jawed Shamim "with immediate effect and in the interest of public service". Shamim will now take over the DG (Fire Services) position.

In a letter, the EC said "...the particular provisions of Model Code of Conduct relating to the 'party in power' which inter alia says that the party in power whether at the Centre or in the States concerned, shall ensure that no cause is given for any complaint that it has used its official position for the purposes of its election campaign."

"The Ministers shall not combine their official visit with



electioneering work and also shall not make use of official machinery or personnel during the electioneering work." There shall be a total ban on use of official vehicle by any political party, candidate or any other person connected with election (except officials performing any election related official duty) for campaigning, electioneering or election related travel during elections. The government transport including official air-crafts, vehicles, machinery and personnel shall not be used for furtherance of the interest of the party in power," the EC said in its communications.

The EC also stated that public places such as maidans etc., for holding election meetings, and use of helpads for air-flights in connection with elections shall not be monopolised by itself. Other parties and candidates shall be allowed the use of such places and facilities on the same terms and conditions on which they are used by the party in power," it said.

The EC further points out that rest houses, dak bungalows or other government accommodation where elections have been announced or are taking place can be given to the political functionaries who are provided security by the State in Z scale or above or equivalent by various State Governments or

the Central Government under provisions of their laws, on equitable basis.

"This shall be subject to condition that such accommodation is not already allotted or occupied by election related officials or Observers. Such political functionaries shall not carry out any political activity while staying in the Government Guest Houses/Rest Houses or other Government accommodation etc," it said.

The poll body further said that no advertisements shall be issued in electronic and print media highlighting the achievements of the government at the cost of public exchequer. "If any advertisement has already been released for telecast/broadcast or publication in the print media, it must be ensured that the telecast/broadcast of such ads on electronic media is stopped forthwith and that no such ad is published in any newspapers, magazines, etc., i.e. in print media, from today itself and it should be immediately withdrawn," it said.

The MCC is a set of rules put in force by the Election Commission of India to guarantee free and fair elections. It is a set of norms that have evolved with political parties consenting to abide by the principles embodied in the said code.

## 'Hunar Haat boon for Vocal for Local plan'

DEEPAK K UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister for Minority Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi on Saturday said here that the "Hunar Haat" is playing "phenomenal and perfect" role in making "Vocal for Local" campaign a "mass movement" and as of now given employment to over five lakh people and 'still counting'.

Speaking at the "Hunar Haat" in Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here Naqvi said that "Hunar Haat" has been becoming "Kumbh of backers of brilliance".

Naqvi said that more than 12 lakh people have visited the "Hunar Haat", started from 20th February and become "Proud Promoter" of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Vocal for Local" campaign by purchasing handmade products of indigenous artisans and craftsmen worth crores of rupees.

The number of visitors is likely to go above 16 lakh in the next two days, he said. This "Hunar Haat" will be concluding on March first, 2021. The 10-day "Hunar Haat" was inaugurated by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

Several Ministers, MPs, senior government officials, various Diplomats, renowned industrialists have come here to encourage the artisans and



craftsmen.

More than 600 artisans and craftsmen from more than 31 States and UTs participating in the "Hunar Haat". Artisans and craftsmen from Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chandigarh, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu-Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Ladakh, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland, Odisha, Puducherry, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, West Bengal etc are participating in the "Hunar Haat to display and sale of their indigenous handmade products.

Naqvi said that indigenous handmade products such as Applique work, dry flowers, jute-cane, brass products, wooden and clay toys, Ajrakh Block Print, Blue Art Pottery, Pashmina Shawl, Khadi products, Banarsi Silk, Wooden Furniture, Chikankari Embroidery, Chanderi Silk, Lac bangles, Rajasthani jewellery, Phulkari, Oil Painting, Leather products, Khurja pottery, Sandalwood artefacts from Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Jute products from West Bengal, rare antiques made of glass, mats and carpets etc were available for sale and display at the "Hunar Haat".

Naqvi said that the visitors also enjoyed traditional deli-

cacies from every region of the country at "Bawarchikhana" section.

Besides, different cultural and musical programmes were daily presented by renowned artists of the country such as Vinod Rathore (21 Feb); Nizami Brothers (24 Feb); Sudesh Bhonsle (26 Feb); SI Kailash Kher (27 Feb) and others.

Naqvi said that the "Hunar Haat" has, as of now, provided employment and employment opportunities to more than 5 lakh 30,000 artisans, craftsmen and artists.

The Union Ministry of Minority Affairs will provide employment and employment opportunities to 7 lakh 50,000 artisans and craftsmen through 75 "Hunar Haat" which will be organised by completion of 75 years of the country's independence.

The "Hunar Haat" is available on virtual and online platform <http://hunarhaat.org> and on GeM Portal also where the people of the country and abroad can buy products of indigenous artisans and craftsmen digital/online.

Next "Hunar Haat" will be organised in Bhopal (12 to 21 March 2021); Goa (25 March to 04 April); Kota (9 April to 18 April); Surat (23 April to 2 May).

## NIA files chargesheet against four in human trafficking case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The NIA on Saturday filed a chargesheet against four persons in a case relating to human trafficking in the guise of running placement agencies before the NIA Special Court, Ranchi under various Sections of the IPC, Provisions of the Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979 and the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, 2015.

Those charged are Panna Lal Mahto, Sunita Devi (absconding), Gopal Oraon and Shiv Shankar Ganjhu.

The case was initially registered as FIR No. 07/2019 at AHTU police station in Khunti, Jharkhand on July 19, 2019 in which the accused Panna Lal Mahto, aged about 37 years, of village Ganaloya under Murhu police station, Khunti was arrested for running a Human Trafficking network in Jharkhand and New Delhi.

The NIA had taken over the investigation on June 13 last year after re-registering the case as RC-09/2020/NIA/DLI.

"During investigation, it was revealed that Panna Lal Mahto, the kingpin of human trafficking racket, along with his wife, Sunita Devi, was operating a Human Trafficking network in the guise of six Placement Agencies in Delhi. They used to traffic poor and innocent minor boy and girls from Jharkhand on the pretext of providing them jobs in Delhi and neighbouring States. However, the victims were exploited and were never paid the promised remunerations," the NIA said in a statement.

During the investigation, two other accused Gopal Oraon and Shiv Shankar Ganjhu, both residents of Khunti district were arrested. Both were close associates of the kingpin Panna Lal Mahto, and were actively involved in trafficking vulnerable persons from Jharkhand, it said.

Investigation has also revealed that both were owners of three Placement Agencies in Delhi, involved in human trafficking racket. Another accused Sunita Devi, wife of arrested accused Pana Lal Mahto, is absconding.

## Statins reduce Covid severity: Research

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

People who took statins — widely used cholesterol-lowering medications — may have reduced risk of developing severe Covid-19 disease, a team of researchers said adding that they were approximately 50 per cent less likely to die if hospitalised for the infection.

"Our study is one of the larger studies confirming this hypothesis and the data lay the groundwork for future randomized clinical trials that are needed to confirm the benefit of statins in Covid-19," said Aakriti Gupta, cardiologist at NewYorkPresbyterian/Columbia University Irving Medical Center and one of the co-lead authors of the study published in the Nature

Communications.

"If their beneficial effect bears out in randomized clinical trials, statins could potentially prove to be a low-cost and effective therapeutic strategy for COVID-19," adds co-lead author Mahesh V Madhavan, cardiologist at New York - Presbyterian/Columbia University Irving Medical Center.

Gupta, Madhavan, and the study's leadership group are cardiologists who cared for hospitalized Covid-19 patients in the spring and summer of 2020 when the first wave of the pandemic swept through New York City.

"We observed that patients who got very sick and required hospitalization had high rates of hyperinflammation and clotting," says Elaine

Wan, the Esther Aboodi Assistant Professor of Medicine in Cardiology and Cardiac Electrophysiology and a cardiac electrophysiologist at NewYork Presbyterian/Columbia University Irving Medical Center, one of the study's senior authors.

"As cardiologists, statins naturally came to mind," Gupta says. "In addition to their well-known cholesterol-lowering effect, statins are known for their anti-inflammatory, anticoagulant and immunomodulatory properties."

Based on their observations, the authors looked at outcomes for 2,626 patients with Covid-19 who were admitted to a quaternary academic medical center in Manhattan during the first 18 weeks of the pandemic.

## The Pioneer ready to undergo major facelift

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Battling insolvency proceedings, *The Pioneer* media group is gearing up to undergo a major facelift. The group is planning to augment its revenue, improve its contents, and radically change its digital presence through the introduction of new technology, new marketing strategy and revamping of its circulation.

The senior employees of the newspaper both from the management and the editorial side met on Saturday under the leadership of NCLT-appointed Interim Resolution Professional (IRP) Ranjeet Kumar Verma where it was decided to effectively tackle the "existential" challenge the one of the oldest media houses in the country is facing.

"I am here as a representative of the court and my main objective is to keep *The Pioneer* group as a going concern. I've no score to settle or no axe to grind. I want the cooperation of everyone to make *The Pioneer* a vibrant brand again, both in Hindi and English," Verma said during the course of an exchange of idea session. He added that he expected the company operation to return to normal in a short while.

The IRP assured the employees that their priority would be look into a range of



serious issues flagged by them regarding their remuneration and staff shortage. "I will do everything possible to create a proper atmosphere so that everyone can contribute to the revival of the company," he said.

He said he didn't believe in a witch-hunt, but he expected everyone to help him implement the court's order in letter and spirit.

The Delhi bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) last month initiated insolvency proceedings against the CMYK Printech, which runs the operation of *The Pioneer* newspaper, following a plea by one of its directors.

## Govt should shed its 'arrogance', reduce fuel taxes: Congress

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress Saturday accused the Modi Government of ignoring the woes of common man and asked it to shed its "arrogance" and reduce the tax imposed on petrol, diesel and LPG.

Addressing a press conference here, Congress spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi said the government should immediately roll back the additional taxes of ₹23.78 and ₹28.37 per litre on petrol and diesel respectively, which will help bring down fuel prices.

He quoted Prime Minister

Narendra Modi's words as Gujarat Chief Minister to urge the government to reduce the high tax components on petroleum products. Singhvi said the common man is already hurt due to rising inflation and joblessness amid a decline in the economy post-pandemic.

The PM may ignore the Congress' demand, but he should at least listen to his own words as Gujarat CM during the UPA regime at the Centre, or may heed RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das's advice that the rising fuel prices will have a cascading effect, the Congress leader said.



# One Dist One Focus Product list finalised

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Saturday said that the list of One District One Focus Product (ODOFP), which will be promoted in a cluster approach through convergence of the various schemes, has been finalised. The products have been identified from agricultural, horticultural, animal, poultry, milk, fisheries and aquaculture, marine sectors for 728 districts across the country.

Agriculture and Farmers Welfare in consultation with the Ministry of Food Processing Industries has finalised the products for One District One Focus Product, said an official statement.

The list of products have been finalised after taking inputs from the States/UTs and Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).

These products will be promoted in a cluster approach through convergence of the Government of India schemes, to increase the value of the products and with the ultimate aim of increasing the income of the farmers. These identified products will be supported under the PM-FME scheme (PM Formalisation of Micro food processing Enterprises Scheme) of the Ministry of

Food Processing Industries which provides incentives to promoter and micro-enterprises. Many products also include convergence of resources and approach from the other departments. The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare will support ODOFP from its ongoing centrally sponsored schemes such as Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH), National Food Security Mission' (NFSM), Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojna (PKVY).

The implementation of ODOFP by State Governments will benefit farmers and provide support for realizing the expectations of value addition and subsequently enhancing agricultural exports.

# Hyundai i20 wins Indian Car Of The Year 2021

Indian Motorcycle Of The Year goes to the Royal Enfield Meteor

KUSHAN MITRA ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Car Of The Year (ICOTY) 2021 and the Indian Motorcycle Of The Year (IMOTY) 2021 awards were announced at a glittering ceremony here in Delhi.

The winner of the ICOTY was the Hyundai i20 and the IMOTY award went to the Royal Enfield Meteor. The ICOTY award, which is celebrating its 16th year this year is well-established as India's top car award and similarly IMOTY is India's leading two-wheeler award.

Speaking to The Pioneer, Yogendra Pratap, Editor of Auto Today and the Chairman of the ICOTY jury said that ICOTY will always remain as India's top car award and not just because of

its name, "the fact that we partner with multiple publications which look at various aspects of



motoring, some are targeted at enthusiasts and other are targeted at practicality.

This in addition to the independent judges who come from various other publications and almost all of us have been evaluating cars for at least a decade makes this award the most influential in India.

Our judges have over 350 years of combined experience evaluating cars and because we are not part of a 'single' publication, I believe ICOTY

carries much more weight with Indian automotive manufacturers as well."

Speaking to The Pioneer, Aspi Bhatena, Editor of Bike Magazine and Chairman of the IMOTY jury said that the award was proof of how Indian manufacturers have progressed. "In all the years we have given this award, we have not given it to a 'lemon', all our winners have enjoyed immense commercial success and some like the 2019 winner, the Royal Enfield Interceptor have had immense global success."

At a function held at the Andaz attended by the senior management of several automotive companies, both awards firmly established themselves as India's leading and most credible awards for the industry.

# 'Improved economic environment to boost FY21 credit growth'

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

Improved economic environment in 2HFY21 and the Centre's focus on higher spending especially on infrastructure will give a boost to FY21 credit growth, India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) said.

The agency's February 2021 edition of its credit market tracker showed an upgrade to its FY21 credit growth estimates to 6.9 per cent from 1.8 per cent.

Accordingly, the agency said that amid the pandemic, the credit offtake in the banking system has remained muted, which led to lesser issuances of certificates of deposits (CDs).

"The CD issuances for January 2021 increased for public sector banks, whereas that for private banks have remained muted.

Concurrently, the CD yield across maturities was confined to a narrow range, amid subdued issuances. Similarly, the issuances of commercial paper (CP) by corporates have fallen, due to a lesser requirement amid fewer rollovers.

"The CP yields however have largely seen an upward revision, owing to the Reserve Bank of India's announcement of the restoration of liquidity management operations."

Besides, demand from fund houses for corporate bonds and short-term funds has increased by "Rs 52 billion and Rs 10 billion, respectively".

On the other hand, the agency said that CP issuances by non-banking financial companies and housing finance companies have remained encouraging, both in terms of total amount and volumes.

# PM asks toy manufacturers to use less plastic, more eco-friendly material

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday exhorted toy manufacturers to use less plastic and more eco-friendly and recyclable material in a bid to increase the share of the domestic industry in the global market.

Inaugurating the first India Toy Fair, the Prime Minister said, "We have to become Aatmanirbhar in the toy sector and also cater to the global market."

Observing that India's share in the USD 100 billion global toy market is very small, and 85 per cent of the toys in the country are sourced from abroad, Modi said there is a need to change this situation.

"In the field of toys, India has tradition and technology, India has concepts and competence. We can take the world back towards eco-friendly toys. Through our software engineers, computer games can

bring the stories of India to the world," he said.

While referring to the traditional toy industry, the Prime Minister underlined the need for promoting Handmade in India.

If there is a demand for Made in India today, then the demand for Handmade in India is also increasing equally, he said, adding "today people do not only buy toys as a product, but also want to connect with the experience associated with that toy. So, we have to promote Handmade in India as well".

The Prime Minister appealed to the manufacturers to make toys that are better for both ecology and psychology, using less plastic and more of such things that can be recycled.

Referring to the initiatives of the government, Modi said the country has now graded the toy industry in 24 major sectors.

# Govt sets 50 lakh users threshold to define 'significant social media intermediary' under IT rules

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government has fixed 50 lakh registered users as the threshold for defining 'significant social media intermediary', which will have to adhere to additional obligations and compliance under the new IT rules that seek to crack down on misuse of social media platforms.

The new rules, announced earlier this week, require 'significant social media intermediaries' to follow additional due diligence, including the appointment of a chief compliance officer, nodal contact person and resident grievance officer. All three officials will have to reside in India.

They will have to publish a monthly compliance report and details of the contents removed proactively.

At present, the country has 53 crore WhatsApp users, 44.8 crore YouTube users, 41 crore Facebook subscribers, 21 crore Instagram clients, while 1.75 crore account holders are on microblogging platform Twitter"...The Central

Government hereby specifies fifty lakh registered users in India as the threshold for a social media intermediary to be considered a significant social media intermediary," the notification said.

Earlier on Thursday, the government announced the tightening of the rules governing social media and streaming companies, requiring them to take down contentious content quicker, appoint grievance redressal officers and assist investigations.

The move aims to make social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and Instagram - which have seen a phenomenal surge in usage over the past few years in India - more accountable and responsible for the content hosted on their platform. Social media companies will have to remove contentious content flagged by the government or court orders within 36 hours and take down posts depicting nudity or morphed photos within 24 hours of receiving a complaint, as per the latest intermediary rules.

# Gold Bond Scheme 20-21 to be issued at ₹4,662/gm

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

The new series of Sovereign Gold Bonds 2020-21 will be opened for the period March 1-5, 2021.

The issue price of the Bond during the subscription period shall be Rs 4,662 per gram.

The Settlement date under the Series XII scheme had been fixed for March 9.

The Government in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India has decided to allow discount of Rs 50 per gram from the issue price to those investors who apply online and the payment is made through digital mode.

# KVIC's e-market portal achieves ₹1.12 crore turnover in 8 months

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The e-market portal unveiled by Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) has achieved a gross turnover of over Rs 1.12 crore in just eight months of its launch, the MSME Ministry said on Saturday.

"Launched on 7 July 2020, Khadi e-portal has delivered orders to over 10,000 customers out of the 65,000 people who visited the e-portal till date. KVIC has also delivered more than 1 lakh articles/commodities to these customers," an official statement said.

During this period, the average online purchase has been recorded at Rs 11,000 per customer. MSME Minister Nitin Gadkari has lauded

Khadi's successful e-commerce venture saying this provided a wide marketing platform for various khadi and village industry products to a larger population. He said e-marketing of Khadi is proving to be a game-changer. Gadkari also said the effort should be to reach a turnover of Rs 200 crore per year. KVIC Chairman Vinai Kumar Saxena said all expenses incurred on operating Khadi e-portal are borne by KVIC.

"While in case of other e-commerce sites, product cataloguing, packaging and dispatch are the responsibility of the respective sellers;

KVIC has a policy that the Khadi institutions and PMEGP units are exempted from any such financial and logistical burden," Saxena said.

# Fuel prices resurge after 3-day break

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

Country's petrol and diesel prices continued its northward march on Saturday, after a three-day break, taking its retail rates to unprecedented levels and burning holes in the consumers pockets.

Oil marketing companies raised the pump price of petrol and diesel by 24 paise and 15 paise per litre on Saturday.

With this, petrol is now priced at Rs 91.17 a litre and diesel Rs 81.47 a litre in the capital.

Across the country as well the petrol and diesel prices increased between 20-30 paise per litre depending on the level of local duty at the state level.

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Head Office : 5th floor, Kisan Bhawan, Lal Koti, Tonk Road, Jaipur-302015, Phone: 0141-2744692, 0141-2744649, Fax No. 0141-2741924, E-Mail: rsfsc@gmail.com, CIN : U63023RJ2010SGC033489  
No. : F10(101)RSFSC/ICDS/tender/2020-21/18947 Dated : 26/02/2021  
**e-Bid Notice**  
e-Bids are invited for transportation work of Food Grain, wheat, Rice & Dal under ICDS in (14) Districts Jhunjhunu, Sikar, Bharatpur, Bikaner, bundi, Jaipur, Jhalawar, Sirahi, Udaipur, Barmer, Nagaur, Sawaimadhopur, Bhilwara & Chittorgarh for one year from the date of agreement. If the tenders of those districts where they are in process, are finally cancelled by the date of uploading this tender, those districts should also upload the new tender. The Bid shall be submitted only through online tendering system at concerned districts on the website [www.eproc.raajasthan.gov.in](http://www.eproc.raajasthan.gov.in). As detailed below:  
UBN No. : FCS2021SL0800053

S. No.	Name of the Service	On line uploading date	On line bid submission end date
1.	Transportation work for ICDS wheat, Rice & Dal	01/03/2021	22/03/2021

For details visit our Website <https://sppp.raajasthan.gov.in/http://eproc.raajasthan.gov.in>  
Raj.Samwad/C/20/10320 General Manager (Adm.)

**PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON (SEE SECTION 82 Cr.P.C.)**  
Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person **Tasleem w/o Late Riyajuddin R/o H. No. 3 B, Gali No. 4B, Aram Park, Shastri Nagar, Delhi** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case F.I.R. No. **189/14 U/s 420 IPC PS. Geeta Colony, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused **Tasleem** can not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused **Tasleem** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused person **Tasleem** of F.I.R. No. **189/14 U/s 420 IPC PS. Geeta Colony, Delhi** is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before 06.04.2021

By Order  
Sh. Vinod Joshi  
DP/82/Crime/2021  
LD. MM. East - 02  
-Court Matter  
Karkardooma Court, New Delhi

**SEARCH FOR MISSING GIRL**  
  
General public is hereby informed that one Girl **Name: Ayushi D/o Yogender R/o H. No. 753, Village bakhthiyarpur, Delhi, Age: 17 Years, Height: 5'2", Built: Thin, Face: Round, Complexion: Fair, Wearing: Red Colour Jarsi & Blue Colour Payjama** has been missing since 29.01.2021 from the area of P.S. Alipur, Delhi.

In this regard a FIR No. 51/21, dated 30.01.2021 has been lodged at P.S. Alipur, Delhi.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this Girl but no clue has come to light so far.

Any person having any information or clue about this Girl kindly inform to the following.

E-Mail: [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in) **SHO**  
Website: <http://cbi.nic.in> **P.S. Alipur, Delhi**  
Fax: 011-24368639 **Ph. 011-2720 2265**  
Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641 **DP/789/ON/2021**

**SEARCH FOR MISSING**  
  
General public is hereby informed that this person (depicted in the photo) namely: **Rishi S/o Ranbir Singh R/o C-52, Amar Colony, Nangloi, Delhi** has been missing/ kidnapped from the area of PS Nangloi, since 16.12.2020. In this regard FIR No. 73/21 U/S 363 IPC dated 10.02.2021 has been registered at **PS. Nangloi, Delhi**. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the person but no clue has come to light so far.

His physical description is as under:-  
**Sex:** Male, **Age:** 17 years 6 months, **Height:** 5'8" ft., **Complexion:** Shallow, **Face:** Round, **Wearing:** Blue Jacket-Blue Payjama and White shoes in feet.

Any person is having information or clue about this missing/ kidnapped person may kindly inform to the following:- **SHO**  
**Website:** <http://cbi.nic.in> **P.S. Nangloi, Delhi**  
**E-mail:** [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in) **Ph. No.: 011-25947225**  
**Tel. No.:** 011-24368638/24368641 **Mob. No. 7065036127**  
**Fax No.:** 011-24368639 **DP/684/OD/2021**

**APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION**  
  
General public is hereby informed that an unidentified person (depicted in the photo) name: **unknown**, residence and family is **unknown about 40 years** of age was found dead at park Nigam Bodh Ghat, Kashmir Gate, Delhi. In this regard a DD No. **4-A U/s 174 CrPC** dated 24.02.2021 has been lodged in Police Station Kashmir Gate, Delhi.

His physical description is as under:-  
**Sex:** Male, **Age:** 40 years, **Height:** 5'5" ft., **Complexion:** Shallow, **Built:** Thin, **Face:** Long, **Wearing:** White Shirt & Black Pant

Any person having any information or clue about the deceased may kindly inform to the undersigned on the following address or Telephone Numbers. **SHO**  
**P.S. Kashmir Gate, Delhi**  
**Ph. No.-011-23967889**  
**Mob. No- 8750870123**  
**DP/972/N/2021**

**UTTARAKHAND POWER CORPORATION LTD.**  
(A Govt. of Uttarakhand Undertaking)  
Corporate Identity No. UA40109UP2001SGC029887/2358, V.C.V. Gaba Singh Urja Bhawan, Kanwali Road, Dehradun-248001, Telephone: 0135-2763672-76, Fax: 0135-2760289, Website: [www.uktenders.gov.in](http://www.uktenders.gov.in)

**E-TENDER NOTICE (NIT)**  
Uttarakhand Power Corporation Ltd., Dehradun invites e-tender for purchase of following items as detailed below :-

Sl. No.	Tender Specification No.	Name of Item	Quantity (in Nos.)	Estimated Cost (₹)	Average Yearly Turn Over of Preceding Three Financial Years (₹)	Earnest Money (₹)	Cost of Tender Document Including GST (₹)	Date & Time of Prebid conference in online mode	Last Date & Time of online request for Tender and submission of Tender in online & offline mode	Date of opening of Part-I of Tender in online & offline mode
1.	CCP-II/ 33/2020-21	9 KV 10 KA Lightning Arrester	8408	2,920 CRORE	4,380 CRORE	5,840 LAKH	17 700.00	08.03.2021 at 11:30 Hrs.	22.03.2021 upto 17:00 Hrs.	23.03.2021 at 15:30 Hrs.
2.	CCP-II/ 34/2020-21	30 KV 10 KA Lightning Arrester	1000	1,130 CRORE	2,260 CRORE	2,260 LAKH	11 800.00		22.03.2021 upto 17:00 Hrs.	23.03.2021 at 15:45 Hrs.

For further details, please visit our website [www.uktenders.gov.in](http://www.uktenders.gov.in)  
No. : 101/EE(CM)/UPCL/A-2 Dated: 27.02.2021

Superintending Engineer  
Corporate (Contract & Procurement-II)

"SAVE ELECTRICITY IN THE INTEREST OF THE NATION" Use L.E.D. Bulb to Save Electricity (Toll Free No. 1912)  
Pay Electricity Bill Online 24x7 from [www.upcl.org](http://www.upcl.org) (For information on Electricity theft, Informer may report to Toll Free No. 1800 180 4185 / Fax No. 0135-2760911)

**WESTERN RAILWAY**  
**PROVISION OF MULTI SECTION DIGITAL AXLE COUNTER**  
Tender No.: SG 217\_2\_285\_286\_288\_ WA dated 25/02/2021. Executive: Sr. DSTE(S) MMCT. Name of Work: Provision of Multi Section Digital Axle Counter by Replacing Old AC Track Circuit and ABB make AFTCS in Bandra - Kandivli section of Mumbai Suburban Division of Western Railway. Approx. Cost of Work: ₹ 8.93,19,553.19. EMD: Bid Security Declaration Required. Cost of Tender Form: ₹ 0/-. Completion Period: 12 Months. Validity of Offers: 45 Days from the Date of Opening. Type of E-Tender: Open E-Tender. Time & Date for Closure for Submission of E-Tender Documents: At 15.00 hrs. on 26/03/2021. Time & Date for Opening of E-Tender: After 15.30 hrs. on 26/03/2021. Particular Office Where E-Tender Open: Senior Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer(S), 2nd Floor, Divisional Railway Manager's Office, Mumbai Central, Mumbai - 400 008. The tender can be viewed at website <http://www.ireps.gov.in> 0685  
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# Myanmar police deploy early to crank up pressure on protests

AP ■ YANGON

Police in Myanmar escalated their crackdown on demonstrators against this month's military takeover, deploying early and in force on Saturday as protesters sought to assemble in the country's two biggest cities and elsewhere.

Security forces in some areas appeared to become more aggressive in using force and making arrests, utilising more plainclothes officers than had previously revealed themselves. Photos posted on social media showed that residents of at least two cities, Yangon and Monywa, resisted by erecting makeshift street barricades to try to hinder the advance of the police.

Myanmar's crisis took a dramatic turn on the international stage at a special session of the United Nations General Assembly on Friday when the country's UN ambassador declared his loyalty to the ousted civilian government of Aung San Suu Kyi and called on the world to pressure the military to cede power.

There were arrests Saturday in Myanmar's two



Police stand in formation blocking a main road in Mandalay, Myanmar on Saturday

AP

biggest cities, Yangon and Mandalay, where demonstrators have been hitting the streets daily to peacefully demand the restoration of the government of Suu Kyi, whose National League for Democracy party won a landslide election victory in

November. Police have increasingly been enforcing an order by the junta banning gatherings of five or more people.

Many other cities and towns have also hosted large protests against the Feb. 1 coup. Police in Dawei, in the southeast, and Monywa, 135

kilometres northwest of Mandalay, used force against protesters. Both cities, with populations of less than 200,000 each, have been seeing large demonstrations.

Social media carried unconfirmed reports of a protester shot dead in Monywa.

The reports could not immediately be independently confirmed but appeared credible, with both photos and identification of the victim. The reports from Monywa also said dozens or more people were arrested.

The military takeover reversed years of slow progress toward democracy after five decades of military rule. Suu Kyi's party would have been installed for a second five-year term in office, but the army blocked Parliament from convening and detained her and President Win Myint, as well as other top members of her government.

At the General Assembly in New York, Myanmar's UN ambassador, Kyaw Moe Tun, declared in an emotional speech to fellow delegates that he represented Suu Kyi's "civilian government elected by the people" and supported the fight against military rule.

He urged all countries to issue public statements strongly condemning the coup, and to refuse to recognise the military regime. He also called for stronger international measures to stop violence by security forces against peaceful demonstrators.

## Myanmar's UN envoy dramatically opposes coup in his country

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

Myanmar's UN ambassador strongly opposed the military coup in his country and appealed for the "strongest possible action from the international community" to immediately restore democracy in a dramatic speech to the UN General Assembly Friday that drew loud applause from many diplomats in the 193-nation global body.

Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun began his statement saying he represented Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy "civilian government elected by the people" in November, and supported their fight for the end of military rule.

He urged all countries to issue public statements strongly condemning the military coup, and to refuse to recognize the military regime and ask its leaders to respect the free and fair elections in November



In this image taken from video by UNTV, Myanmar Ambassador to the United Nations Kyaw Moe Tun flashes the three-fingered salute, a gesture of defiance done by anti-coup protesters in Myanmar, at the end of his speech before the UN General Assembly at the United Nations on Friday

AP

won by Suu Kyi's NLD party. He also urged stronger international measures to stop violence by security forces against peaceful demonstrators.

"It is time for the military to immediately relinquish power and release those detained," Tun said, agreeing

with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres "that military coup is not acceptable in this modern world and the coup must cease."

"We will continue to fight for a government which is of the people, by the people, for the people," he vowed.

## GLOBE TROTTER

### 42 ABDUCTED FROM NIGERIAN SCHOOL FREED

**Lagos:** An official says 42 people including 27 students who were abducted two weeks ago from a school in northern Nigeria have been freed. The chief press secretary for the Niger state governor, Mary Noel-Berje, told The Associated Press on Saturday that those released have arrived in the State capital, Minna.

### COVID CASES CONTINUE TO RISE IN PAKISTAN

**Islamabad:** Pakistan's aviation authority on Saturday extended the existing restriction regarding the standard operating procedures for all inbound travellers for another two weeks as the nation continues to witness a surge in the number of coronavirus cases.

### IRAN EXPECTS 2,50,000 JABS FROM CHINA

**Tehran:** Iran's Health Ministry says the country expects to receive 250,000 doses of the Sinopharm vaccine from China on Saturday. Alireza Raisi, deputy Health Minister, says the country will receive doses of other vaccines, including from India, in the "near future" as the country struggles to fight the worst outbreak of the pandemic.

### GERMANY'S LEFT PICKS 2 WOMEN TO LEAD PARTY

**Berlin:** Germany's Left has picked two women to lead the anti-capitalist party into this fall's national election. A party convention on Saturday elected Janine Wissler and Susanne Hennig-Wellsow as co-leaders.

### UKRAINE SEES SECOND FATAL OXYGEN BLAST

**Kyiv:** An explosion in a Ukrainian hospital where Covid-19 patients are being treated has killed one person and injured another, authorities said on Saturday. The emergencies service said that the explosion occurred in an oxygen pipe.

## Biden: Strikes in Syria sent warning to Iran to 'be careful'

AP ■ WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden said Friday that Iran should view his decision to authorize US airstrikes in Syria as a warning that it can expect consequences for its support of militia groups that threaten US interests or personnel.

"You can't act with impunity. Be careful," Biden said when a reporter asked what message he had intended to send with the airstrikes, which the Pentagon said destroyed several buildings in eastern Syria but were not intended to eradicate the militia groups that used them to facilitate attacks inside Iraq.

Administration officials defended the Thursday night airstrikes as legal and appropriate, saying they took out facilities that housed valuable "capabilities" used by Iranian-backed militia groups to attack American and allied forces in Iraq.

John Kirby, the Pentagon's chief spokesperson, said mem-

bers of Congress were notified before the strikes as two Air Force F-15E aircraft launched seven missiles, destroying nine facilities and heavily damaging two others, rendering both "functionally destroyed." He said the facilities, at "entry control points" on the border, had been used by militia

groups the US deems responsible for recent attacks against US interests in Iraq.

In a political twist for the new Democratic administration, several leading Congress members in Biden's own party denounced the strikes, which were the first military actions he authorized.

## President Joe Biden protected US personnel, facilities: White House

**Washington:** The White House has said that through the airstrikes in Syria, President Joe Biden protected US personnel and facilities, and deterred the risk of additional attacks "over the coming weeks."

On Thursday, airstrikes in Syria targeted facilities belonging to a powerful Iranian-backed Iraqi armed group, reportedly killing one fighter and wounding several others.

The strikes came in the

wake of recent attacks on US interests in Iraq, including a rocket attack last week which killed a civilian contractor and injured a US service member and other coalition troops.

"The president is sending an unambiguous message that he's going to act to protect Americans, and when threats are posed, he has the right to take action at the time, and in the manner of his choosing," White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki told reporters. **PTI**

## Attackers strike gas pipeline in eastern Syria, causing fire

**Damascus:** Attackers struck a gas pipeline in eastern Syria on Saturday, leaving it ablaze but causing no casualties, state news agency SANA reported, the latest incidence of sabotage against Syria's oil and gas infrastructure.

As in the past, no one claimed responsibility for the attack. Syria's nearly 10-year conflict, which has killed about half a million people, has also badly affected oil and gas fields,

many of which are outside government control.

SANA said the attack occurred in the area known as Abu Khashab in the eastern province of Deir el-Zour that borders Iraq.

Sleeper cells of the Islamic State group are known to be active in the area and have targeted government forces and US-backed Kurdish fighters in eastern Syria. **AP**

## Pakistan experts: Religiosity fostering rise in militancy

**Islamabad:** Terrorists attacks are on the rise in Pakistan amid a growing religiosity that has brought greater intolerance, prompting one expert to voice concern the country could be overwhelmed by religious extremism.

Pakistani authorities are embracing strengthening religious belief among the population to bring the country closer together. But it's doing just the opposite, creating intolerance and opening up space for a creeping resurgence in militancy, said Mohammad Amir Rana, executive director of the independent Pakistan

Institute for Peace Studies.

"Unfortunately, instead of helping to inculcate better ethics and integrity, this phenomenon is encouraging a tunnel vision" that encourages violence, intolerance and hate, he wrote recently in a local newspaper.

"Religiosity has begun to define the Pakistani citizenry," Militant violence in Pakistan has spiked: In the past week alone, four vocational school instructors who advocated for women's rights were travelling together when they were gunned down in a Pakistan border region. **AP**

## Officials: 400 escape, 25 dead after Haiti prison breakout

AP ■ PORT-AU-PRINCE (HAITI)

Haitian authorities announced Friday that more than 400 inmates escaped and 25 people died in a prison breakout, making it the country's largest and deadliest one in a decade, with the prison director and a powerful gang leader among those killed.

Some believe on Thursday's jailbreak at the Croix-des-Bouquets Civil Prison in northeast Port-au-Prince was to free gang leader Arnel Joseph, who had been Haiti's most wanted

fugitive until his 2019 arrest on charges including rape, kidnapping and murder.

Joseph was riding on a motorcycle through the Artibonite area in the town of L'Estère on Friday a day after his escape when he was spotted at a checkpoint, police spokesman Gary Desrosiers told *The Associated Press*. He said Joseph pulled out a gun and died in an exchange of gunfire with police.

Joseph ruled Village de Dieu, or Village of God, a shantytown in downtown Port-

au-Prince, and other communities, including some in Artibonite, which is Haiti's largest department.

Authorities have not yet provided much details on the breakout except to say that 60 inmates have been recaptured and the investigation is ongoing. State Secretary Frantz Exantus said authorities have created several commissions to investigate who organized the breakout and why. Among those killed was the prison director, identified as Paul Joseph Hector.



**UJVN Ltd.**  
(An Uttarakhand Govt. Enterprises)  
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Telephone-0135-2763808 Fax 0135-2763508  
CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866 Website: www.ujvn.com.

RO NO. 173 Date: 27.02.2021

**TENDER NOTICE**

Office of Executive Engineer (M&G), Dhalipur Power House invites sealed tenders from interested parties. Brief summary of tender is given below:

**Tender No.:** 25/EE/M&G/DLR/2020-21

**Name of the Work:** Repairing and overhauling of damaged thrust bearing oil coolers.

**Estimated Cost:** (Rs) 13,00,000/- Only (GST Extra)

**Date of availability of bid document:** 27-02-2021 from 17:00 Hrs

**Last Date for submission of tender:** 20-03-2021 up to 16:00 Hrs

For fuller & further details, kindly visit our website. The tender documents can be downloaded from the Nigam's website [www.ujvn.com](http://www.ujvn.com).

**Executive Engineer (M&G)**

**"AVOID WASTEFUL USE OF ELECTRICITY"**

## APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that one male was admitted in LNJP Hospital, Delhi. During treatment doctors declared him dead on 17.02.2021 in the area of PS Kotwali, Delhi. In this regard a **DD No. 77A u/s 174 CrPC, Dated 17.02.2021** has been lodged at **P.S. Kotwali, Delhi**. The description of the dead body is given as under:



**Name:** Unknown, **S/o:** Unknown, **R/o:** Unknown, **Age:** about 35 years, **Height:** 5'5"  
**Feet, Complexion:** Shallow, **Face:** Long, **Build:** Thin, **Wearing:** Green Colour T-Shirt, Black Colour Lower and Bare Footed.  
Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the information about the dead male but no clue has come to light so far. If any one is having any information about this dead male please inform the undersigned.

S.H.O

P.S. Kotwali, Delhi.

Ph. No. 011-23977100, 23953442

DP/962/N/2021

## WFP: Security protocols, leaks a focus of Congo probe

AP ■ ROME

A UN investigation into the attack on a humanitarian convoy in Congo that killed the Italian ambassador, his bodyguard and driver will look into whether the long-planned mission's security protocols were followed and whether information might have leaked to the unknown gunmen involved in the ambush.

The deputy communications director of the World Food Program, Greg Barrow, told an online briefing Friday that the February 22 mission to bring Ambassador Luca Attanasio to a WFP school feeding program in eastern Congo had been in the works since 2020.

Advance planning and security meetings as well as security briefings took place up to the moment the seven-member team took off from Goma, in Congo's east, in a two-car convoy bound for the program in Rutshuru, he said.

## UK PM Boris reiterates support against Taliban in call with Afghan Prez

PTI ■ LONDON

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has reiterated Britain's support to Afghanistan in its fight against the Taliban, as part of the wider North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) alliance.

In a phone call from Downing Street in London with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani on Friday, Johnson also agreed on the importance of making progress in peace talks to secure a sovereign, democratic and united Afghanistan.

"He [Johnson] reiterated the UK's longstanding support for the Afghan government's fight against the Taliban as part of the NATO coalition," a Downing Street spokesperson said.

In February last year, the US and Taliban signed a peace agreement in Doha, Qatar, which provided withdrawal of all American and NATO troops from war-torn Afghanistan by May 1.

"They agreed on the importance of making progress in peace

talks to secure a sovereign, democratic and united Afghanistan, and to preserve the gains made by civil society and women and girls," the Downing Street spokesperson said.

The US-Taliban Peace Agreement also mentioned a pledge from the Taliban to prevent militant forces from operating in its areas, and dialogue between the Taliban and the Afghanistan government.

Besides regional matters, Johnson and Ghani discussed the Covid-19 crisis and global efforts around access to vaccines to combat the pandemic.

"The Prime Minister and President Ghani also discussed global efforts to tackle the pandemic and the rollout of vaccines in Afghanistan and the UK," Downing Street said.

The conversation between the two leaders comes amidst a review of the US-Taliban peace deal by the Joe Biden-led US administration, creating uncertainty over the future course of events.

BEFORE THE NATIONAL COMPANY LAW TRIBUNAL  
NEW DELHI BENCH, COURT-3  
COMPANY PETITION NO.CAA. 8/ND/2021  
IN  
COMPANY APPLICATION NO. CA(CAA)-4/(ND)/2020  
IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2013  
AND  
PETITION UNDER SECTION 230 TO 232 AND OTHER APPLICABLE PROVISIONS OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2013 READ WITH THE COMPANIES (COMPROMISE, ARRANGEMENT & AMALGAMATION) RULES, 2016.  
AND  
IN THE MATTER OF:  
SCHEME OF MERGER  
OF  
M/S FERN PROJECTS PRIVATE LIMITED  
Regd. Off.: C-8/8289, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi-110070  
AND  
M/S LEMCOM MERCHANTS PRIVATE LIMITED  
Regd. Off.: C-8/8289, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi-110070  
AND  
M/S TECHNO BUILDERS PRIVATE LIMITED  
Regd. Off.: C-8/8289, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi-110070  
WITH  
M/S UNIPACK MULTIPRODUCT PRIVATE LIMITED  
Regd. Off.: C-8/8289, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi-110070  
.....Transferee Company

**Notice of Petition for Hearing**  
A petition under Section 230-232 of the Companies Act, 2013, for approval of Scheme of Amalgamation of M/s FERN PROJECTS PRIVATE LIMITED (Transferor Company 1), M/S LEMCOM MERCHANTS PRIVATE LIMITED (Transferor Company 2), M/S TECHNO BUILDERS PRIVATE LIMITED (Transferor Company 3), with M/S UNIPACK MULTIPRODUCT PRIVATE LIMITED (Transferee Company) was presented jointly by the companies on the 20th day of December, 2020 and the said petition is fixed for hearing before Principal Bench of National Company Law Tribunal on 24th day of March, 2021. Any person desirous of supporting or opposing the said petition/application/reference should send to the petitioner's advocate, notice of his intention, signed by him or his advocate, with his name and address, so as to reach the petitioner's advocate not later than two days before the date fixed for the hearing of the petition/application/reference. Where he seeks to oppose the petition/application/reference, the grounds of opposition or a copy of his affidavit shall be furnished with such notice. A copy of the petition/application/reference will be furnished by the undersigned to any person requiring the same on payment of the prescribed charges for the same.

Sd/-  
Iswar Ch Mohapatra  
Advocate for Petitioner  
8/43, LGF, South Patel Nagar,  
New Delhi-110008

Dated 25/02/2021  
Place: New Delhi



# ‘Who defines a good cricket surface?’ questions Ashwin

Indian off-spinner says all the talk around pitches being used in ongoing Test series is ‘getting out of hand’

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

India off-spinner Ashwin Ravichandran on Saturday said that the talk around the pitches being used in the ongoing Test series against England is “getting out of hand.”

India edged ahead in the four-match series with a 10-wicket win over England in the third Test at the Motera Stadium in Ahmedabad, and a major talking point in the match was the pitch which offered sharp turn from day one.

While several former England cricketers questioned the nature of the Ahmedabad pitch, Ashwin questioned the narrative that is emerging.

“I think I have said that in the past as well, everyone is entitled to their opinion and I am not here to say that your opinion is right and it is wrong. The fact remains that the talk about the surface is getting out of hand,” said Ashwin in a virtual press conference on Saturday.

“Why would you talk about the surface and sell that to us time and time again? Is there any instance where the pitch has been talked about this much when we have played games in other countries.

“I somehow find it funny that when they speak about the surface, it immediately gets quoted all over in our press and this is the issue here. There have been instances, we have been to New Zealand, where both the Tests got over in a total of five days.”

Ashwin said that the talk around the pitch is unnecessary and there is no set rule on how a cricket pitch should behave over the course of a Test match.

“The bowler wins the game, the batsmen need to bat well to score runs. Who defines what a good surface is? Seam on the first day, then bat well in the next couple of days and spin on the last two days, come on, who makes these rules?”

“We need to get over it and if you are asking whether the pitch in the third Test was a good surface, I do not see any players of England coming out and complaining. You should be hoping for a good cricket match, not the surface,” he said.

Ashwin also cited a press conference of Virat Kohli during a South Africa tour where the India captain refused to blame the pitch for the results.

“There is a video doing the rounds where Virat Kohli is talking in South Africa and he says I am not here to talk about the pitch. That is how we have been taught to play cricket, that’s why I say let them sell thoughts, buying is our choice,” he added, similar to the tweets he had put out on Friday.

The 34-year-old off-spinner, who has become second-fastest to 400 Test wickets, tweeted about “ideas being sold” to form public opinion.

“I am not disturbed with things being taken out of context. That is what has been happening for the last decade, if not more. That is why I put out the tweets I did yesterday (Friday). People need to get the context and what is happening,” said Ashwin.

“There have been people messaging me that the match has finished in two days. Every pink-ball game we have played has ended within three days. I do not know what to say, unfortunately, many people have not played the pink-ball game, so they will not understand this facet of the game.

“My angst against the whole thing is that someone says one thing, there are so many people watching the same picture but are not able to paint a different one as compared to someone who is driving a certain case and selling a certain case to us. This needs to stop,” he added.

## Ashwin has stopped thinking about landmarks long back

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Ravichandran Ashwin has stopped bothering about landmarks “long, long time back” as his only endeavour currently is to work on his craft and be useful every time when he plays for India.

Ashwin has become the fourth Indian bowler to complete 400 wickets in Test cricket and was asked if surpassing ‘Peak 619’ could be a reality in coming years.

“If you look at it pragmatically, it’s 218 wickets away,” Ashwin, who is always good with words answered.

“For me, I have stopped thinking about all those landmarks and all long, long time ago.”

He said he is looking to become a better cricketer, every time he stepped on the field.

“It’s been about what I can do, how I can get better, what more I can offer to the team

because every time you come back into this setup, especially now that I am only playing Test cricket, it’s important to come back and offer to the team.”

Ashwin wants to be in this happy zone and enjoy his craft as he always does.

“I am looking to get better as an individual and cricketer. That’s probably one of the reasons why I am really, really happy and I am enjoying my game and probably the best I have done in the last 15 years.

I would like to continue this phase and not think about too much else,” the bowler added.

Ashwin has been in the bio-bubble since the IPL and then has been part of the Australia series and the ongoing England series, and he said that is incredibly hard to be without family but in the same vein said that the team bonding has got better.

“I think without them (family) around it can be



incredibly hard. Yes, we get larger hotel spaces. We do get our entertainment area. We bond much better. One thing that stands out is that the fact that because of this bio-bubble the players are getting together more than ever. I think the team

pink-ball Tests, Ashwin said: “There is no apprehension. If there was apprehension, we would have expressed.”

He said it was all about adapting.

“This is a new facet that has been introduced to the game. We are used to playing with the red ball. We are conditioned to playing with the red-ball and now all of a sudden, they have got in the pink ball. The pink ball has got a new dimension to the game, so it’s about adapting,” he said.

“You play more and more and get used to it, the players are going to adapt better. The same thing with one-dayers. We were used to playing with the red ball and then shifted to the white ball. Initially, the white-ball was doing a lot. Now, it does nothing. That’s how this format will also evolve. Anything new is going to have a lot of challenges,” he elaborated.

## Motera likely to escape ICC ‘Red Eye’

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Motera track may have received a lot of flak after the pink ball Test ended inside two days but it is unlikely to attract any severe sanctions from the game’s governing body ICC with the pitch for the final game set to be a batting beauty.

With India 2-1 up in the four-Test series and needing a draw to qualify for the World Test Championship final at Lord’s from June 18-22, another turner is currently out of question as the home team will be aiming to take minimal risks as far as the track is concerned.

“Expect a good hard surface which will be firm and even bounce. It will be a batting beauty and since it’s a traditional red ball match, one can expect a very high scoring contest here from March 4-8,” a senior BCCI official privy to the developments told PTI.

Also the BCCI bigwigs along with the team management understands the fact that another dust bowl won’t augur



well for the new venue which is expected to host a lot of important matches during IPL as well as ICC T20 World Cup.

“If there are two matches played at the same venue, you can’t hold one result in isolation. Let the final Test be over and then only based on match referee Javagal Srinath’s report can ICC decide its course of action.

Also as of now, the England team hasn’t lodged any official complaint,” the BCCI official

said.

If there has been one good and one bad pitch at the same venue, the ICC is unlikely to take any action. While India would be happy with a 3-1 margin, they will not require a result oriented turner as a draw would suffice their purpose.

Also the Indian team management doesn’t want to prepare a track that can ideally backfire on them in a very high-stake game of cricket.

## Bumrah released from Test squad



PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah will miss the fourth and final Test against England, beginning here on Thursday, as he was released from the Indian squad, owing to personal reasons.

The BCCI said no addition to India’s squad will be made

for the final Test at Motera.

“Jasprit Bumrah made a request to BCCI to be released from India’s squad ahead of the fourth Test owing to personal reasons,” BCCI Secretary Jay Shah said in a media release on Saturday.

“Accordingly, the fast bowler has been released and he will not be available for selection for the fourth Test.”

Bumrah has already been rested for the limited-over series, comprising five T20Is and three ODIs, beginning on March 12 here as part of the team’s extensive workload management programme.

The 27-year-old Indian pace bowling spearhead has been inside bio-secure bubble since August prior to the Indian Premier League in the UAE.

England all-rounder Chris Woakes also has left the Test tour without playing a match as part of the ECB’s rotation policy.

## Shikha axed for SA series



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Veteran medium pacer Shikha Pandey was on Saturday dropped from India’s ODI and T20 squads that will take on South African women in a twin series starting March 7.

The most debatable decision by the Neetu David-led selection committee, however, was the exclusion of teenage batting sensation Shafali Verma in the ODI squad which has plodders like skipper Mithali Raj and Punam Raut, whose strike-rates have come under the scanner time and again.

With 19 T20 Internationals under her belt and an amazing Women’s T20 World Cup last year, Shafali is a box-office cricketer.

“It will be interesting to know whether skipper Mithali Raj, who herself loves to bat at the top of the order and consumes more deliveries than permissible, had at all wanted Shafali in the ODI squad,” a senior BCCI official, who sounded miffed with the move, told PTI.

“Her absence means that India lack firepower save Harmanpreet and Smriti. We lost out on a big hitter,” he added.

The selectors, though, have included a lot of rookies based on their last season’s domestic performances as well as A and B team series against Bangladesh. Rookie keeper-batsman

Shwetha Verma, along with the seasoned Sushma Verma, are the two keepers in both formats.

Pandey’s exclusion was more to do with the selectors wanting to check out the pace bowling bench strength and rookie right-arm medium pacers C Prathyusha and Monica Patel were included in both the squads.

There is also young seamer Simran Dil Bahadur, who is part of the T20 Internationals team.

Left-arm spinner Yastika Bhatia has made way for Ekta Bisht in the 50-over squad while Veda Krishnamurthy, after a prolonged lean phase, has been dropped from both squads.

**ODI squad:** Mithali Raj (Captain), Smriti Mandhana, Jemimah Rodrigues, Punam Raut, Priya Punia, Yastika Bhatia, Harmanpreet Kaur, D Hemalatha, Deepti Sharma, Sushma Verma, Shwetha Verma, Radha Yadav, Rajeshwari Gayakwad, Jhulan Goswami, Mansi Joshi, Poonam Yadav, C Prathyusha, Monica Patel

**T20I squad:** Harmanpreet Kaur (Captain), Smriti Mandhana, Shafali Verma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Deepti Sharma, Richa Ghosh, Harleen Deol, Sushma Verma, Nuzhat Parveen, Ayushi Soni, Arundhati Reddy, Radha Yadav, Rajeshwari Gayakwad, Poonam Yadav, Mansi Joshi, Monica Patel, C Prathyusha, Simran Dil Bahadur.

# Back to back hundreds for Shreyas

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Skipper Shreyas Iyer’s fluent 116 and an impressive show by India speedster Shardul Thakur powered Mumbai to a 67-run win over Rajasthan in an Elite Group D game of the Vijay Hazare Trophy here on Saturday.

This was Mumbai’s fourth successive win, having earlier defeated Delhi, Maharashtra and Puducherry.

Opting to bat at the KL Saini stadium, Mumbai rode on Iyer’s 103-ball knock to post a competitive 317/7. The elegant right-handed batsman led from the front before his bowlers bundled out the opposition for 250 with Thakur (4/50) doing the bulk of the damage.

Iyer anchored the innings before toying with the Rajasthan attack, scoring his second century of the tournament with the help of 11 fours and three sixes.

He found able partners in Sarfaraz Khan (30) and



Suryakumar Yadav (29), who played their roles to perfection.

For Rajasthan, left-arm spinner Shubham Sharma (3/59) did the bulk of the damage.

Chasing 318, Manender Singh (40) and Mahipal Lomror (76) tried to take the game deep with their 101-run third-wicket stand, but medium pacer Akash Pankar broke the partnership after trapping Singh in front of the wicket. Shardul castled Lomror to leave Rajasthan at 160/4.

From thereon, it was an uphill task for Rajasthan and they were eventually bowled out for 250.

In other matches of the group, India opener Shikhar Dhawan’s 153 helps Delhi beat Maharashtra by three wickets at Sawai Mansingh Stadium. While Puducherry win by 104 runs against Himachal Pradesh.

**PRERAK SLAMS 174**

**Kolkata:** In Group E clash, middle-order batsman Prerak Mankad took Eden Gardens by storm with a sensational 174 to power

Saurashtra to a 62-run win over Chandigarh. The 26-year-old plundered six sixes and 16 fours in his knock from 130 balls to propel Saurashtra to a massive 388 for 7 after Chandigarh opted to bowl.

In reply, Chandigarh, who have been impressive in their debut Elite season with three wins on the trot, could manage 326 for 7.

The win helped Saurashtra consolidate their lead with 16 points, four clear of Chandigarh to close in on a quarterfinal spot.

The No 4 batsman paced his innings brilliantly taking 53 balls for his half-century before he stepped up to race to his second List A century in the next 39 balls.

There was no stopping Prerak as he took another 27 balls to cruise to 150. He was dismissed by Jagjit Singh in the final over but the damage had been done.

Chasing the target, Chandigarh skipper Manan Vohra (50) and Arslan Khan (61) put on a century-plus stand and then Ankit Kaushik chipped in with 54

but it proved too little in the end.

In other games, Services beat Haryana by 112 runs and Bengal win by 82 runs against Jammu & Kashmir.

**UK, ASSAM WIN**

**Chennai:** Uttarakhand notched up their fourth straight win beating Mizoram by eight wickets in their Plate group match.

Uttarakhand are currently on top of the standings with 16 points from four matches, sharing the position with Assam, who won their match against Sikkim by four wickets.

Leg-spinner Dikshansu Negi took 6 for 21 in a brilliant bowling performance to help Uttarakhand bundle out Mizoram for a paltry 117.

In reply, Uttarakhand knocked off the required runs in just 10.5 overs.

In another match, Assam chased down a target of 246 set by Sikkim in the 48th over to maintain their all-win record in the group.

## Gayle returns to Windies T20I side

PTI ■ ST JOHN’S

Veteran batsman Chris Gayle has returned to the West

Indies squad for the first time in nearly two years for the three-match T20I series against Sri Lanka, beginning on March 3.

The 41-year-old top-order batsman was recalled to the 14-man squad under Kieron Pollard on the basis of his good performances in recent tournaments, including the IPL and Pakistan Super League.

Senior fast bowler Fidel Edwards, 39, is also back in the national squad after a nine-

year hiatus.

The three matches of the T20I series will be played on March 3, 5, and 7 at the Coolidge Cricket Ground in Antigua, which will be making its International debut.

The big-hitting Gayle last played for West Indies in their home series against India in August 2019 after

the 50-over World Cup that year.

He had earlier said that the 2019 World Cup matches would be his last appearances for West Indies.

“Chris Gayle has performed very well in recent tournaments and the selection panel thinks that he can still add great value to our team,” Roger Harper, Cricket West Indies’ (CWI) lead selector, said.

“As we build towards the defence of the T20 World Cup, the opportunity is being taken to determine our best team and squad as we go forward.”

The selection panel also named the squad for the ODI series against the visiting Sri Lankans to be played between March 10-14 at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua.

All-rounder Andre Russell is recovering from contracting Covid-19, and despite testing

negative over a week ago has been ruled out of the T20 series.

A West Indies spokesman added that fast bowlers Sheldon Cottrell and Oshane Thomas, along with batsman Shimron Hetmyer and all-rounder Roston Chase have all failed to reach the minimum fitness standard in time to be considered for selection.

**T20I squad:** Kieron Pollard (c), Nicholas Pooran, Fabian Allen Dwayne Bravo, Fidel Edwards, Andre Fletcher, Chris Gayle, Jason Holder, Akeal Hosein, Evin Lewis, Obed McCoy, Rovman Powell, Lendl Simmons, Kevin Sinclair.

**ODI squad:** Kieron Pollard (c), Shai Hope, Fabian Allen, Darren Bravo, Jason Holder, Akeal Hosein, Alzarri Joseph, Evin Lewis, Kyle Mayers, Jason Mohammed, Nicholas Pooran, Romario Shepherd, Kevin Sinclair.

## New Covid case changes NZ-Aus T20I schedule

AFF ■ AUCKLAND

A community coronavirus outbreak in Auckland has forced New Zealand cricket bosses to hastily reschedule two T20 matches against Australia as other affected sports assessed their options. A New Zealand

Cricket spokesman said the third match in the current T20 series, to be played in Wellington on Wednesday, will go ahead but without spectators. Game four, scheduled for Auckland on Friday, has been moved to Wellington and, again, will be played behind closed doors.

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# the pioneer agenda

FROM THE INSIDE

## The Magic of Mandu

Mandu's geographical location is what made it such an important city. It prospered greatly under the Sultans of Malwa for nearly 200 years

2

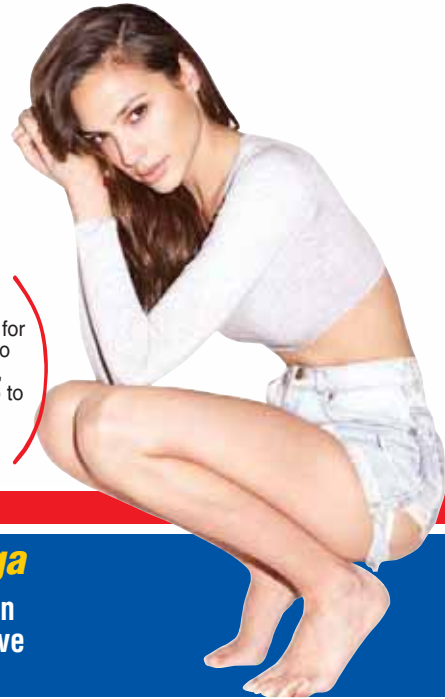


4

## Attaining the state of Yoga

In the state of *Yoga*, mind enters an infinite domain having no distinctive existences

It is so important for girls and boys to have a female, strong superhero to look up to  
— Gal Gadot



As the pandemic brought the world economies to a halt/slowdown, different industries are leading their way through the crisis and changing the core strategy. DISHA CHHABRA shares top 5 lessons from senior leaders across industries



# LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM TURBULENT TIMES

In the last one year, our lifestyles and habits have changed forever. The way we live, eat, play, work is all altered. The resulting lockdowns of countries has brought national economies to a standstill. Salary and job cuts are happening throughout the world. Lives versus livelihood is a constant debate. No one living in these times has experienced a crisis that can be remotely equated to this one. And things are still unfolding.

When we are not going out to eat out but cooking more at home; when we prefer services at home rather than going out; when we need high speed internet to work from home, when masks are the new fashion statement; all these changes in our behaviour shape the way different industries are leading their way through the crisis and changing the core strategy. Covid-19 has impacted every sphere of the corporate world.

The pandemic has had a varied impact on different industries. Across the globe, there have been industries where revenue has gone negative; for some it has even gone down to zero. Industries like travel which relied on people physically moving around even needed to refund future bookings. Entertainment like physical events, movie ticketing, are in the same category. It is not sure when revenue is going to return. Some of these industries fall in the bucket of 'putting off for the future'. For example, people are putting off the visit to the hairdresser and are likely to go back when the crisis eases. These industries are shifting their present revenues into the future. The immediate focus is on cash conservation.

During this crisis, we have all indulged in some kind of hoarding. Be it toilet paper in the western countries or Maggi noodles in India; industries selling products which are essentials and non-perishable are seeing their future revenues brought forward as people buy for the next quarter and at some point in future, the present day spends will impact the future spends.

On the other end, being stuck and home and having a lot of time at hand; people are finding time to take up new hobbies; cooking, gardening and other isolation friendly activities. Baking banana breads became a huge trend. Companies that help provide these virtual classes or sell the raw materials one needs for these activities are attracting a large share

of discretionary spends of customers. This is new revenue for the companies but not necessarily brought forward from the future. However, the growth that these industries are seeing may not sustain once people begin to step out for leisure and entertainment.

And then there are big winners in this crisis. Industries like video conferencing, online grocery delivery, digital payments have seen a huge spike in adoption and have reached levels they would have otherwise expected to reach in order of months to years. These are likely fundamental customer behaviour changes and expected to stay even when the crisis eases. These industries are not only making a lot of revenue during the crisis. And when the crisis is over, the new normal of these industries will be at a higher level. These are industries that are mostly constrained on their supply side to handle the exponential growth in demand.

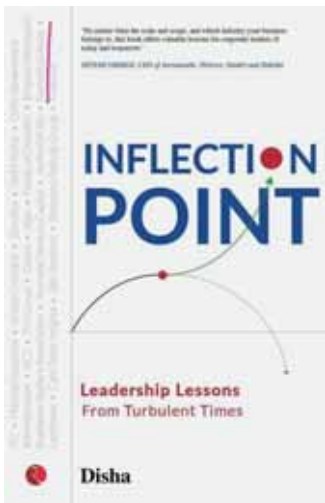
Few years down the line, leadership and business lessons from this crisis will be taught as crisis management case studies in B-schools. Which of these lessons will be permanent armours for future leaders for dealing with any crisis? And do the learnings differ depending on which side of the revenue curve a company finds itself. Does leadership need to be reactive? Here are the top 5 lessons coming directly from senior leaders across different industries and organisations.

### LESSON 1: NIMBLENESS

Ever since the world reported its first case, every day has been a roller coaster ride. Situations on the ground have evolved rapidly. Every day has been different from the previous one.

A week before, leaders were checking the sales numbers and reviewing their 2020 plans. A week later, supply chains were disrupted and businesses asked to temporarily shut until further notice. A day before, all our employees were safe. A day later, an entire department got infected. The time horizon of major events was severely shortened.

In a crisis situation, dealing with uncertainty needs less planning, more execution. This is not the time to draw a product roadmap, a 5-year vision or long-term strategies. Leaders are embracing speed, mitigating the short to mid-term consequences to stabilize the situation and stay afloat. COVID-19



THE PANDEMIC HAS HAD A VARIED IMPACT ON DIFFERENT INDUSTRIES. ACROSS THE GLOBE, THERE HAVE BEEN INDUSTRIES WHERE REVENUE HAS GONE NEGATIVE; FOR SOME IT HAS EVEN GONE DOWN TO ZERO. INDUSTRIES LIKE TRAVEL WHICH RELIED ON PEOPLE PHYSICALLY MOVING AROUND EVEN NEEDED TO REFUND FUTURE BOOKINGS. ENTERTAINMENT LIKE PHYSICAL EVENTS, MOVIE TICKETING, ARE IN THE SAME CATEGORY. IT IS NOT SURE WHEN REVENUE IS GOING TO RETURN



has delivered a crash course in agility for organisations of all stripes.

### LESSON 2 - INNOVATION

It is said that innovation and creativity love crises and constraints. Crisis brings out constraints and makes innovation almost a forcing function. Leaders often leverage consultants to get a fresh, outside perspective on their organisations to find opportunities to innovate. A crisis can have much the same effect, putting the spotlight on vulnerabilities, problem areas; great and small, that we've been ignoring or are just plain unaware of. When a crisis hits, we are forced to confront the truth about how our systems work (or don't). The places where things could be done better or more efficiently become glaringly obvious. All of a sudden, opportunities for innovation are staring us in the face.

The current crisis is bringing a whole new set of innovations. Services like medicine, education, industrial plant set ups are all going digital. Google and Apple are collaborating on contact tracing. Dunzo is working with brands to get the products delivered at one's doorstep. ITC's personal care team deserves recognition for introducing a range of new health and hygiene products for households. Its hospitality team curated a gourmet menu, which recreates the ITC dining experience for our customers in the comfort of their homes. While these are just a couple of examples, leaders across industries continue to strive to change and innovate to ensure that they deliver nothing short of excellence in their products and services to our customers, despite the pandemic.

### LESSON 3: EMPLOYEE WELL BEING

While it may sound obvious, crises are crises because people suffer. In a situation where emotions and anxieties run high, leaders connect with employees and other stakeholders and acknowledge the personal and professional challenges they are going through. Impactful leaders convey their vision in a manner that the employees feel aligned, motivated and rallied against.

Effective crisis management requires integrity, accountability, and moral courage. Thoughtful, frequent, and empathetic communication signals that the leaders share with their organization show they care and are together in the journey that employees go

through. These messages are delivered with "bounded optimism" — hope combined with realism.

### LESSON 4: RISING ABOVE SELF INTEREST

What makes a leader is not just thinking about self but for the larger community. Be it giving back to the community in cash or kind or even gestures where one takes care of people who are not directly on the organization's payroll but on the frontline; leaders showcase how it is not enough if the organization alone progresses. No true leader sees crisis as a time to carve out a competitive advantage; definitely not at the cost of a struggling competitor. Compassion is leadership, leadership is compassion — compassion not just for self but for everyone else, especially ones where one has no self-interest whatsoever. If anything, the crisis will make leadership more humane and above self-interest.

### LESSON 5: BEING OPEN TO FAILING

In times of crisis, the acceptance of failure and moving on from there to the next step and the next is a critical leadership trait. These are times when given the dynamicity of the situation, decisions need to be made based on the limited information available and many times in decentralized manners. Fail fast is more important than learning and waiting to make the right decision. Different business models are prototyped and many of them may not work. It's ok. Leaders move on.

There are often external circumstances beyond one's control. Leaders are kind to yourself and to their teams. They repivot as many times as necessary. They collaborate with competitors. Leadership is not about the outcome — it is about the process. Even a decision of shutting down the business may look like a failure looking outwards. But the process of arriving at that decision, accepting, communicating and executing the failure can demonstrate leadership. Being open to failure is the biggest lesson from turbulent times.

The onus of leadership lies with each one of us. We all need to lead ourselves, our loved ones, our societies, organisations and countries out of this and every crisis.

The writer is a corporate professional and author of 4 books. Her latest book, Inflection Point – Leadership Lessons from Turbulent Times, has been published by Rupa Publications





The canopy facing the Narmada from where Roopmati looked at the river; Hoshang Shah's tomb; Jami Masjid

Though the cemetery is not easy to locate and gets only few visitors, it is very well maintained. So next time you visit Ranchi, do make time to visit this piece of history. As reads a message at one of the resting places: *Thoughts go back to bygone days. Life moves on but memory stays.*



# Lankan Civil War and human rights violation

The Mahinda Rajapaksa Government in Sri Lanka is in trouble again. The horrors of the three decades of Lankan Civil War are revisiting the Government. The two brothers — Mahinda and Gotabaya — are holding the two crucial posts, Prime Minister and President, respectively.

Earlier, Mahinda served as the President from 2005 to 2010, when Gotabaya was the Defence Secretary. During this period, both the brothers crushed the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and put an end to the longest Civil War in the country.

However it was the leadership of former Lieutenant Colonel Gotabaya, who finally led the Lankan Army to the successful war against the dreaded LTTE leadership of Velupillai Prabhakaran in 2009. It was good that an ethnic terror movement came to an end that took the lives of many in the past. And the armed forces of this tiny island nation and its political leadership breathed a sigh of relief. Prabhakaran's torture regime was over with his killing in May 2009 at the hands of the Lankan Army.

This had not only shattered the command structure of the Tamil Tigers, but also pushed the outfit to the brink of closure. The organisation had lost both its firepower and manpower. The Lankan Government forces too had received severe casualties though the forces received abundant supply of arms from China.

The end of the war brought the most vital question to the fore — the massive violation of human rights by the Lankan Army. Though the Rajapaksa Government had justified the war, the humanitarian concerns emerging from the number of dead, missing and post-war rehabilitation of the Tamil civilians exposed the extreme level of brutalities that the Lankan forces resorted to.

Both the Rajapaksa brothers turned out to be heroes among the majority Sinhalese population, but questions of the violation of fundamental rights of the Tamils in the North and Eastern part of the country remained unanswered.



And this has been haunting the Rajapaksa Government since the end of the Civil War and now also with the returning of the duo to power.

Sri Lanka is facing a new UN Resolution at the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), calling on the human rights abusers to account and asking the country's Government to deliver immediate justice to the victims. Britain and others have circulated a draft of the resolution among the members of the UNHRC.

It is expected to be adopted at the end of the four-week Spring Session of the UN's top human rights body. The session began on February 22 in Geneva.

Both the Tamil Tigers and the Lankan Army were accused of massive violations of human

rights during the war. Therefore, the UN human rights office blames both for carrying out unparalleled brutalities against the innocent civilians during the war.

Germany and Canada are among the six countries that formed the core group along with Britain to bring the resolution on Lanka. Lord Ahmad, Britain's Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth, said: "The victims from all communities of Sri Lanka's brutal Civil War are, a decade later, still awaiting justice for loved ones murdered or missing and dealing with the repercussions of violence and conflict".

He further commented that the current resolution moved by his country in the UNHRC is a vital step towards reconciliation and peaceful

relations among all of Sri Lanka's diverse communities and faith groups. This will bring an added pressure on the Lankan Government, but then how Colombo will respond may only decide the future of the families of the victims.

UN Human Rights chief Michelle Bachelet has submitted her report on Sri Lanka to the UNHRC. While introducing the report to the Council, she said the effect of the conflict on thousands of survivors from all communities was devastating.

She highlighted that 12 years after the end of the armed conflict in Lanka, the domestic efforts to ensure justice for victims have failed.

Further she stated, "Despite commitments made in 2015, the current Government, like its predecessor, has failed to

pursue genuine truth-seeking or accountability processes... Moreover, the systems, structures, policies and personnel that gave rise to such grave violations in the past remain and have recently been reinforced".

This has put the Rajapaksa Government in the dock. All efforts are on to pressurise Colombo so as to offer justice to the families of thousands of victims and missing persons in this devastating war.

As per the records made available by the international media and human rights agencies, the war killed about 1,00,000 people, including 40,000 Tamil civilians, massacred by the Lankan Army in the final onslaught.

However, the Rajapaksa Government completely denies these allegations. An estimated 1,50,000 people were

trapped on the coast at the end of the war. Besides thousands went missing and the Lankan security forces were blamed for the disappearance of the Tamil rebels who either surrendered or captured.

Recently in a meeting with a UN envoy, Lankan President Gotabaya acknowledged for the first time that more than 20,000 people who disappeared during the country's Civil War were dead.

Further his office released a statement that steps would be taken to issue death certificates for those missing. This has certainly dampened the hopes of those who were expecting a positive response from the Government.

Sri Lanka, the island nation, had witnessed the scourge of terrorism for about three decades. The terror fuelled by the monstrous LTTE had claimed many lives, including the civilians, soldiers and high-profile political leaders within and outside the country.

The LTTE under the leadership of Prabhakaran was simply running a parallel Government in the North-Eastern parts of Lanka. Today, the Tamils and other minority groups like the Muslims and Christians are alleging massive violation of human rights by the Lankan forces in the final war against the LTTE in 2009. But the international community must not forget the reign of terror brought by Prabhakaran and his team over innocent civilians across the island.

The LTTE, formed on May 5, 1976, by Prabhakaran was once used to be the only terror group in the world possessing its own military. Its political headquarters was in Kilinochchi, situating at a distance of 200 miles north of Lanka's capital city of Colombo. And this military consisted of three distinct branches — the Tigers (Infantry), Sea Tigers (Sea Wing) and Air Tigers (Air Wing). It had gradually emerged as the most lethal and well-organised terror group.

In fact, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), in its report published in January 2008, stated that the LTTE was one of the most dangerous

and deadly extremist outfits in the world and the world should be concerned about the outfit as they had inspired networks worldwide, including the al-Qaeda in Iraq. The brutal tactics and the employment of child soldiers by the LTTE were causing concerns across South Asia in its heydays.

Further some reports indicate that women were also forced to join the organisation. Only after seven years of its formation in 1983, the organisation opened its Women's Front of the Liberation Tigers under the leadership of Vithusha. Like many other African terror groups, the LTTE used to recruit children for combat forces.

As per the estimates of the Sri Lankan Directorate of Military Intelligence, as much as 60 per cent of the outfit's fighters were below 18 years. It was also revealed that the fighters of the Tamil Tigers who were killed in the war were mostly between 9 and 18 years.

These were some of the harrowing episodes of the LTTE that rightly underlines how the terror organisation was simply twisting and undermining the epithets of basic human rights. Initially, it seemed to be an endless saga of terror, violence, torture and a parallel state run by an authoritarian leader.

Today the Tamils are calling for accountability and justice for the crimes committed during the Civil War by the Lankan forces. It is hard time for the Rajapaksa duo to respond to the Tamil minority in their country and to the world Tamil diaspora on this sensitive issue. What is expected from Colombo is quick redressal of the grievances of the minorities in the North and Eastern part of the country.

It is time to accept the responsibility of war crimes on the part of the Lankan Government. It is time to heal the wounds. Else, relationship between the Sinhalese majority and rest of the minority communities, particularly with the Tamils, would further deteriorate.

*(The writer is an expert on international affairs)*



MAKHAN SAIKIA

## PERSPECTIVE

# Wastewater surveillance for detecting early spread of Covid

**Sewers or sewage treatment plants can provide near real-time outbreak data as they constantly collect human fluids shed by infected population. Real-time community sewage detection can be taken as early as possible to restrict the movement of the local population, working to minimise the pathogen spread and threat to public health**

The ongoing global pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019, caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), has been declared as a public health emergency of international concern (WHO, 2020).

Several research studies across the globe have confirmed that SARS-CoV-2 ribonucleic acid (RNA) has been detected in faeces of not only symptomatic but also asymptomatic patients. It has also been seen that sewers or sewage treatment plants (STPs) can provide near-real-time outbreak data because they constantly collect human fluids shed by infected population.

Thus, wastewater-based epidemiology (WBE) is a promising approach to understand the prevalence of viruses in any given wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) catchment population.

A densely populated country like India will require constant vigilance to contain Covid-19 infection hot spots, unless and until either a vaccine is proven to be effective or herd immunity is achieved, to combat the spread of SARS-CoV-2. Real-time community sewage detection can be taken as early as possible to restrict the movement of the local population, working to minimise the pathogen spread and threat to public health.

This could help the timely

determination of whether there are Covid-19 carriers (both asymptomatic and symptomatic) in an area to enable preventive measures such as rapid screening and quarantine, even before the residents of that city have been tested.

In India, the pandemic steadily rose from April 2020 with peaking in mid-August 2020. The cumulative confirmed cases have significantly lowered at present.

Several research groups across the globe have reported detecting novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 in wastewater. In Switzerland, École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) researchers, working in association with the Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology (EAWAG) on wastewater sampling and analysis developed a study in March 2020, which acts as an early warning signal for spread of SARS-CoV-2 in communities. Similarly, in April 2020, sewage sampling across greater Paris (France) for more than one month, researchers have detected a rise and fall in novel coronavirus concentrations that correspond to the shape of the SARS-CoV-2 outbreak in the region.

Other researchers have also reported detecting novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 in wastewater in countries such as: Australia (Ahmed et al, 2020),

Cyprus (Michael-Kordatou et al, 2020), Ireland (Cahill et al, 2020), Italy (La Rosa et al, 2020), Japan (Haramoto et al, 2020), South Africa (Street et al., 2020), The Netherlands (Dutch Water Sector, 2020), Spain (Chavarria-Miró et al, 2020), USA (Peccia et al and Hart & Halden et al, 2020), and India (Kumar et al and Arora et al., 2020).

For effective dissemination of knowledge created by the current research efforts, and to empower collaboration on a global scale for wastewater-based epidemiology of SARS-CoV-2, there are various ongoing initiatives such as the European Union's NORMAN - SCORE Joint Initiative (Sewage Analysis CORe group Europe) (score-cost.eu/), COVID-19 WBE Collaborative (covid19wbec.org/), Biobot Analytics (biobot.io/), NSF Research Coordination Network (RCN) (sites.nd.edu/rcn-wastewater-sarscov2/), COVIDPoops19 (https://twitter.com/COVIDPoops19?s=20), Global Water Pathogen Project (GWPP) (waterpathogens.org/) and others.

In IIT Gandhinagar, India, Kumar et al, 2020, for the first time, detected the presence of three SARS-CoV-2 genes (ORF1ab, N and S virus) in wastewater. The samples were collected in May 2020 from Old Pirana WWTP in Ahmedabad

(Gujarat) to understand the application of WBE surveillance in India.

The WWTP has a capacity of 106 MLD receiving effluents of Civil Hospital treating Covid-19 patients. The number of gene copies was found comparable to that reported in the untreated wastewaters of Australia, China, and Turkey and lower than that of the USA, France, and Spain. A similar study was conducted by researchers of Dr B Lal Institute of Biotechnology (Rajasthan) with samples from hospital wastewater as well as from WWTPs of Jaipur, which has been a pandemic hotspot (red zone) since April 2020.

To analyse the presence of SARS-CoV-2 in the community wastewater of different catchments in Chennai city in India, a group of scientists led by Chakraborty et al from SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Mu Gamma Consultants Pvt Ltd (MGC) and The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) jointly implemented an intensive wastewater surveillance study, the first-of-its-kind in the southern region of India.

The study entailed partial lockdown and post lockdown survey along the wastewater discharge points in Adayar and Cooum Riverine belt flowing through the densely populated region of Chennai to

develop an early signalling spread of Covid-19 in communities during partial and post-lockdown periods in 2020. This study gave interesting insights for informing policy actions.

The wastewater surveillance study in Chennai has the potential for replication in other Indian cities like Delhi as well as upscaling it for larger geographic areas covering a large population. Also, it could potentially be one of the bases for scientifically informed decisions to implement public health intervention strategies consistent with legal and ethical considerations in India.

At present, Delhi has 41 Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) with a cumulative treatment capacity of 3,149 MLD. Out of 41 STPs, 32 STPs (2,775 MLD) are operational and 9 STPs (373 MLD) are non-operational. Also, importantly, 75 per cent of pollution is contributed by three major drains

(Najafgarh, Supplementary and Shahdara) out of all the drains falling into the river Yamuna. Given the current sewage management scenario of Delhi, a wastewater surveillance study (similar to the one conducted by SRM IST, MGC and TERI in Chennai) can be taken up in the national Capital to track the SARS-CoV-2 virus in the wastewater samples from major drains

falling into the Yamuna river and select STPs.

The advantages of wastewater surveillance in Delhi will include the monitoring of wastewater samples from sewage treatment plants and major drains of the Yamuna river in Delhi can help in estimating the number of infected individuals, and hence provide robust scientific evidence for informed decision making at the policy level.

This is an early, cost-effective, unbiased community-level indicator of the presence of Covid-19 and of "hot-spots" within a community. It will support risk mitigation decisions for the communities, and guide decisions about where and when to impose or relax more targeted restrictions on movement and activity. It will help alert asymptomatic infections in the community through real-time community sewage detection could be determined.

It will be very useful for positioning resources and triggering public actions for improved health outcomes. It will also alert second and subsequent waves, and develop preparedness towards outbreak of other pandemics in the future.

To track any resurgence of Covid-19, national wastewater surveillance programmes are being implemented in various countries like the USA,

Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, and Pakistan. The same can be planned for India. In the past, WBE has played an important role in the eradication of polio in 2011 in India, and at present, wastewater surveillance continues at 52 WWTPs and unregulated catchment areas for detection of poliovirus.

This surveillance network can be a viable resource for the detection of SARS-CoV-2 in wastewater in the country, including the national Capital Delhi.

There is a need to identify the key issues and challenges related to the development of validated methodological protocols for the quantitative analysis of SARS-CoV-2 in wastewater.

The data generated from the SARS-CoV-2 wastewater monitoring system in Delhi might be used to show a roadmap for tracking disease, intensifying testing, re-introducing public orders related to social distancing or quarantines (if needed), and even lifting restrictions once a cessation of infection is confirmed.

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